

## **ON THE NECESSITY OF SHAPING BULGARIAN NATIONAL INTERESTS IN TERMS OF GLOBAL UNCERTAINTY**

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**Abstract:** The global security system is undergoing a profound transformation. In this process, the international community is seeking the shape of a new security architecture and international order. At the same time, the Bulgarian state is characterised by a lack of clearly articulated strategic interests. This circumstance is reflected in the weak role of the Bulgarian state in regional and international affairs. In this regard, it is necessary to formulate Bulgaria's main foreign policy interests that will position the country in the new global system.

**Key words:** national interests, global and regional security, Bulgaria, international relations, economic security, international community.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Last decades we see a process of a global transformation of the international order from bipolar to unipolar, with a clear dominance of the US - as a global hegemon and of NATO, as a political and military organization for Euro-Atlantic collective security and defense.

The easing of tensions globally and the confrontation between West and East was of a temporary nature. This has been particularly noticeable since 2008 – after the global financial and economic crisis. A time when the world started talking about polycentrism. The United States was in the process of losing its role as the sole economic and political world leader. Russia and the alternative economic and demographic potential of China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Iran, and Turkey entered the world arena. Only the European Union does not have a commonly accepted policy for action and for building European strategic autonomy, guaranteeing Europe's ability to defend its members without over-reliance on the US and NATO.

In this environment, the demands on the foreign and security policy pursued by the Bulgarian state will become ever greater. Logically, the main question arises -

can the Bulgarian state be a sovereign subject of international relations and protect the dignity and interests of its citizens and businesses. If the answer is in the affirmative, this implies the formulation of basic Bulgarian national interests and their embodiment in policies that Bulgaria should follow regardless of who governs the country.

Formulating Bulgaria's national interests and setting priorities in Bulgaria's foreign policy is a complex, polyvalent and multivariate process. There are not a few factors inside and outside the country that hinder the definition of the framework of our foreign policy.

## **2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

Formulating Bulgaria's national interests and setting priorities in its foreign policy is a complex, complicated and not so easy process. There are not a few factors inside and outside the country that hinder the definition of the framework of our foreign policy. In this paper, the author sets as their main objective to attempt to formulate Bulgaria's national interests to underpin the future foreign policy based on an in-depth situational, geo-economic, geopolitical, and systemic analysis of the security environment of the Bulgarian state. Several research tasks follow from the objective thus formulated: to analyze and assess the security environment of the Bulgarian state; to assess the war in Ukraine and its impact on regional security; to attempt to define Bulgarian national interests; and to present the authors' vision of the opportunities facing the Bulgarian state and its role in regional and global affairs. Due to the complexity and complexity of the study, the authors use systems, network, and cybernetic approaches, which are complemented by geo-economic, geopolitical, geographical, territorial, functional, descriptive, and historical methods, analysis, and synthesis, as well as reference to expert opinion. The research presented here is based on the methodology for foreign policy analysis of the security environment presented in [1].

## **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE SECURITY AND BLACK SEA SECURITY ENVIRONMENT**

Security as a concept is very actual at every time because of the changing world, constant conflicts at different parts of the world and the big political and energy struggle for world dominancy of the Great Powers. Security is a term that we could describe as a condition of instability and uncertainty. There is a strong connection between security, security environment and threats availability. We can go further and to explain security in the context of peace and Power. We can understand security as a term through the prism of insecurity and security. The three concepts of peace, power, and security each represent a distinct response to the common problem of insecurity [2]. The most elementary definition of the security is: security is a condition in which there is a lack of instability and threats. The concept is related to the people sense of stability and state awareness. We can explain the term security

through international relations theory (political realism and idealism) [3], international politics [4] and war concept [5]. Speaking of security there is a strong relation between the term and national interests and national security problem [6].

There are different approaches to security analysis (fig. 1). As we look at the figure 1 more details, we find security analysis at three levels. On the top we have security analysis as whole. The second level approach to security analysis is separated into two groups – fundamental and technical. The third security analysis level consists economic, industry and company analysis.

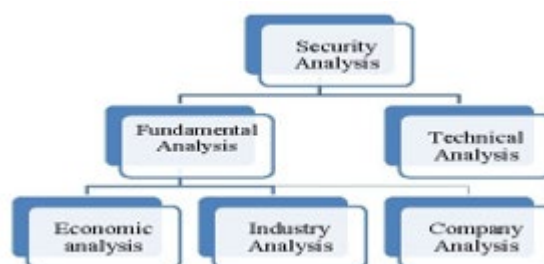


Figure 1. Approach to security analysis. Source. DMCA.

