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UKRAINE'S PATH TO THE EUROPEAN UNION: THE EVOLUTION OF SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY IN THE PERIOD 2014–2022

This article explores the intricate dynamics of Ukraine's European integration within the realm of security and defense, against the backdrop of Russian aggression. It delves into Ukraine's strategic shift post-2014, driven by the imperative to counter external threats and ensure national security. The analysis highlights the interplay between Ukraine's pursuit of European integration and the securitization of the Russian threat, revealing a mutual alignment of interests between Ukraine and the EU. The study underscores the significant strides made by Ukraine towards European integration, as evidenced by strategic documents and practical cooperation within the Common Security and Defense Policy and the Eastern Partnership. However, challenges persist, including insufficient attention to security issues in the EU – Ukraine Association Agreement and an emphasis on civilian security aspects in bilateral cooperation. Despite these obstacles, the article emphasizes the deepening convergence between Ukraine and the EU in security affairs, signaling a promising path towards full integration into the European security space, contingent upon sustained political will from both parties.

Key words: *Ukraine, European integration, European Union, national security, security and defense policy, foreign policy, Russian threat, external security, Common Security and Defense Policy.*

Introduction. In the tumultuous landscape of international relations, the trajectory of a nation's journey towards closer integration with supranational entities is often intertwined with strategic imperatives of national security and defense [25; 7]. Nowhere is this intricate interplay more evident than in the case of Ukraine, a state situated at the crossroads of Europe [3; 11], grappling with both aspirations for European integration and persistent security challenges [5].

From the Revolution of Dignity in 2014 to the ensuing years, Ukraine embarked on a transformative journey aimed at aligning itself more closely with the European Union (EU). Central to this endeavor was the restructuring and fortification of its security and defense policies. The events of 2014, including Russia's annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of conflict in Eastern Ukraine, fundamentally reshaped Ukraine's perception of its security landscape and catalyzed a paradigm shift in the strategic thinking of its leadership [16]. Faced with external aggression, Ukraine sought to strengthen its defense capabilities while simultaneously realigning its strategic priorities towards European integration. Integration into the EU is a crucial component of Ukraine's national security strategy, offering a multifaceted response to its security challenges by not only providing economic and political benefits but also bolstering resilience against external pressures.

This article delves into the intricate evolution of Ukraine's security and defense strategy from 2014 to 2022 within the framework of European integration, highlighting its alignment amidst a growing Russian threat. Through a meticulous analysis of both regulatory frameworks and practical implementations, the study aims to offer valuable insights into Ukraine's security landscape and its intricate path to European integration. Fundamentally, this study contends that Ukraine's trajectory towards the EU cannot be divorced from its strategic security calculus; rather, it is intricately intertwined with its pursuit of security amidst a volatile geopolitical terrain. Consequently, this study serves as a critical examination of Ukraine's strategic trajectory, emphasizing the indispensable link between European integration and national security in shaping the country's future within the European community.

To comprehensively explore this subject matter, it is imperative to address the following research question: How does the securitization of the Russian threat influence the process of Ukraine's security integration with the EU, both strategically and practically?

Materials and methods. This study employs a combination of qualitative methods to analyze data concerning the challenges of European integration and strategic issues of national security and defense of Ukraine. The literature review method made it possible to systematize and evaluate the existing literature, enabling the identification of key trends and disparities in approaches to the research topic. This comprehensive analysis served as the foundation for understanding the broader context surrounding European integration and national security issues. The document analysis method was employed to examine legal frameworks governing national security and defense. The review and analysis of official strategic documents made it possible to reveal the Ukrainian authorities' perception of external threats and strategic partners, particularly in the context of European integration as a means to enhance national security. Event analysis was used to consider the key events that affected the process of European integration of Ukraine, with a specific focus on security issues. This approach facilitated the identification and examination of historical events, political shifts, and strategic decisions that influenced Ukraine's integration efforts. Through the synthesis of these research methods, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of legislative measures, policy frameworks, and historical events that have shaped Ukraine's strategic trajectory and its pursuit of European integration.

