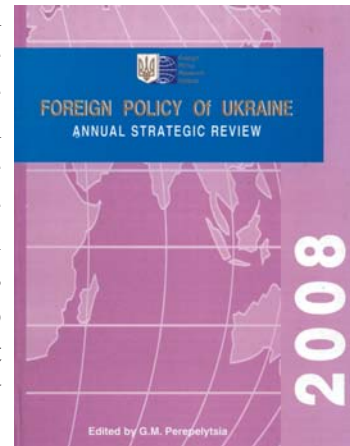


STRUCTURAL IMPERATIVES OF FOREIGN POLICY OF UKRAINE



The place of Ukraine in the modern system of international relations is defined in the following dimensions: research of the status of the system international relations; correlation between the system of foreign policy objectives of Ukraine and the international environment in which these objectives are to be achieved; Ukraine's ability to concentrate resources for the consistent implementation of its foreign policy strategy.



By its potential Ukraine ranks among the medium states and its foreign policy actions are localized mostly on meso-levels of the international relations system. This predetermines a relay nature of systematic impacts when defining the place of Ukraine: first, general trends of the system on a global level and trends' specifics on regional levels are defined; and then the counter reaction of Ukraine to this impact (mostly within the limits of regional subsystems) is defined.

As a medium-level state Ukraine has inadequate structural power to significantly influence the processes in a global international relations system. Therefore, in the context of global processes, the main objective of the foreign policy strategy of Ukraine is an understanding of and an adequate reaction to structural imperatives of global policy aimed at materializing potential opportunities and top priority vital national interests: survival and gradual development of Ukraine as a sovereign state in the context of the dynamism of the modern system of international relations.

Unlike the case with the global international system, Ukraine's structural power is sufficient to influence the process of the formation and development of the regional European subsystem of international relations. From the moment of its independence, Ukraine has been an important element in the European political landscape. On the sub-regional level of the international relations system Ukraine preserves the status of a leading state that creates the «critical mass» for the implementation of significant Eurasian projects: in Eastern and South Eastern Europe, Baltic-Black Sea and Black Sea-Caspian regions, etc.

For Ukraine the year 2008 was marked by numerous foreign policy challenges (at both regional and global level) predetermined by a critical mass of changes accumulated over the last years. These changes resulted in a high «crisis nature» of Ukraine's foreign policy characterized by a number of strategic dilemmas which were to be resolved under conditions of time deficit and high «price of the issue».

The variety and multiplicity of these changes can be assigned to several major groups: changes of polarity and correlation of forces; change in hierarchy level of global and regional systems; changes in the degree of homogeneity/heterogeneity of global policy.

The impact of such structural changes revealed itself at the level of global structural shifts, regional transformations, and local challenges. The combination of these signals creates the nature of structural imperatives of state foreign policy and determines the key parameters of its «road map». From this point of view the following question tends to be of critical importance: do the theory and practice of Ukraine's foreign policy keep pace with the fast transformation dynamics of the structure of global and European regional systems of international relations?

Over the last years the most significant changes in the system of international relations were related not to the transformation of institutes and regimes of «cold war» times (as it was in the Nineties of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century), but to a new dynamic of global and regional processes aimed at a restructuring of world hierarchy and establishment of a new balance of forces both globally and in separate regions of the world. Major system-level conflict in international relations in the first decade of the 21st century is related to the aspirations of certain states that significantly strengthened their economic, military, and political potential and greatly enhanced their impact on global policy, and attempts of the recognized world leaders to retain their dominant role on the international scene.

This trend revealed itself in a relative decline of US hegemony, the global system's shift to a new type of multi-polarity, transformation of several inter-state political institutes at global and regional level, and an intensification of ideological struggle in the midst of growing international heterogeneity.

The US hegemony crisis is a lasting phenomenon which will predetermine the landscape of world politics over a long period of time. After September 2001, the decline of American domination seemed to be the period of «organized chaos»: the momentum of US power and the powerful influence of common Euro-Atlantic values guaranteed a relatively peaceful transition period. However, the 2008 global financial crisis brought about significant changes and shook the balance of powers that took shape after the beginning of the Iraq war. It creates the conditions which significantly increase the risk of system destabilization in general and various adventurous foreign policy steps in particular.

Over the last few years the international system has been seeking such a way of self-organization that would compensate the lack of American power. Until recently, among several possible models characterized by different degrees of cooperation/competition/opposition, preference was given to a sort of multi-polarity with relatively low antagonism levels predetermined by the strengthening of such a structural parameter as growing mutual dependence and mutual integration in the international system.