In figure 2 is illustrated three types of security analysis. On the top is fundamental analysis. In the middle we see technical analysis. And the third type is the quantitative analysis. We consider security and apply security analysis at the different level. We can address this to the security environment. We can define security environment as an environment in which there is interaction between subjects and objects, different players, processes, and tendencies [7-9].

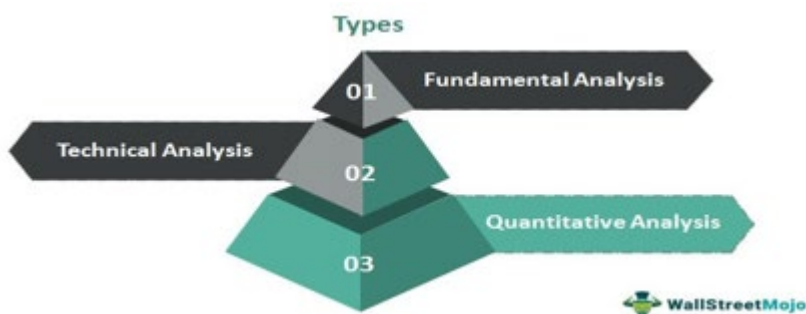


Figure 2. Security analysis types.

Source. <https://www.wallstreetmojo.com/security-analysis/>.

The security and peace studies vary depends on level and field of analysis, objectives direction and region. Some of the studies are related to peace and war concepts. Especially regional research on Western Balkans is in the field of peacebuilding and state building [10, 11]. The literature analysis shows that most of

the authors direct their research to Kosovo and Bosna and Herzegovina [12, 13]. The authors survey the relation between international and regional security environment.

Other studies analyse the energy security and environmental changes in Balkans and respectively North Macedonia [14]. Most of the surveys try to evaluate the security conditions and influence of international security on regional environment. In this regard we find the security studies that examine the subordination of security levels in the context of system changes in Balkans and Turkey regional role [15]. Lazaridi and Valvis define as a main threat human security in the Balkans [16]. Turan and Aksay analyze the impact of European policy on Western Balkans [17]. According to them this region destabilizes the nearest countries as domino effect. The authors highlighted the main threat to the Balkans according to the European union.

Analyzing the regional security and the role of Bulgarian country we must consider the policies of all Black Sea states. The proof we can find in the research of Ustun [18]. The author evaluates the Turkish and other countries foreign policy. According to him we see Europeanization of the foreign policy. Other scientists analyze the Romanian policy in the context of the Black Sea region [19]. The Black Sea region is scientific and political very interesting. We find proof in the big quantity of literature sources. One direction of the studies is related to strategic security management [20]. Other research presents Black Sea region security environment analysis, cyber security and digital challenges in regional economy [21-23].

## **2. STATE OF THE GLOBAL SECURITY SYSTEM**

The security environment of the Bulgarian state stems from the past, present and future state of the ongoing processes in the system of international order and security. For its analysis it is necessary to consider the tendencies, the change of processes in the global and regional perspective, the subjects and objects of influence, the factors that affect the establishment of a balance of interests or disturb them.

### **2.1. Tendencies in the international community**

#### **✓ Undermining of the existing value system**

During recent international changes, social, political, and economic processes are evolving in which the prevailing moral and material values, as well as interpersonal and interstate relations, are changing explosively. This also applies to the relevant geopolitical legal norms - rules imposed by the victors of the WWII on the global international community.

#### **✓ World regionalization and a new economization of politics**

In the context of a disintegrating international order, a global process of successive crises is also taking place, leading to a transformation of the world economy and the global financial system. These changes began because of the global financial and economic crisis that unfolded in 2008; they went through the economic

and financial sanctions imposed by the West on Russia over Crimea, and the artificially reinforced refugee crisis in Europe; the Kovid-19 pandemic and the imposed border closures. The world economy had begun to recover when, following NATO's refusal to recognize Russia's demands for security guarantees, the military crisis in Ukraine began, with its reinforced energy insecurity; the threat of food shortages in the Third World; the EU's misguided 'Green' policy; and, especially, the course taken by the US to curb China's economic and political expansion. These developments have necessitated a conceptual shift in the geography of global supply and logistics networks, and a transformation of global industrial and production networks. Most countries, including EU Member States, have started to look for industrial and production bases to serve their own markets. This has increased the attractiveness of Eastern European countries, the Arab countries of the southern Mediterranean and Turkey. A process of shortening global production and logistics networks has begun. Essentially, we see a process of new global specialization for the world's geo-economic regions and regionalization of the world into spheres of economic and political influence.