The theoretical basis of the research

Political realism

Political realism explains the security approaches of states, in that states are the main participants in international relations, and national interests, not by moral or ethical norms, guide their behavior [42]. In this theory, states seek to maximize their interests and security and thus emphasize the military factor of threats [42]. The reason for this approach lies in the peculiarities of human nature, according to which states are aggressive because they are ruled by people with an innate tendency to subjugate others and a desire to maximize power [12].

As a result, the international system has an anarchic character driven by ruthless, cost-benefit-driven states and an absence of a central authority that could resolve conflicts between states. For this reason, states believe that they must rely on their own forces and skills to ensure their defense and security. To ensure its security, a state must either maintain a balance of power independently or forge associations with other states through unions or alliances [7]. The balance of power is a crucial concept within political realism, defined as a mechanism aimed at preventing any single state from attaining such overwhelming power that it can dictate terms to all others [7]. Consequently, states often collaborate to counteract the expansion of revisionist powers, thereby safeguarding international order and equilibrium.

In the present context, the revisionist policy pursued by the Russian Federation represents a direct threat not only to Ukraine but also to the broader EU. As such, Ukraine's integration into the EU is seen as a strategic move to reinforce regional and international stability. By aligning with the EU, Ukraine contributes to the preservation of balance, both regionally and globally, thereby bolstering international order.

The theory of securitization

Securitization theory, developed by the Copenhagen School, focuses on the process through which certain issues or threats are constructed as security concerns [4]. Security can be defined as "the absence of threats, as well as protection against them and confidence resulting from effective measures to prevent or eliminate them" [42]. The generally accepted definition of the concept of threat "is the possibility of the occurrence of one of the negatively assessed phenomena" [41]. In a narrower sense, a threat to national security "is a set of conditions and factors that pose a danger to the vital interests of an individual, society, and the state" [13].

Security is not static but a constant social process in which active subjects try to constantly improve the mechanisms that provide them with a sense of security [42]. Security is an existential

need that is necessary for the existence of the state. In this regard, ensuring security is the primary need of the state in comparison with other goals and values [35]. The presence of threats or the lack of a sense of security causes fear, anxiety, restlessness, and insecurity, which is why the state seeks to influence its external and internal spheres in order to neutralize or at least distance threats [42].

The theory suggests that actors such as the government view specific issues or actions as existential threats to national security, which warrants exceptional measures [2]. Specifically, in the Ukrainian case, securitization theory illuminates the inevitability of European integration as the Ukrainian government securitized the Russian threat, recognizing it as a direct threat to the existence of the state. This securitization process propelled Ukraine towards European integration as a means to bolster its security and sovereignty in the face of perceived external threats.

Ukraine's strategic approach to European integration amidst Russian aggression

The roots of the European integration of Ukraine go back to the 1990s, when in 1993 the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Resolution “On the Main Directions of Ukraine’s Foreign Policy,” in which it was determined that the neutral and non-aligned status of the state must be adapted to new conditions and cannot prevent its participation in the European-wide security structure [20]. From that moment onward, European integration began to be viewed through the lens of national security, recognizing it as a fundamental component thereof.

The de jure European integration of Ukraine unfolded continuously, anchored by foundational documents such as the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Ukraine and the European Communities and their member states (1994)¹, the Strategy for the Integration of Ukraine into the European Union (1998), the Program for the Integration of Ukraine into the European Union (2000)², and the Action Plan “Ukraine-European Union” (2005), culminating in the current Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU (AA).

However, de facto European integration was carried out with varying intensity, as it depended on the Ukrainian domestic political situation, directly on the strategic approach of the state leadership to the foreign policy vector, and on pressure from Russia with the aim of blocking Ukraine’s European course. The leadership of the Kremlin has always considered the European integration of Ukraine as a challenge to its hegemony in the post-Soviet space. The success of Ukraine’s European integration is not only a stimulating example for other post-Soviet countries but also a threat to the authoritarian regime itself [24, p. 9]. To maintain Ukraine within its sphere of influence and to oppose its integration into Western structures, Russia uses a hybrid warfare that covers a wide range of means, including economic, energy, political, diplomatic, informational, religious, and cultural-mass actions, supplemented since 2014 by military, terrorist, and cyber operations [33, p. 382].