G 20 is an obvious example. The establishment of this international institution is fully associated with the trend towards redistribution of influence among the leading world powers. It was the G 20 format rather than G 8 which was selected as an appropriate format to discuss at the highest level the ways for overcoming the global financial crisis. Possible scenarios include both expanding the G8 format and the parallel competitive existence of such formats as G 8, G 20, BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) etc.

Both the East and the West are seeking alternative ways to enhance their influence on international policy outside the scope of previously established institutions. Specifically, in the last few years Russia managed to bring to summit level meetings in the format of Russian Federation-China-India (RCI) and make systematic the activity of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SOC). In opposition to the idea of the second administration of President Bush regarding the creation of global and several regional organizations of democratic states (de facto - an alternative to UNO), lately the representatives of the US Democratic Party pursued the idea of small coalitions within which the USA (along with certain other leading world nations) must resolve specific comprehensive issues of a global and regional nature. Particularly illustrative in this respect was the proposal of Zbignev Bzhezinskij regarding the creation of the «Group of

Two», composed of the USA and China, to resolve key issues of global politics. This coalition may allow the USA to gain control over the increasing power of China and compensate the losses of its own image in the world arena.

Moreover, an ideological component of structural transformation does not contribute towards improved stability. By activating another dimension of political confrontation, it «brings back to life» the identity conflicts (first of all religious and ethnic conflicts) thus undermining not only global or regional stability, but also the national security of separate states.

For Ukraine sharp transformations in the system of international relations resulted in an increased number and an aggravation of foreign policy challenges. These challenges are further aggravated by the global financial crisis, the Russian-Georgian War, Ukraine-Russia gas conflict, problems in Ukraine's relations with the EU and NATO, and Ukraine's loss of its regional leadership status position.

In the political dimension a global financial crisis has three major consequences: first, for a long time the state reduces its unconditional leadership among players in international relations - mostly due to the decreasing role of international organizations, regimes and integration groups, i.e. all institutions which are the products of states' policy (under conditions of shortage of funds and reduction of budget expenditures the states will cut the funding of all international projects); second, the states will be ever more inclined towards selfish behavior (which is predetermined by the need for financial mobilization); third, international cooperation will experience the revision of quantitative and qualitative parameters towards regional and sub-regional levels, which will precondition the increased political influence of regional leaders.

For Ukraine (already a strong possibility) this would mean the crisis of a total reliance on Western institutions as the imperative of Ukrainian foreign policy. In the near future Ukraine, just like the majority of world nations, will face the following policy realities: a) low - compared to the previous periods - readiness of other states to assist Ukraine in the protection of its national interests (except situations when Ukraine is part of the vital interests of other states); b) revision of the contents and structure of regional cooperation entailing the establishment of clear boundaries of integration groupings and regional organizations. As a result, Ukraine may find itself outside the boundaries of such regions (most expressly - outside Central and Eastern Europe and the EU region) which will lead to a limited format of cooperation with respective institutions.

Decreasing oil prices (as well as prices for other energy carriers) caused by the global financial crisis will have restricting political consequences for Ukraine. Investment in mineral exploration and energy infrastructure will reduce (at least, it is unlikely to increase). As a result, the practical activity of leading energy companies in the development of alternative routes for transportation of energy carriers will also reduce. Only the EU is really interested in the development of new transportation routes. However, unlike the US, the EU has no leverage on energy companies to compensate the reduced economic efficiency of projects.

Along with the decrease of the investment attractiveness of Central Asia and Caspian Region, the weakened position of alternative projects for transportation of energy carriers will lead to a significant decrease of the role of Black Sea and Black Sea -Caspian areas in the organization of transit. This will lead to structural shifts in Ukraine's international environment: US and EU involvement in political and economic projects will decrease, the influence of Russia and Turkey will increase, and, what is most important, room to maneuver for the region's medium level states (and first of all for Ukraine) will be significantly reduced.

The decrease of Ukraine's weight in the structure of international relations, combined with domestic instability and uncertainty of the leading external players of Ukrainian political space (USA and Russia) regarding the selection of priority partners in the Ukrainian political establishment, may lead to the increased probability of direct agreements (regarding Ukraine) between these two players without the involvement of any Ukrainian politicians. This will make

Ukraine the object of international relations. At first glance, this trend is moment-driven by its nature and is related to future elections in Ukraine. However, it might have long lasting consequences if the USA and Russia meet halfway and agree not to oppose each other. This, de facto, will create a condominium of two states in resolving foreign policy problems of post-Soviet states, which can take the shape of a structural imperative in the region.

