

HOW THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR IS TRANSFORMING INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

ЯК РОСІЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКА ВІЙНА ЗМІНЮЄ МІЖНАРОДНУ СИСТЕМУ Й МІЖНАРОДНИЙ ПОРЯДОК

Kapitonenko M.

PhD, Associate Professor at the Institute of International Relations of Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University
Mail: Nickolay.Kapitonenko@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0003-2283-341X

Капітоненко М.Г.

Кандидат політичних наук, доцент кафедри міжнародних відносин та зовнішньої політики Інститут міжнародних відносин Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка
Mail: Nickolay.Kapitonenko@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0003-2283-341X

Abstract. The article examines the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on international system and international order. It assesses the former through the lenses of realism and neorealism, while approaching the latter within constructivist and English School approaches. Structural and normative changes in international politics are examined.

The war has been revealing and transforming the balance of power on a global and regional levels. By doing so, it is enhancing structural changes in the international system. The article explores the scope of these changes.

On the normative side, the conflict challenges and potentially alters the rule-based international order, affecting established norms and institutions. This war not only affects Ukraine but also has broader implications, contributing to the ideological standoff and security paradigm shifts globally. The article underscores the interplay between structural changes and normative shifts, illustrating how these dynamics are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. This comprehensive analysis provides insights into the evolving landscape of international relations and security, emphasizing the far-reaching consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian war on both international system and order.

Key words: Russian-Ukrainian war, international security, international order, international system, power transition

Анотація. Стаття досліджує вплив російсько-української війни на міжнародну систему та міжнародний порядок. Міжнародну систему оцінено крізь призму реалізму та неореалізму, тоді як міжнародний порядок розглянуто в рамках конструктивістського підходу та Англійської школи. Оцінено структурні та нормативні зміни в міжнародній політиці.

Війна виявляє та трансформує баланс сил на глобальному та регіональному рівнях. Тим самим вона посилює структурні зміни в міжнародній системі. Стаття досліджує обсяги цих змін.

З нормативного боку конфлікт кидає виклик і потенційно змінює міжнародний порядок, заснований на правилах, впливаючи на встановлені норми та інститути. Ця війна не лише впливає на Україну, але й має ширші наслідки, сприяючи ідеологічному протистоянню та змінам у парадигмі безпеки на глобальному рівні. Стаття підкреслює взаємодію між структурними змінами та нормативними зрушеннями, ілюструючи, як ці процеси взаємопов'язані та підсилюють один одного. Дослідження описує середовище міжнародних відносин та безпеки, що змінюється, звертаючи увагу на далекосяжні наслідки російсько-української війни для міжнародної системи та порядку.

Ключові слова: російсько-українська війна, міжнародна безпека, міжнародний порядок, міжнародна система, перетікання сили

Introduction.

The Russian-Ukrainian war is a multifaceted security problem and a systemic challenge to international order and international security. It is impacting the global balance of power and questions well-established norms and institutions of international conduct. By doing so, the war is becoming a manifestation of a deep crisis of international politics. On a normative side, it is a struggle for preserving/changing the 'rule-based international order'. On a structural side, it is a factor of power transition within international system.

Assessing the impact of the war on international security along both dimensions is important to understand its consequences, including subsequent security risks. Structural transformations on a global level trigger adaptations in national security strategies of great, middle and small powers, resulting in new alliances and (im)balances of power. Normative changes in world politics, enabled by the war, are changing the ways international society operates, as well as shifts the rules of the game. Those shifts, in turn, transform international security environment.

The purpose of this article is in assessing the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on both international system and international order.

Literature review.

The concepts of the international system and international order are extensively debated given their definitions, dynamics, and implications. Key theoretical perspectives include realism, liberalism and constructivism.

Realism offers a pragmatic view of the international system. Classic realists like (Morgenthau, H., 1948) argue that the international system is anarchic, driven by the competitive pursuit of power among sovereign states. Kenneth Waltz (Waltz, K., 2010) further refines this in his structural realism (or neorealism), emphasizing the distribution of power (polarity) as the primary determinant of international order. John Mearsheimer (Mearsheimer, J., 2001) adds to this discourse with offensive realism, positing that great powers are perpetually engaged in power-maximization for survival.