The dynamics of European integration significantly accelerated after the Russian aggression on the territory of Ukraine in 2014, which influenced the rethinking of the strategic approaches of the Ukrainian leadership [16, p. 63]. Ukraine securitized the Russian threat by defining its nature as long-term, considering the Russian Federation as a military adversary. Ukraine’s strategic documents identify a range of military-political threats stemming from the Russian Federation. These threats encompass: military aggression; the temporary occupation of Crimea and territories in eastern Ukraine; militarization of the region; non-fulfillment of obligations in the field of arms control; intelligence and subversive activities of special services; the presence of the Russian military contingent in Transnistria; and the desire to keep Belarus in the sphere of its political influence [27; 37].

Along with this, the Law of Ukraine “On the Basics of National Security of Ukraine” 2003 and its successor Law of Ukraine “On National Security” 2018 define the integration of Ukraine into

¹ The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Ukraine and the European Communities and their Member States of 1994 expired on September 1, 2017, when the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU entered into force in its entirety.

² The Strategy for the Integration of Ukraine into the European Union (1998) and the Program for the Integration of Ukraine into the European Union (2000) became invalid as of July 10, 2015.

the European political, economic, security, and legal space, as well as the subsequent acquisition of membership in the EU as a fundamental national interest of the state [40; 39]. In this context, in 2019, the leadership of Ukraine made fundamental legal changes to the Constitution regarding the foreign policy vector, which confirmed the irreversibility of Ukraine's European course [15].

So what is the value of the EU as a security entity? The EU has its own security guarantees that apply to member states, namely the mutual defense clause³ (Article 42 of the Treaty of Lisbon) and the solidarity clause⁴ (Article 222 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union) [31, p. 33]. In connection with Russia's aggressive actions, Ukraine rightfully expects that through its European integration it will be able to more successfully confront existing and potential threats to its national security [22, p. 4].

During the presidency of Petro Poroshenko, the main strategic documents of Ukraine were the National Security Strategy 2015 and the Military Doctrine 2015 [40; 39]. The National Security Strategy 2015 outlined that the foreign policy activities of Ukraine in the sphere of guaranteeing the national security of the state will be based on the policy of European integration [27]. To attain this objective, Ukraine planned a systematic reform of the security sector, alignment with the European acquis, and development of cooperation with the EU within the framework of the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) [27]. This convergence aimed to bolster Ukraine's security and defense sectors while fostering a climate of trust and security in the Eastern European and Black Sea regions [27].

The Military Doctrine 2015 defines in more detail a wide range of tasks with the aim of integrating Ukraine into the EU security space, strengthening cooperation within the framework of the CSDP, and, as a result, improving the European system of collective security. It provided for a comprehensive reform of the national security system to a level that meets EU standards [37]. The main directions of reform, which are defined by the Doctrine, are to improve the unified state system of civil protection, reform the system of mobilization and mobilization training, as well as increase the effectiveness of the system of democratic civilian control over the security and defense sectors [37]. Moreover, the doctrine provided for specific directions for deepening cooperation with the EU, such as engaging the Armed Forces in international operations, deepening cooperation in the field of intelligence to counter hybrid threats, and increasing the effectiveness of international scientific and technical cooperation [37].

After coming to power, the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyi, adopted new strategic documents, namely the National Security Strategy 2020, the Military Security Strategy 2021, and the Foreign Policy Strategy 2021. In these documents, the focus on security issues shifts to NATO because, as noted in the Foreign Policy Strategy 2021, despite the trends to strengthen the strategic autonomy of the EU in the field of security and defense, NATO remains the main contributor to security in the Euro-Atlantic area [30]. The Military Security Strategy 2021 emphasizes that defense reform based on Euro-Atlantic standards contributes not only to membership in NATO but also in the EU [29]. The National Security Strategy 2020 allocates for European integration the issue of civil security reform, in particular the improvement of the state-wide system of state border protection through the implementation of European border security standards and the development of the National Guard of Ukraine, drawing from the experience of EU countries [28].

According to the strategic documents of Ukraine under the presidency of Volodymyr Zelenskyi, European integration should be carried out through the full implementation of the AA [28]. In terms of security cooperation, it should be strengthened through further convergence with the EU within the framework of the CSDP, participation in international operations and EU missions, involvement

³ The mutual defense clause states that if an EU member state is the victim of an armed attack on its territory, other member states are obliged to provide assistance and support, employing all available means at their disposal.