In this respect the Russian-Georgian war is quite illustrative. A great nuclear power was a direct participant of this conflict. If it was not Russia but some other state, the reaction of the United States would have been much tougher.

Anyway, this conflict was highly illustrative from a political point of view. It emphasized certain important trends of the modern international relations system. Specifically, after the attempts to form a dominated world environment the world is coming back again to the fragmentation of political space. In a war involving a nuclear power - a permanent member of the UN Security Council - most of the countries refrained from stating their own position on the origin of the conflict and limited themselves to expressing their regret about the conflict.

In the case of all the leading players in international politics (from leading EU member states to Japan, India, and China), their own selfish interests prevailed over the aspirations towards a universal security regime in the world or specific region.

This conflict also provided evidence of the renaissance of the policy of force and the use of armed forces as an effective foreign policy instrument. The inability of the international community to interfere with a conflict and stop it (proved many times over the last years and repeated lately during the military operation of Israel in the Gaza Strip) evidences that - at least in a contemporary world - large powers and regional leaders can resort to force to demonstrate their status and protect their own interests.

For Ukraine this experience proves the absolute danger of confrontation scenarios in relations with great powers (first of all, with Russia) and lack of any international guarantees in case of direct conflict with such states. Asymmetry in Ukraine-Russian relations remains uncompensated and runs contrary to the interests of Ukraine. Under these conditions Kyiv has to seek a systematic compromise with Russia. Pursuing the confrontation policy and the so-called policy for «promotion of democracy» in the post-soviet area in the spirit of an old American administration, can lead to a worsening of relations with the majority of countries that prefer a dialogue with Russia, as well as result in the loss of privileged relations with such countries and marginalization of Ukraine in the European space.

Transformation dynamics in the structure of the European regional system of international relations is no less deep and turbulent. First, significant weakening of American domination results in a transformation of the trilateral balance EU-Russia-USA into a bilateral structure of a new (mostly cooperative) EU-Russia structure. This is exactly the structure that transforms into the imperative for resolution of principal problems of European policy: conflicts in the Caucasus and Transnistria, energy security, crisis of regional organizations and security regimes etc. It is this format that has a decisive influence on the positioning of Ukraine in the European space: problems related to the plan for preparation for NATO membership and actual NATO membership, EU Eastern policy and status of the EU neighbor or associated partner, status of a transit state and gas conflict with Russia.

Second, geopolitical and geostrategic discrepancies between the USA and the EU deepened. The EU has different geopolitical projects both in global politics and on the European continent. This leads to aggravated competition between the two «cornerstones» of Euro-Atlanticism for maintaining a strategic dialogue with Russia, influence on Eastern Europe, as well as further transformation of NATO and reorganization of general European security structure. It creates conceptually a new political environment for Ukraine and new alternatives for foreign policy orientation: to speed up the process of accession to NATO and ascertain its place in

Euro-Atlantic space, or, considering objective differences between the processes of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, to focus on «European identity» and the «European choice» of Ukraine and seek its place in the unified Europe.

Third, «strategic pause» in further expansion of the European Union became a fact. Despite the continuing rhetoric on «open doors», the Eastern policy of the EU and principal provisions of future Agreement on association with Ukraine became the official reaction of the European Union to the completion of the expansion process. For Ukraine, another consequence of such a policy will be the return of the EU to the practice of the delegation of powers to its separate members interested in the development of a respective area of EU policy. In case of Ukraine these «authorized representatives» will be Poland and Baltic states. As a result, the intensity of the dialogue with Brussels and some European capitals will decrease and the subjective factor of Warsaw and Poland's influence on Ukraine will, on the contrary, increase.

Fourth, change of the role and modality of policy of great European states is another key structural challenge for Ukraine. In 2008, due to frustration with the inability of the Eastern Europe member states to depart from national selfishness and promote consolidation of the European Union, as well as realizing the inability of the United States of America to unilaterally regulate economic and political processes in the world, France, Germany and Italy have seen the revival of the trend for a strengthening of their independent role and the renaissance of great power ideas.

Over a long period of time Ukraine's policy with regard to leading European states was based on the imperative of accession to the EU and NATO. Unreadiness or unwillingness on the part of these organizations to further discuss these problems can lead to decreased interest in Ukraine if the latter fails to offer cooperation in areas that would meet the interests of European «grandees» (considering their vision of the transformation of the European international-political region).