Liberalism presents an alternative understanding, focusing on cooperation and institutions. Theory of complex interdependence (Keohane, R., Nye J., 1977) highlights the role of international institutions in mitigating anarchy and fostering cooperation. The work of John Ikenberry (Ikenberry, J., 2001) explores the construction of international order through liberal institutionalism, suggesting that hegemonic stability underpinned by democratic values and economic openness can lead to a more stable and prosperous international system.

Constructivism shifts the focus from material to ideational factors (Wendt, A., 1992). It argues that the international system is socially constructed through the interactions and shared understandings of states. This perspective emphasizes that international order is not only shaped by power and interests but also by identities, norms, and beliefs. Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink (Finnemore, M., Sikkink, K., 1998) elaborate on the role of international norms and how they influence state behavior and contribute to the formation of international order.

Recent scholarship explores the implications of emerging powers, global governance, and non-state actors on the international system and order. The rise of China and its impact on the liberal international order is a subject of significant debate (Ikenberry, J., 2008; Allison, G., 2017). The impact of transnational challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and cyber threats on the stability of the international system is increasingly recognized (Buzan B., Hansen, L., 2009).

Realism and liberalism offer competing explanations based on power and institutions, respectively, while constructivism and critical theories introduce the significance of ideational factors and structural inequalities. Contemporary debates continue to evolve, addressing new challenges and the shifting dynamics of global power. Understanding these complex interactions is essential for comprehending the nature of international relations and the prospects for global stability and order.

The geopolitical implications of the Russian-Ukrainian war are also widely debated. John Mearsheimer's controversial article 'Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault' argues that NATO's eastward expansion provoked Russia, sparking significant debate. Conversely, Richard Sakwa's 'Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands' highlights the internal Ukrainian dynamics and the role of external actors in exacerbating the conflict.

The war has been also examined through various theoretical lenses. Realist perspectives, as discussed by John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, emphasize power politics and strategic interests. Liberal perspectives, represented by scholars like Anne-Marie Slaughter, focus on the role of international institutions and the liberal international order. Constructivist analyses (Hopf, T., 2016) explore the identity and normative dimensions of the conflict, including the competing national narratives of Russia and Ukraine.

Main results of the research.

The impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war can be noticed in many ways; however, from the international security perspective, two of them are particularly important: structural and normative. The war is revealing and changing the global, regional and bilateral balance of power, and is thus transforming the international system. It is also changing the norms and undermining existing regimes – what's often referred to as a 'rule-based order'. The war is not so much making all the rules obsolete but suggests the normality of its own. In that sense it is the conflict over the future of international order.

The structural dimension of the war is manifested in transformations within the international system. Not all of them have been caused by the war; however, many have been triggered, accelerated or reinforced. To assess transformations of international system I'll be turning to a neorealist IR framework with its emphasis on a structural level of analysis. A neorealist approach to the Russian-Ukrainian war is focusing on power transitions, relative strength of the poles, concentration of power and the way these developments impose frameworks on states' decision-making (Mearsheimer, J., 2022; Walt, S., 2023). The way power is distributed and how states perceive such distribution are fundamental parameters of international security from a realist perspective.

The Russian-Ukrainian war exemplifies both the consequences and catalysts of shifts in the global balance of power. The conflict's impact on the international system is multifaceted: it not only influences the global distribution of power but also illuminates existing power dynamics. According to neorealist theory, international security is fundamentally shaped by the distribution of power among major actors, particularly great powers (Waltz, K., 2010). However, assessing this balance presents significant challenges.