✓ **New technological renewal accompanied by transformation of global and national economies**

According to the World Bank, total global GDP in 2021 was \$96.1 trillion. The G7's contribution to world GDP was worth \$42.3 trillion (about 44%), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) countries' contribution was over \$24.2 trillion (about 25% or ¼ of world GDP). The G7 visibly outperforms the SCO in terms of GDP, but the coronavirus pandemic remains a serious factor affecting all. At the same time, we see that the data shows almost double the GDP for the G-7, but the SCO will gain momentum given its short history. The SCO has a concentrated industrial base, military power, and a world population of over 4 billion. This hints at the organization's potential. The leading countries in the SCO are Russia, China, India, Iran, and their influence is growing in combination with the BRICS countries.

Another important process in the world economy is the technological race. Undoubtedly, gross domestic product and its relation to international trade are significant determinants that can influence the structuring of a new world order. But a key indicator is the production and possession of technology. Here we should also keep in mind the technological transfer and its direction. In recent years (especially under Donald Trump as US president), an economic-technological war has been raging between the US and the West and Chinese IT companies, along with countries producing smart devices. The analysis shows that the technological gap between the US and China is gradually closing.

✓ **Entering a new era of struggle for supremacy in space, military race (supersonic weapons)**

We are entering in the era of the neo real politic. We see that the Great powers decide their territorial sphere problems using strength. The proves we can discover in American and Russian policy in the last decades. I think that the New real politics

instrument is technology (especially military technologies), economic policy and possession of energy raw materials.

The monopoly in economic terms based on new technologies is severely shaken. At the same time, the technological race in defense has not stopped. It is difficult to say who has the upper hand in this area. At the same time, it is a fact that Russia was the first to take up supersonic weapons (medium- and long-range missiles), some of which we see being used in Ukraine. Supersonic missiles mean only one thing, that we are once again entering a space race. Last year, Russia withdrew from the international space station project, as well as from the two Start 1 and Start 2 contracts. We can therefore assume that the next few years are going to be ones of escalating tension, unpredictability and uncertainty until a balance is found that can be established by signing international treaties. The Cold War has never ended, but it has now flared up with unprecedented proportions and force.

## **2.2. Key challenges and threats to global security**

The restructuring of the old alliances and the deinstitutionalization of the existing international organizations lead to the emergence of new alliances based on polycentricity, equality, and mutual interest. The reformatting of the international community creates conditions of imbalance of interests and strong confrontation between states. In this environment, the small, weaker, and poorer states are the most affected. In fact, until now, disputes and claims of states against each other were impossible due to the established order guaranteed by the existence of the UN, NATO, and other organizations. They were the instrument for channeling emerging controversies, but in fact, for example, the UN has long lost its importance and role as an organization. Obviously, the dominance of the United States also as a guarantor of security and geopolitical legal norms has been challenged and there is virtually no effective mechanism for the settlement of regional and international disputes and conflicts. In their place, regional powers have emerged and are beginning to play the role of mediators in resolving crises of various kinds. For example, Turkey is currently playing a similar role in the Black Sea region.

The lack of a generally accepted mechanism and the formulation of new geopolitical legal norms for dispute resolution in the international community comes to tell us that the suspension of the hitherto familiar system of geopolitical legal norms is a fact. In fact, the system of geopolitical legal norms is directly linked to the existing order and security in the international community and the existence of international organizations such as the UN, UNESCO, NATO, WTO, OECD, the International Court of Arbitration, etc. In the absence of legitimacy and recognition of international organizations as authorities, inter-state relations shift to bilateral ones.

Obviously, this new order of the international community should be constructed based on new principles and values around which states can unite. But mutual acceptance of international principles is impossible before tensions in the international community can subside. Of course, there is the question of what those

principles should be that would establish the new geopolitical legal norms. In the author's view, trust in geopolitical legal norms must be restored, and this should happen based on the signing of new international interstate treaties. As basic international principles we can point out freedom, reciprocity, mutual respect, protection and guarantee of mutual interest between states, mutual assistance, equality, free trade, etc.