⁴ The solidarity clause states that member states must collectively act in response to a terrorist attack or a natural or man-made disaster affecting one of them.

in projects within the framework of PESCO⁵, as well as the development of the security dimension of cooperation within the framework of the EU initiative Eastern Partnership (EaP) [30].

Thus, following the Russian aggression in 2014, there was a notable shift in Ukraine's leadership strategic approach, which now consisted of the securitization of the Russian threat and awareness of the importance of European integration as one of the key elements of strengthening national security. Considering that the primary aim of national security involves preventing, eliminating, or postponing threats, European integration could serve as a viable countermeasure. Hence, Russian aggression had the opposite effect on Ukraine; instead of restraining it in its sphere of influence and preventing integration into the EU, it became a decisive factor in the state's foreign policy trajectory, turning into a driving force that pushed Ukraine towards more proactive European integration.

Practical cooperation in the security and defense domains between Ukraine and the EU

The current tension between Russia and Ukraine has become an important factor affecting the security structure of the European space, as it shows that war in the classical sense on the European continent is still possible [26, p. 73]. Since 2014, when the security situation near the EU borders suddenly worsened, the EU was forced to immediately review the foundations of its security and defense policy [22, p. 9]. Thus, in the period from 2014 to 2022, there was significant progress in the development of the CSDP, however, it should be noted that the security potential of the EU still remains mainly focused on non-military (civilian) aspects [22, p. 7]. This approach is explained by the fact that security cooperation within the EU serves as a complement to transatlantic cooperation [9], which actually makes the EU a civil-security union [22, p. 10]. As a result, cooperation between Ukraine and the EU is focused mainly on civilian aspects of security and has limited influence in the field of defense [22, p. 4].

The EU securitized Russia's revisionist policy, which consisted of gross violations of international law and the destabilization of Ukraine [6]. This approach contributed to the strengthening of security cooperation between Kyiv and Brussels, as the interest of both sides was to overcome challenges to the European security order [22, p. 9]. Overall, the EU played a key role in supporting Ukraine's efforts to preserve its territorial integrity and sovereignty, providing significant political, military, humanitarian, financial, and technical assistance to overcome security challenges [14, p. 143].

Support and solidarity with Ukraine became the main policy of the governing structures of the EU after the Russian intervention and were first manifested in the European Council Conclusions on Ukraine [34, p. 119]. In the following years, the policy of solidarity was reflected in numerous decisions of the EU-Ukraine summits and resolutions of the European Parliament, in which the EU called for an end to Russian aggression, the withdrawal of troops, and ensuring the territorial integrity of Ukraine [24, p. 12]. Undoubtedly, for Ukraine, which is facing Russian aggression, the issue of security and joint response to threats is becoming a key aspect in relations with the EU, and therefore security dialogue is extremely important in all formats and at all levels.

This interaction proved to be beneficial for both sides, providing the EU with greater awareness of the situation in Ukraine as well as allowing Ukraine to actively participate in important security issues, policy formation, and the implementation of security projects. Nonetheless, the EU is still not ready to fully involve Ukraine in the CSDP, which creates significant restrictions on participation in meetings of defense ministers of EU member states and military projects.

After the Russian aggression, practical interaction between the parties within the framework of the implementation of the CSDP took place in 2015, when the European Defense Agency (EDA) and the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine concluded an Administrative Agreement aimed at enhancing military-technical cooperation. As a consequence, Ukraine became involved in the "Material

⁵ "PESCO" (Permanent Structured Cooperation) is a treaty instrument within the EU CSDP, enabling member states to collaborate on defense and security initiatives, aiming to enhance defense capabilities, foster closer integration among participating countries, and assume additional responsibilities in defense cooperation.

Standardization” and “Single European Sky” projects and cooperated in the areas of “Logistics” and “Training” [23, p. 64]. Since 2020, the cooperation between the parties has developed dynamically, which has made it possible to attract Ukrainian specialists to work as part of the European Defense Committee on Standardization, EDA expert groups (Ammunition, Technical documentation of the life cycle, Quality of power supply/Portable power generators), and the Project Team Logistic Support [18].