One traditional method of gauging power distribution is through the outcomes of recent conflicts. Yet, interstate wars are increasingly rare, and conflicts between great powers have been absent since World War II. This rarity renders the balance of power an often speculative and indeterminate concept, undermining its reliability as a cornerstone of international security. This inherent ambiguity fosters a pervasive sense of uncertainty within the international system. Uncertainty regarding the relative power potentials of states can itself be a significant factor in international (in)stability. Governments inclined toward risk-taking, for various reasons, may be tempted to test their strength in practical scenarios. Challengers might overestimate their own power while underestimating that of established hegemony. But what was the real balance of power on the eve of the war?

Recent developments offer preliminary insights into the current distribution of power. Wars tend to make existing power distributions more explicit, and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has elucidated several key aspects. It has exposed the limits of the West's capabilities, highlighted the extent of European soft and normative power, and underscored the dynamics of the 'West versus the Rest' confrontation. Additionally, the conflict has revealed both the weaknesses and strengths of Russia.

The evolving balance of power, both globally and regionally, has become more discernible. It is evident that Western hegemony, while still influential, is no longer as overwhelming as it once was. Concurrently, China has demonstrated a reluctance to fully align with Russia's aggressive revisionism, despite shared strategic goals aimed at altering the international order. These observations suggest a more complex and multipolar global power structure.

The ongoing war is also highlighting the presence of elements of bipolarity in today's world, evidenced by conceptual divides such as the Global North vs. Global South and democracies vs. autocracies. These divisions are further reinforced by the distribution of material capabilities, with the United States and China being the only two states surpassing a 15% share of global GDP.

However, this bipolarity is only partial, as the contemporary world features more than two significant poles.

The relevance of multipolarity is increasingly acknowledged. Many leaders of major powers perceive a world characterized by political diversity, a dispersion of power, and competition among multiple centers of influence (Scholz, O., 2022/2023). Furthermore, power in today's world is not as heavily concentrated in the hands of states; non-state actors are gaining more influence, resources, and agenda-setting capabilities.

In this context, the future positions of the European Union, as well as countries like India, Saudi Arabia, and Brazil, will significantly impact the evolving architecture of international security. The decline of American hegemony, alongside China's rise, the steady growth of nations like India, and the sustained influence of traditional poles such as the EU and Japan, suggest a coexistence of several great powers within an increasingly diversified political setting. Nevertheless, the hard power dominance of the US and China has made expectations of a new bipolarity widespread.

Polarity is traditionally defined by the distribution of material capabilities among states, yet it also encompasses the readiness and ability of states to project military power and leverage these capabilities to influence the behavior of others. The Russian-Ukrainian war serves as a critical test of both this readiness and ability. The outcomes of this conflict will be crucial in shaping the future system of international security. The war represents not only a clash of military forces but also a struggle for international leadership, strategic vision, and coalition-building.

Moreover, significant conflicts do more than reveal the existing balance of power; they actively alter it. Understanding shifts in the global balance of power is essential from both static and dynamic perspectives. The static perspective focuses on identifying the current operational international system, while the dynamic perspective involves monitoring and managing power transitions. The implications of these shifts are profound, affecting how power is distributed and exercised on the global stage.

The Russian-Ukrainian war has emerged as a significant catalyst for polarization within the international system. Prior to this conflict, technological advancements and the evolution of political institutions contributed to the dispersion of power, diminishing the extent of state control over substantial segments of the global economy and material capabilities. This diffusion of power has been further bolstered by a network of international multilateral institutions, several robust international regimes, and what constructivist scholars might term an 'international society'—a set of widely accepted norms, rules, and procedures (Wendt, A., 1999).

An important structural feature of international politics in the past two decades revolves around the contentious status of American supremacy. On one hand, the United States has indisputably held the mantle of the most potent state globally. Yet, on the other hand, its position of hegemony has gradually eroded. American supremacy has traditionally rested upon a substantial share of the world economy, a commanding lead in military expenditures, the capacity to project power on a global scale, and an extensive network of allies. However, these material capabilities have not automatically translated into the influence necessary to sway the decisions of other actors—an essence of power as articulated by Dahl (Dahl, R., 1957). Unlike the 1990s, the United States has relinquished control over the outcomes of politically significant recent events, such as Russia's annexation of Crimea or the protracted conflict in Afghanistan.