The absence of a normal and effectively functioning system of the international community creates conditions of permanent instability. This insecurity is reinforced by the threats to the global community. One major threat to order and security in the international community is the imbalance in economic, industrial, military, and demographic terms. This is a major threat to all humanity. Asia and Africa are home to the bulk of the world's population.

From the point of view of Bulgaria's location in the region of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea, relations between states portend new regional conflicts. This region is characterized by a high potential for regional clash for several reasons. Firstly, it is home to states of different religions - Islam and Christianity. Secondly, in recent years large new deposits of natural gas have been discovered. One of the largest, Leviathan, is located between Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus. The others are claimed by Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, and others.

All these changes and challenges require conditions for reformatting security. And in fact, this is the greatest danger facing the international community, because now no one can say for sure what it will look like. At the same time, the new conditions require changes in the content, scope, and nature of security at all levels. Increasingly, certain dimensions of security are taking precedence, such as food and energy security, social and economic security. From these, of course, flows the global role of security - collective and military security. And here all states must ask themselves what security should be for each of them in the context of their national interests and what the architectonics of the global security system of the international community should be. And this is in fact the greatest challenge facing the international community. The events in Ukraine have already legitimized the imbalance in the security of the international community. The military and economic clash was preordained by the actions of the Great Powers, NATO, and the permanent members of the UN Security Council.

It can be assumed that in the coming years, the European Union and the Bulgarian state will face an increased wave of depopulation; the emigration of young people to the EU; conditions for raising children will become more difficult; all this could lead to a general crisis of the family in Europe and a strengthening of transgender ideology.

The location of the Black Sea region and the Balkans is strategic given the border location in the context of Eurasian development. On the other hand, the strategic location is not only confirmed but also strengthened in view of the interests of the major states in the region, as evidenced by the conflict that has broken out in Ukraine. Therefore, the role of the Balkans and the Black Sea is being strengthened,

and the escalation of tensions and the likelihood of a new clash is rising in direct proportion to this.

In the short term, we can expect a series of clashes around Bulgaria, mainly triggered by the national economic interests of the countries in the Mediterranean region. And here we can highlight the always topical strategic role of the Mediterranean and the straits. This process, together with the developing military conflict in Ukraine, is creating the conditions for the consolidation of the authority and positions of regional powers such as Turkey, Greece, Iran, and others.

### **3. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL ROLE OF THE BULGARIAN STATE IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

In this unstable and uncertain international environment, it is extremely important that the Bulgarian state pursues a precise foreign policy in the Balkans, on the European stage and in the world. It is now clear that this policy must rest on certain national interests that it must defend. What could Bulgarian national interests be?

Guaranteeing the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and security of Bulgarian citizens in the implementation of foreign policy. This should be the basis on which we build Bulgarian foreign policy. The security of citizens and the territorial integrity of the state are supreme values. The vital interests of the Bulgarian state extend to the borders of Europe, the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean. Although the Bulgarian state is a small country, it must pursue its interests (economic and political in some regions of the world). Bulgaria has traditionally had good relations with the countries of the regions mentioned.

In his book "What will you say after you say hello", Eric Berne introduces the concept of "script" - a plan for life drawn by parents. Such scripts are at work in history and shape the destiny of peoples and states. It is formed under the influence of cultural and civilizational ancestors - events taking place during the childhood and adolescence of national and history.

When states and peoples interact, their scripts collide. If they are complementary - events begin to unfold according to a logic of dynamic equilibrium. If not - then very painful events occur.

In the case of the conscious scenario, the people who follow it fully understand the logic of events and walk the path consciously. For example, the Jewish people.

In the neurotic scenario, the game requires the people to ignore logic; to close their hearts to someone they consider unworthy or to abandon their traditions. I.e., then there is a neurotic component to the story (a traumatic event or immoral act). And the people then seek to expunge it from their historical memory.