Another key aspect of cooperation between the parties in the context of the CSDP is the practical participation of Ukraine in international operations to maintain peace and security under the leadership of the EU. Even before 2014, the Armed Forces of Ukraine participated in police and military operations of the EU, but due to objective circumstances, after the beginning of Russian aggression, such cooperation was limited. In 2014, Ukraine continued its participation in the EU military operation “Atalanta” by sending the Navy frigate “Hetman Sahaidachny” with a Ka-27PR helicopter and a special purpose unit to counter piracy in the northwestern part of the Indian Ocean [23, p. 64]. In 2021, Ukraine decided to join the peacekeeping operation of the EU forces “Althea” and to send two servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to the headquarters of the operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina [1; 23, p. 64]. The Armed Forces of Ukraine are noted for their active participation in operational duty in the combat tactical groups of the EU, in particular in the Balkan combat group “HELBROC,” which they have already joined five times in 2011, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020 [18]. Simultaneously, a crucial aspect lies in fostering regional cooperation with EU countries in the realm of security. In 2008, during a gathering of EU defense ministers, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine reached an agreement to establish a multinational LITPOLUKRBRIG⁶ named after Grand Hetman Kostiantyn Ostrogski, which commenced operations in 2014 [23, p. 64]. Ukraine’s active participation in EU operations contributes to its international authority as a full-fledged partner in the field of security and contributes to the strengthening of the association partnership between Ukraine and the EU.

A separate direction that deserves attention is the support of Ukrainian security sector reforms with the help of the European Union Advisory Mission Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine), which began its work in December 2014. It is a civilian advisory mission of the EU CSDP, and its mandate focuses on three main areas: the provision of strategic consultations on reforming the civil security sector; supporting the implementation of reforms by providing practical assistance and equipment; and cooperation and coordination to achieve interaction between Ukrainian authorities and international partners [8]. The EUAM Ukraine made a significant contribution to the reform of the civil security sector, in particular by contributing to the development of 95 draft laws, 44 strategic documents, and training for about 50,000 people [9].

Ukraine’s engagement in new EU security projects represents a promising direction for collaboration within the framework of the CSDP. PESCO is one of these areas that has the potential to develop military-technical cooperation between Ukraine and the EU, as well as to improve national defense capabilities. In November 2020, the Council of the EU adopted a decision according to which countries that are not members of the union can participate in specific PESCO projects if they meet certain legal criteria [38]. Ukraine formally responds to them, and therefore the parties have started preliminary consultations, which are still in the process of negotiations.

Ukraine’s active security cooperation with the EU is also carried out within the framework of the EaP, covering bilateral and multilateral tracks. The bilateral track is aimed at harmonizing the European *acquis* and deepening cooperation separately with each EaP member country [19]. Security cooperation in this area is carried out in accordance with Section II “Political dialogue and reform, political association, cooperation and convergence in the field of foreign and security policy” and Section III “Justice, freedom and security” of the AA [36]. According to the data

⁶ “LITPOLUKRBRIG” is a multinational military unit (brigade) composed of troops from Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine, established to enhance military cooperation and strengthen regional security.

of “Agreement Pulse,”⁷ the directions “political dialogue, national security and defense” and “justice, freedom, security, human rights” demonstrate sufficient effectiveness, which indicates the intensity of contacts with the leadership of EU institutions and member states’ leaders, as well as the productivity of annual EU-Ukraine summits [21].

It is worth noting that, unlike the economic part, the part on security integration is characterized by extreme brevity and declarative content, as it contains general framework provisions unencumbered by specific obligations, plans, and performance indicators [23, p. 12]. The very decisions of the Ukraine-EU summits repeatedly condemned Russia’s aggression, emphasized the need for further cooperation to counter hybrid threats and reform Ukraine’s security sector. However, concrete measures to enhance cooperation in the realm of CSDP were only explicitly mentioned in the Joint Statement following the 23rd EU-Ukraine summit in 2021. This statement outlined plans for Ukraine’s future participation in the EU military operation “Althea,” potential involvement in selected PESCO programs, and prospects for continued support of Ukraine’s stability, particularly in the realm of professional military education [17]. Thus, on a bilateral track, cooperation in the field of security between Ukraine and the EU has the potential to develop, provided further steps for cooperation are specified and determined.