The relative decline in American power capabilities has engendered elements of multipolarity within the international system. This multipolar balance of power has traditionally underpinned international security through the collective dominance of Western powers and a network of security commitments spanning Western multilateral alliances and specific nations. This arrangement has been further fortified by containment strategies at regional levels. Additionally, several international regimes have been established to mitigate the risks associated with direct military confrontations, including those pertaining to nuclear non-proliferation and arms control. Despite the design of a global system of international security aimed at averting major conflicts, it has, regrettably, failed to prevent the eruption of a significant war in Europe.

The enduring impact of Russia's war in Ukraine on the global balance of power remains to be seen. The war has induced shifts in the framework of expectations guiding state behavior and has accelerated major structural developments, notably in the realm of coalition-building. While the

United States has augmented its prospects for reclaiming global leadership, the conversion of these prospects into tangible political influence is still unclear.

Examining the dynamics of power transition through the lens of power transition theory yields valuable insights into how regional crises can precipitate transformations in global orders, particularly when aligned with a sustained trend of hegemonic decline (Organski, A., 1968). This theoretical perspective posits that global security is preserved as long as status quo powers substantially outweigh challengers. Typically, status quo powers coalesce in some form of collective hegemony, comprising states that derive maximal benefits from extant rules, structures, and institutions. However, as the gap between status quo powers and challengers narrows, the risks to international security escalate. Challengers may resort to aggressive revisionism if they overestimate their capabilities or underestimate those of the established status quo powers. The Russian-Ukrainian war has exemplified such inaccuracies in assessing the balance of power, accompanied by Russia's willingness to test Western hegemony, which may portend the onset of a profound crisis in international security precipitated by anticipated or actual power transitions.

From such a perspective, the erosion of the international security architecture at the global level has been perceptible as the disparity between status-quo powers and potential challengers has diminished. The sustained ascendance of China, strategically propelled by the implementation of the One Belt, One Road initiative since 2013 (Kim, W., Gates, S., 2015), alongside the consolidation of Russia during the 2000s—facilitating Vladimir Putin's enunciation of a revisionist trajectory in his 2007 Munich speech and subsequent invasion of Georgia—may represent pivotal junctures. The Russian-Ukrainian war serves as a constituent element within a continuum of regional conflicts, emblematic of the broader global crisis in international security stemming from shifts in the balance of power.

Efforts to sustain the post-Cold War international order have strained and depleted the United States' power. Preserving and augmenting U.S. global influence necessitated meticulous management of its considerable yet finite resources and attendant risks. Confronting the complexities of managing client states engendered a conundrum, requiring discernment in delineating appropriate measures and optimal responses, particularly concerning arms provisions, security assurances, and financial assistance (Yarhi-Milo, K., Lanoszka, A., Cooper, Z., 2016). The crisis of leadership engendered a more circumspect approach by the United States at the regional level, alongside an intensified focus on strategic partnership with the European Union and strategic competition with China. Involvement in regional security issues became progressively more fraught. Nevertheless, the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 transcended mere regional security concerns, constituting a direct affront to the foundational principles of the international order. The United States was compelled to augment its engagement in the conflict, transcending its initial characterization as a bilateral dispute with Russia to become enmeshed within the broader global competition paradigm.

The annexation of Crimea and subsequent full-scale invasion by Russia have markedly impacted the European Union's global posture. Since 2014, the Union has grappled with the imperative to formulate a novel modus operandi in its relations with Russia—one that would preclude Russia's further attempts to destabilize Europe, while simultaneously preserving room for stable and predictable coexistence. Despite the imposition of sanctions, Russia has remained a pivotal trade partner for the EU, particularly regarding energy resource supplies. Notwithstanding these measures, several European countries have continued to support the construction of Nord Stream-2, a new gas pipeline, until mere weeks before the invasion. Consequently, Russia has continued to wield significant influence in the strategic planning of the EU and its foremost member-states, such as Germany and France.