In the conditions of crises, pursuing policies based on imperial ambitions and realizing the above scenarios, it is very difficult for each country in Eastern Europe to implement a successful foreign policy separately. It is through this prism that we must also outline the role of the Bulgarian state in South-Eastern Europe and the



Balkans. Because Bulgaria is a small country with a strategic location that it does not take advantage of. That is why the Bulgarian state must step up and play an active role in relation to the development of the Balkan countries. Mutual assistance, strengthening of connectivity and economic ties between Bulgaria and other countries around it will create preconditions for accelerated socio-economic development. And this can help overcome the consequences of the recent crises that have hit Bulgaria.

The creation of a cultural community Friends of Bulgaria, encompassing all those who have been educated in Bulgaria. Older generations remember foreign students in Bulgaria. Currently, the last foreign graduates in Bulgaria are in leadership positions in their countries. One major weakness of the Bulgarian state is the fact that all these people are forgotten, they are not contacted, of course they are not used. And these people are friends of Bulgaria. That is why we are proposing the formation of a Friends of Bulgaria community.

Bulgaria - a zone of peace, security, and reciprocity. Bulgaria's transformation into a transport, logistics and energy hub by improving connectivity between countries in the region. To this end, an active foreign policy needs to be pursued in sync with the development of the strategic infrastructure in the Balkans to improve connectivity. And the Bulgarian state should play an active role.

Bulgaria for Open and Digital Balkans. The Bulgarian state should pursue an active foreign policy for the formation of a Balkan Quartet or Six, following the example of the Visegrad Four. In this way, with a balance and alignment of interests, the Balkan countries can better defend their common interests. In this way, conditions can be created for a strategic partnership with the Balkan countries.

Security zone, strategic partnership, and development of the countries in Southeast Europe. The strategic partnership between the Balkan countries must develop into an alliance in South-East Europe. This strategic partnership should combine and synchronise the objectives of regional initiatives and organisations in the region such as the SEECP, BSEC, Open Balkans. The Organisation for Black Sea Cooperation (BSEC) is a regional initiative that has its place in strengthening political, economic, and social interaction and ties between member states. On the other hand, the Bulgarian state supports integration and bilateral relations between the Balkan countries. That is why the regional initiative Open Balkans, in which Greece, North Macedonia, Serbia and Albania actively participate, is important for our country. The coordination of the SEECP with the BSEC and Open Balkans will allow for full integration and inter-state relations in the SEE region to enhance cooperation and economic ties. On this basis, the formation of a collective security and defence system between the states in this region could be considered. Through these initiatives and a proactive foreign policy in the European arena, Bulgaria must more effectively protect and defend its national interests. All of this should be in

support of the main foreign policy objective - the consolidation of Bulgaria on the European stage.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Globally and regionally, we are going through a long period of confrontation, deindustrialisation, dehumanisation and uncivilization. We can confidently state that there is a parallel with the terrible times of the barbarian invasions of medieval Europe and the plague epidemic that depopulated territories from the Atlantic to the Urals and the Balkans.

Compared to the scenarios formulated by Bern, we can say that the Eastern European peoples are themselves very weak. Their geopolitical projects rest on a very weak resource base. The location of these nations on the borders of powerful cultures and spaces giving rise to imperial structures renders them helpless. This is why Eastern Europe has for centuries been subject to forces external to it. These external forces have their own project for the indigenous peoples. These designs are widely known. The USA and Great Britain do not want to allow the creation of a continental bloc Germany - France - Russia. In Germany there are colonial minded (with racist ideology). For them a traditional living space in the East and subordinated Eastern European peoples are necessary. At the same time Turkey has its own imperial ambitions which it pursues steadfastly. On the mainland, Poland is also pursuing a policy of expanding influence that is anti-Russian and against the spread of Islam.

The external Great Powers always limit the development of countries in resource-weak regions, creating their own spheres of influence. Europe has returned to nationalism. The former liberal universalism is in the past. The nationalism of Eastern European nations has become the dominant trend of their existence. And here the question arises, what can be the new functional role of Eastern Europe? By the 19th century, Russia pursued a policy of limiting the influence of Poland, which was then dominated by anti-Russian centres of influence. Now, the creation of a new anti-Russian community stimulated by Poland is being destroyed by Belarus and the war in Ukraine. These circumstances raise the question - What can be the functional role and national identity of Eastern Europe now for Russia? This is why the Bulgarian state should defend its national interests through an active foreign policy, mainly directed at South-Eastern Europe based on regional initiatives (SEECP, BSEC, Open Balkans) to consolidate its role as a reliable and authoritative partner in this region and Europe.

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