Security cooperation within the framework of the multilateral track takes place through Multi-partite Platform No. 1 “Democracy, Good Governance and Stability”. Its purpose is to improve key governance sectors in such areas as democracy, human rights, justice, internal affairs, security, and stability [19]. Within this platform, there are several panels aimed at the development of the security sector, including the Working Panel on CSDP Cooperation, the Working Panel on Asylum and Migration, and the flagship initiative “Integrated Border Management.” The multilateral track also provides for an informal dialogue on issues of sectoral cooperation and the general development of the EaP.

Thus, within the framework of the EaP, representatives of specialized state bodies of Ukraine regularly participate in courses and discussions on security and defense cooperation with the EU at various levels. The EaP also fosters the professionalization of education and promotes academic cooperation in the field of security. A vivid example is that on the basis of the National Defense University of Ukraine named after Ivan Chernyakhovsky, which has the status of an Associate Partner of the European Security and Defense College, annually hosts an Orientation course on CSDP issues for military personnel [23, p. 64]. However, the potential of the EaP in the field of security remains not fully developed. In December 2022, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Dmytro Kuleba, put forward a corresponding proposal regarding the reform of the EaP. His proposal suggests that the EaP should evolve into a tool for enhancing sectoral collaboration with the EU across security, migration, energy, transport, countering hybrid threats, and disinformation [32, p. 108]. In the case of such adaptation of the EaP to the new realities of the European security architecture, it can be useful for strengthening the national security of Ukraine and the EU.

Following the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the EU intensified its support for Ukraine in countering the aggressor, but it mostly included the political and socio-economic spheres. At the moment, there is no official data on the amount that the EU provided to Ukraine to fight the aggressor and overcome the consequences of the war, however, according to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, the total amount has already reached 49 billion euros as of January 2023 [10, p. 97]. Military assistance to Ukraine is provided within the framework of the European Peace Fund (EPF), which was created in 2021. The purpose of this off-budget instrument is to finance initiatives within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, which are aimed at preventing conflicts and strengthening international security and stability [10, p. 95].

⁷ “Agreement Pulse” is an online monitoring system that reflects the progress of implementation of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union both annually and cumulatively.

The military-technical cooperation with the EU countries in wartime conditions is mainly carried out at the bilateral level and includes the supply of various military equipment and weapons to Ukraine, covering a wide range from rocket launchers, air defense systems, and howitzers to radars, demining devices, medical equipment, and winter clothes [24, p. 14]. At the level of defense ministers of the EU countries, regular meetings are held in the Ramstein format with the aim of coordinating and combining efforts to support Ukraine's defense capability [24, p. 14]. Another important aspect of military cooperation is the professionalization of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. On November 15, 2022, the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine commenced its operations, primarily focusing on training the Armed Forces and the Territorial Defense Forces. In addition to training, the Mission equips the Armed Forces of Ukraine with both lethal and non-lethal technical assets funded by the EPF [10, p. 97].

Therefore, the Russian aggressive war became a catalyst for strengthening Ukraine's national security, galvanized the EU in bolstering Ukrainian resilience against threats, and contributed to its European integration. A real geopolitical breakthrough was granting Ukraine the status of a candidate for joining the EU⁸ in 2022 [10, p. 96]. This signifies that Ukraine is no longer perceived as a "gray zone" between two regional security complexes but is considered an indispensable component of the European regional security complex, which the EU is ready to integrate more closely into its structures.

Summarizing, in connection with the aggressive actions of Russia, cooperation between Ukraine and the EU in the field of security becomes a key element not only for the national security of Ukraine but also for the EU itself, and therefore for stability and security in Europe as a whole. Security cooperation within both the CSDP and the EaP not only enhances Ukraine's defense capabilities but also bolsters its integration into the European security space. With the naked eye, it is possible to trace the interdependence between the strengthening of the Russian threat and the progress of the European integration of Ukraine, since it is primarily a political process that reflects the national interests of the member states. Applying Cold War terminology, Ukraine and the EU find themselves aligned in the same camp, as both entities have securitized the Russian threat. Full-scale Russian aggression on the territory of Ukraine contributed to the granting of the last candidate status for joining the EU. This demonstrates the deep desire and readiness of the EU to support and incorporate Ukraine into its security structures, and therefore, the full integration of Ukraine into the security space of the EU is only a matter of time. However, it's important to acknowledge that despite Ukraine's accelerated integration path, practical reality reveals a low level of attention to security issues in the AA, and the focus on aspects of civil security can make it difficult to use the full potential of mutually beneficial cooperation.