However, the Russian-Ukrainian war has precipitated a paradigm shift in this dynamic. The EU has notably diminished its reliance on Russia for energy supplies and has acknowledged Russia's role as a threat to European security. This shift underscores the EU's recalibration of its strategic priorities and its endeavor to assert greater autonomy in matters of energy security and geopolitical strategy.

China's strategic interests are intricately entwined with the outcome of the Russian-Ukrainian war, presenting a significant challenge to Beijing's geopolitical calculus. In the short term, China stands to gain from the ongoing conflict through the accrual of enhanced influence over Russia, cheap

supply of Russian energy resources, and expanded access to the Russian market. However, these perceived gains are counterbalanced by the attendant risks, notably the consolidation of Western alliances and the concomitant deterioration of China's relations with its primary trade partners, the European Union and the United States.

The war has exerted a profound impact on global security arrangements in three fundamental ways. Firstly, it has disrupted the institutional underpinnings of global security by undermining several international regimes and organizations, most notably those governing strategic arms control, nuclear non-proliferation, and institutions such as the United Nations and the OSCE, thereby fostering the potential escalation of regional crises and exacerbating tensions among major powers.

Secondly, the war is poised to precipitate a recalibration of the balance of power among key global poles, heralding a potential restructuring of the international system. A pivotal juncture in the trajectory towards either bipolarity or the consolidation of Western alliances and influence, the conflict assumes significance as a systemic game-changer.

Lastly, the war has undermined the foundational principles of a rules-based international order, which had hitherto served as a bulwark against large-scale conventional conflicts in Europe and the annexation of territories belonging to neighboring states. This erosion engenders diminished trust and heightened security dilemmas across all echelons of international politics, exacerbating uncertainties and vulnerabilities within the global security landscape.

From a normative and institutional perspectives, the Russian-Ukrainian war is about the future of international order. While international system and balance of power are operationalized within realism, to grasp the concept of order one might turn to constructivism and the English school.

Within these approaches, order is used to denote a set of instruments and rules, with which an international society seeks preserving itself. Why do norms, rules and institutions which promote them emerge? From a realist perspective, the reason is that the egoistic interests of states coincide from time to time. However, according to Headley Bull, the reason is different: there is a common good, which states perceive much like the way people do in a society (Bull, H., 1977). Just the way people agree on simple things, e.g. who's calling back if the call has been disrupted, states can also establish basic principles. They channel some efforts to establishing and maintaining an international order that would be based on the common recognition, for instance, that each state's survival and security depend on the general willingness to restrict the use of force or respect sovereignty and territorial integrity. States agree to exert common efforts with a view to ensuring adherence to such basic institutes as diplomacy or law. Among the major elements or manifestations of the world order, Bull mentions the balance of power, international law, diplomacy, war and great powers. Of a particular interest is the difference between international and world order. The former refers to the interstate level of relations whereas the latter concerns all levels, including that of some people's personal interests. Such a take on international order was to integrate states' interests and human rights into a single whole. While neorealism focuses on structure, an essential element of the English School's theoretical views is the concept of change. Contrary to realists, who associate changes in the international system with shifts in the correlation of power among states, the English School pays attention to normative shifts leading to changes in how states perceive their own interests, rules and norms.

One more important aspect of understanding international order is linked to theory of regimes. The Russian-Ukrainian war is doing a lot of damage for some of them, most importantly of nuclear non-proliferation and armaments control.

A regime is considered to consist of formal and informal principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a specific area of international relations (Krasner, S., 1983). A regime is a particular case of an international institution. It is established through a set of norms and procedures with a view to making relations among actors more predictable and less anarchic, e.g. the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The presence of a regime results in more transparency, predictability and stability of states' interaction.

International organizations, in some ways similar to international regimes, are also elements of international order. A regime can thus be understood as a specific type of international institutions that can take the form of an international organization, but only when embodies the norms and rules of interaction in a certain area.