Fifth, Russia is strengthening its position as Europe's political, economic, and energy «center of balance». Despite the fact that (compared to the EU) Russia has much less attributive and attractive potential, it is a centralized great power formation capable (as demonstrated by the events of 2008) of pursuing a more consolidated and mobile strategy, including aggressive use of force in both «soft» and «hard» formats. Consolidation of post-Soviet space will take place mostly around Russia. At the same time it should be born in mind that it is Ukraine that creates «critical mass» for the success of significant geopolitical projects in the post-Soviet area. In principle, it secures for Ukraine a significant resource for pursuing an active policy both in the region in general and with regard to Russia in particular. Reactivation of this resource requires the achievement of a systematic compromise with Russia based on an understanding of both the high mutual dependence of these two states, and differences in the levels of interests and potential for their realization: formation of a global geopolitical code for Russia and regional geopolitical code for Ukraine.

Thus, transformation processes in global and European policy significantly influence foreign policy behavior of separate elements/states of international systems. Therefore increased pressure on Ukraine simultaneously by Russia, the USA, and the EU is not just the consequence of mistakes of Ukrainian foreign policy, but rather the result of changes in the configuration of forces on both global and regional-European levels.

The aggregate of these changes and challenges put to doubt the effectiveness of the foreign policy strategy of Ukraine. Instead of developing a consistent and realistic strategy that would allow the government to bring to order and pragmatically balance Ukraine's relations with NATO, the EU, and Russia, strengthen the personality of Ukraine in European policy, prevent or neutralize specific threats to national security resulting from destabilization in the Black Sea region, and the financial and energy crisis, Ukrainian diplomacy in 2008 can be characterized

by resonant steps in the area of «soft force» - organization of the visit of the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Forum dedicated to Holodomor (Famine) of 1932-1933. But was the prioritization correct in the context of actual political, economic, and security related processes in the world and in Europe?

Of course, the reasons for a weak foreign policy for Ukraine in 2008 are related to internal problems. A state that lacks an attractive model of economic, political, and social development cannot play the role of a regional leader. Likewise, the activity of the Organization for Democratic and Economic Development - GUAM (that includes countries that rank 53rd, 62nd, 104th and 135th in the democratization rating of the world nations) cannot be effective. It will be impossible to integrate into the European development model without changes in the «internal life» of Ukraine. Likewise, it will be impossible for Ukraine to become a full-fledged element of the European security system.

Preserving significant delays in the domestic «European transformation» of Ukraine leads to an intensification of the «scissors effect» in the development vectors of Ukraine and European countries. This can have grave strategic consequences, bring to nothing Ukraine's ability to implement its Euro-Atlantic policy line, and keep Ukraine for a long time in the shadow of Russia's center of gravity.

The last years have clearly demonstrated the trend towards a transformation of Eastern Europe into a major geostrategy epicenter of the activity of world powers in the Eurasian region.

Stabilization and structuring of this region (a key region in the world hierarchy of geopolitical spaces in the times of that classicist of geopolitics, Sir Halford John Mackinder) based on the model of a respected world leader ranks among the top priority objectives of the leading world centers of influence - the EU, the USA, and Russia. Increased competition of these models is already observed now and Ukraine becomes one of the most important objects of this competition. Under such difficult and strained conditions, this represents one of the greatest challenges for the foreign policy strategy of Ukraine.

This situation is a challenge for Ukraine and has both its «disadvantages» and «advantages». Disadvantages include the risk of the escalation of conflict differences between the «poles» and general destabilization of the European region, which entails the threat of a catastrophic reduction of space for foreign policy maneuver by Ukraine and its increased dependence on the leading international players. The advantage is that under conditions of a renaissance of multi-polar balance policy, Ukraine will gain new opportunities for protection of its interests. In practice it means finding a rational balance among the concepts of «multi-vector approach», «non-participation in any alliances», «European choice», «European» and «Euro-Atlantic integration», «Eurasian vector» etc., which can result in the need to shape a new paradigm of Ukraine's foreign policy. This can also lead to the initiation of such a geopolitical project, in implementation of which Ukraine could play a constructive integrating role corresponding to its potential and geopolitical status.

Considering the above, the project for the formation of the Great Europe (a stable regional structure of inter-state relations within the framework of which Ukraine will realize its vital interests) may become the basic concept and instrument of Ukraine's European policy. The Great Europe paradigm must give back to Ukraine its natural place in the center of general European processes, its natural role as a unifying element and system-forming segment, rather than the role of peripheral element and sanitary buffer. This project is aimed at increasing the influence and role of Ukraine in achieving and enhancing the unity of Europe.