Conclusions. Throughout the entire history of independent Ukraine, its foreign policy vector developed in the direction of deeper integration with the EU, especially in security issues that were of mutual interest. The European integration of Ukraine in the field of security and defense is a complex and multi-level process of implementing the best standards and principles of operation. This process encompasses both a strategic approach and practical cooperation aimed at full integration into the European security space.

Instead, Russian foreign and security policy is aimed at countering the European integration of Ukraine, as its success threatens the dominance of Russia in the post-Soviet space and the existence of the regime within the state. Therefore, Russia uses a hybrid warfare, which in February 2022 was transferred to the level of a traditional, total war. However, it had the opposite effect, as it

⁸ The status of a candidate country for joining the EU involves undergoing a rigorous process of negotiation, reforms, and alignment with EU standards and criteria, overseen by the European Commission. Candidate countries seeking to join the EU must demonstrate adherence to the Copenhagen criteria, including stable institutions, a functioning market economy, and the ability to adopt EU laws and standards.

contributed to the change of Ukraine's strategic paradigm after 2014 and forced Ukraine to intensify the European integration processes to counter threats and ensure national security. In fact, Russia has turned this process into irreversible and uncontested on its own.

Russian neo-imperial ambitions pose a threat not only to the national security of Ukraine but also to regional stability in general and the postwar international order. In such a situation, the zone of stability that the EU built near its borders ceases to exist, thus, starting in 2014, the EU also securitized the Russian threat. The alignment of national interests between the EU and Ukraine served as the catalyst for their convergence in security affairs, expediting integration and cooperation efforts.

Overall, the securitization of the Russian threat had a positive impact on the dynamics of Ukraine's security integration with the EU, both strategically and practically. In the period 2014–2022, Ukraine made significant steps towards European integration within the legal realm, as evidenced by its main strategic documents. The Ukrainian leadership defined the course for European integration as an irreversible and fundamental national interest of the state while outlining practical tasks for achieving the goal. At the same time, in the practical realm, it is also possible to observe significant success in interaction and cooperation. Intensive security cooperation within the framework of the CSDP and the EaP not only contributes to increasing Ukraine's resistance to external threats but also strengthens the process of its integration into the European security space.

However, despite significant success in European integration, which includes granting the status of a candidate for joining the EU, there is still a challenging path ahead to full membership. An obstacle to this is insufficient attention to security issues in the AA and an emphasis on aspects of civil security, which can constrain the full realization of mutually beneficial cooperation. Therefore, further security integration requires the efforts of both Ukraine and the EU, making the political will of the parties the most important aspect of integration.

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Віталій Супрун. Шлях України до Європейського Союзу: еволюція політики безпеки та оборони в період 2014–2022 років

У цій статті розглядається складна динаміка європейської інтеграції України у сфері безпеки й оборони в умовах російської агресії. Вона заглиблюється у стратегічні зміни України після 2014 року, зумовлені імперативом протидії зовнішнім зарозам і забезпечення національної безпеки. Аналіз підкреслює взаємозв'язок між прагненням України до європейської інтеграції та сек'юритизацією російської загрози, виявляючи узгодження інтересів між Україною та ЄС. У дослідженні акцентується увага на значних кроках України на шляху до євроінтеграції, про що свідчать стратегічні документи та практичне співробітництво в рамках Спільної політики безпеки та оборони і Східного партнерства. Водночас зазначається, що існують проблеми, зокрема недостатня увага до питань безпеки в Угоді про асоціацію між Україною та ЄС, а також зроблено акцент на цивільних аспектах безпеки у двосторонньому співробітництві. Незважаючи на ці перешкоди, стаття наголошує на поглибленні зближення між Україною та ЄС у справах безпеки, сигналізуючи про багатообіцяючий шлях до повної інтеграції у європейський безпековий простір, який залежить від стійкої політичної волі обох сторін.

Ключові слова: Україна, європейська інтеграція, Європейський Союз, національна безпека, політика безпеки і оборони, зовнішня політика, російська загроза, зовнішня безпека, Спільна політика безпеки та оборони.

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