Finally, within the context of the international order, especially ‘rules-based’, the notion of rules is important. It may be rather problematic to establish what those rules are, especially when they are informal. If rules are not legal norms, they can be taken as certain principles, which guide decision-making of states. But in that case every motivation is a certain rule for a certain state. A revisionist state, which challenges the world order by violating seemingly universal, but not always written, rules of conduct, is also guided by some principles or, to better put it, preferences. However, instead of being related to agreements among states, these rules are more linked with egoistic interests, the logic of power-based interaction among states, the understanding of tendencies and regularities of world politics or the assessment of the structure of the international system. Breaking the rules in an anarchical society may seem quite paradoxical. From the institutionalist viewpoint, international order, which is a mode of arranging of the international system through introducing formal or informal rules and procedures, may be considered a combination of functioning international regimes.

Russia’s invasion to Ukraine is challenging existing agreements, social arrangements, norms, procedures and regimes – and thus it is challenging international order.

First, it is doing so by denying territorial integrity and sovereignty, two fundamental norms of existing geopolitical arrangements. In fact, Moscow has undermined these principles earlier, in Ukraine in 2014 and in Georgia in 2008. But a full-scale invasion takes these efforts to the highest point, making this war different from other military conflicts of the post-Cold War era.

Second, Russia’s invasion is restoring the value of and demand for military component of power. Military might is once again proving to be a costly but effective power resource. As a result of this war, states are reconsidering their investments into and understanding of security. Extended military power projection capabilities are once again becoming a hard currency in international politics – and a key resource at times when international order is shrinking. Maintaining effective military seems to provide extended benefits, while non-military tools of containment seem much less powerful. Countries are increasing their defense budgets and boost military production – while expecting others to do the same. Military capabilities and the ability to project them are becoming cumulative power assets. Maintaining military advantage is perceived as a crucial condition for survival or success of nations in international politics. Although arms races not necessarily lead to wars, management of security in a highly militarized context would require much more skill and effort.

Third, nuclear weapons are gaining new meaning and value, while nuclear weapons non-proliferation regime is weakening. Ukraine, which voluntarily gave up 176 IBMs, several dozens of strategic bombers, about 1800 nuclear warheads – third largest nuclear capacity in the world overall in exchange for security guarantees, lost a part of its territory. That posed for many a question about whether a nuclear disarmament brings about more security or undermines it. As a powerful component of hard power capabilities, nuclear weapons may become more demanded. Weakening of a non-proliferation regime, which has been underway for a while already, may bring about tactics of brinkmanship, threats and resulting rise of tensions, both regionally and globally. In a world of arms races and weak/absent regimes for weapons control, a war is becoming more immediate danger.

Along with that, Moscow’s hinted nuclear threats before and during invasion to Ukraine imply that whoever can make those threats credible gets a huge advantage. For a nuclear threat to be credible, the more the better rule applies. From now on nuclear armaments race becomes a rational choice for those seeking more security or expansion. Threshold countries may find the best response to the rules of a new international order in seeking nuclear weapons.

Fourth, international security organizations are under threat of becoming obsolete. The UN, OSCE and many other international security institutions failed to impose enough additional costs on Moscow’s decision-making before the war, as well as failed to make Russia stop the war. Apparent weakness of international organizations in what concerned prevention and/or managing large-scale violence makes states seek other options. Progressive insufficiency of international norms and regimes promotes restoration of realist thinking in international politics, with its emphasis on hard power, zero-sum competitions and mistrust. Coalitions may prove to be much more important and effective than international organizations.

In that regard, the Russian-Ukrainian war is affecting multilateral institutions like NATO and the EU and redefining their role in the regional security setting. NATO's importance has been on the rise since annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. The Alliance has taken several steps to strengthen its military presence in Eastern Europe, ensure trust, and contain possible Russia's aggression against any member-state. Exercises have become larger and more often. New types of threats, including cyber and hybrid, have been addressed. After Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, NATO's consolidation continued. The Alliance expanded with Finland and Sweden joining. It put an emphasis on a threat from Russia and established closer relations with partner countries, most importantly Ukraine. NATO is also strengthening its Eastern flank. Credibility of security guarantees within the Alliance goes up; the same is true about NATO's technical, financial and military capabilities. When it comes to providing international security after the war, NATO is going to play a crucial role (NATO, 2022).

EU's also facing significant challenges. The war has revealed the Union's unpreparedness for a long-term military standoff and, more generally, its lack of hard-power resources and power-projection capabilities. A strategy built on expansion of European normative influence largely failed. The Union is facing a strategic dilemma of either restructuring its whole approach to managing regional security or remaining vulnerable to ongoing transformations of the international order. The former would entail revision of policy towards Russia and China, long-term increase in military spending and hard power capabilities, less emphasis on multilateral international institutions and, possibly, changes of decision-making procedures inside the Union.

Transformation of the role of international institutions, as well as undermining of fundamental principles of international politics are signaling about normative changes and are at the heart of the struggle for protecting a 'rules-based international order'. In an anarchical setting of the international system, it is quite difficult to introduce transparency, trust and predictability among states through norms. At the same time, it is much easier to undermine all that. A prolonged large-scale war in the heart of Europe is doing exactly that: undermining current international arrangements. A failure to prevent the war means that usual international security tools are no longer reliable, while growing competition among great powers points at increased probability of other wars in the future. Are wars becoming normal again?

For more than three decades since the end of the Cold War, international political scene has been dominated by intrastate low-intensity conflicts, while interstate wars have been exceptionally rare and mostly concentrated in Asia. Splashes of violence in protracted conflicts, like those between India and Pakistan or Armenia and Azerbaijan, were rather semi-frozen conflicts out of control than 20-century style large wars; and the absence of institutionalized large-scale interstate violence has become a characteristic feature of international security.

High price of a war has been an important element of the international order. What can become an element of a new order is states' readiness to launch wars regardless their price. Russia's war in Ukraine costs hundreds of billions dollars of annual direct spending; with long-term structural effects for the economy and distant impact of sanctions also to be taken into account. Moscow opted for a war not because it was cheap, but regardless of how expensive it might have been. The rise of the global competition among great powers may be accompanied by a growing risk of interstate warfare. That competition is displayed at several levels. On the global level it is about challenging international order and shifting balance of power. On the regional level it is manifested in proxy wars and opposition of the alliances. On the national level it can reinforce ideological standoffs and promote institutional changes inside states. The danger of this war is that it changes the way states perceive intentions of each other and see the ways to enhance their security. It shifts security paradigms and undermines established norms. By doing so, it not only endangers Ukraine, neighboring countries or Europe as a whole; but increases chances of further destabilization.

The Russian-Ukrainian war has affected international order at several levels and in many ways. It has deteriorated security environment by generating suspicion and fear. It has weakened multilateral international institutions and usual frameworks for security cooperation. It pushed large powers in Europe to reconsider their security strategies and reassess challenges and threats.

Conclusions.

Both international system and international order have been strongly affected by the Russian-Ukrainian war. Although structural transformations and changes of institutional setting can be seen separately for analytical purposes, they are intertwined and reinforcing one another.

Structurally, the war is shifting the global balance of power and speeds up the trends set earlier by the rise of China and deterioration of the American leadership. International system is drifting towards bipolarity – or is already there. The war consolidated the process and added a stronger ideological component to already existing power competition between US and China, or between coalitions of status quo protectors and challengers.

The war can also be seen from a power transition perspective as a dangerous case of revisionism, marking a chain of destabilizing events leading to increased instability of the international system.

Institutionally, the war is a game-changer. It has the potential to undermine some most important rules and regimes of international conduct. Renewed significance of military force, denial of territorial integrity and deterioration of nuclear non-proliferation are among most important shifts in international order. These are accompanied by weakening of international organizations and regimes of multilateral cooperation and trust, which have been important for a post-Cold War neoliberal security paradigm. The role of these organizations and regimes is likely to be retaken by alliances and coalitions.

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