

# THE SOCIOCULTURAL AND POLITICAL CHALLENGES IN THE BUILDING OF EUROPEAN SECURITY RESILIENCE

Vytautas ŠLAPKAUSKAS

Mykolas Romeris University  
Maironio str. 27, LT 44211 Kaunas, Lithuania  
E-mail: [slapkauskas@mrui.eu](mailto:slapkauskas@mrui.eu)  
ORCID ID: [0000-0002-9637-6672](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9637-6672)

DOI: 10.13165/PSPO-25-37-01-10

**Abstract.** For 80 years, the United States of America dominated the world in terms of leadership in creating a global security system and overseeing its functioning. After World War II, two opposing political regime systems emerged – liberal democracies and communist dictatorships. Their competition during the Cold War had to find political and economic ways to avoid total war in Europe.

The further development of security resilience in the European countries differed significantly. With the help of the United States, the countries of Western Europe rebuilt their economies and established NATO, a common security resilience organization. This ensured their ability to create liberal democracies and market economies. However, gradually the development of their security resilience became dependent on the political and military power of the United States. The societies of the Central and Eastern European countries occupied by the Soviet Union resisted communist regimes: at first militarily and later intellectually, in an effort to preserve their cultural identity. Therefore, these countries focused not on developing security resilience, but on fighting for their cultural independence.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union enabled the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to restore their sovereignty and independence through democratic elections, to free themselves from Communist regimes and to create liberal democracies. The established US monopoly in the world guaranteed peace in Europe and solutions to the challenges of developing a market economy dominated the political agenda of the European Union. With the disappearance of the threat of communism, the growing economic power of the EU was perceived as a guarantor of European security. But this period of peace ended in 2008, when, in the context of the global and US financial crisis, the Russian Federation began a new period of escalation of military power in Europe. It now seeks to destroy the sovereignty of Ukraine and occupy it.

Military and humanitarian assistance from the US and European countries has helped Ukraine not to lose the war so far. But at the beginning of 2025, the new US administration radically changed its geopolitical orientation and assistance to Ukraine, which has caused great concern among European countries about their security resilience, since neither individual nor joint military power may be sufficient to resist the Russian Federation's further escalation of the war in Europe. The question of the attitude of the societies of the European Union countries towards the future of security also arose: do they understand the need to actively engage in the creation of security in Europe? There are no research-based answers to this question yet. More research is urgently needed on the socio-cultural and political challenges associated with building security resilience in European countries.

The aim of the study is to reveal the challenges inherent in reflecting on the political and social reality of the European Union countries in creating a joint security and defense framework in the context of the escalation of Russian's war on Ukraine. The current study presents its conclusions.

**Keywords:** World War II, Cold War, security resilience, European security dependence on US, new US geopolitical orientation.

## Introduction

The development of Europe in the past was very changeable - short periods of peace were replaced by long-term wars between its countries. An analysis of periods of peace reveals that the longest periods of peace in Europe were established only by those treaties the preparation and implementation of which involved strong countries that respected state sovereignty and created resilient security. The Peace of Westphalia is the first example of a long-term peace: the peace treaties signed by European countries on May 15 and October 24, 1648, established

a new order in Europe, based on respect for the concept of state sovereignty and valid until 1806. (Westphalia, Britannica).

In the 20th century, two world wars took place in Europe, causing very large and long-term damage. World War II, which was based on the antagonism of political ideologies, was especially cruel and caused the death of millions of people. The anti-Hitler coalition (the Allied powers) defeated the aggressors - the Axis powers in this war - and established a lasting peace, the meaning of which in terms of justice was fundamentally different in the countries of Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe (World War II, Britannica).

Peace in Europe in the second half of the 20th century was controversial. Its nature was determined by the countries that won the Second World War: namely, Great Britain, the United States of America and the USSR. These countries agreed at the Yalta Conference, February 4–11, 1945 and the Potsdam Conference, August 2, 1945 to divide the European continent into two spheres of influence. The Soviet Union was given the opportunity to restore and expand the sphere of influence previously held by the Russian Empire. This determined the long-term dependence of European countries on the military power of the United States and the Soviet Union. However, these dependencies were fundamentally different: the experience of democracy and liberal economics spread from the United States, and the totalitarian communist regime of military occupation and planned economy from the Soviet Union. Thus, the postwar peace conditioned a radically different development of the security of European countries in the 20th century: the countries of Western Europe were augmenting the quality of life of their societies, while the countries of Central and Eastern Europe were suffering under occupation and fighting for political and cultural independence.

The fall of the Berlin Wall, a symbol of the division of the world into East and West (1989) and the disintegration of the Soviet Union (1991) marked the beginning of the establishment of a just peace throughout Europe. This period of just peace in Europe was interrupted in 2008, when the global hegemony of the United States ended with its financial crisis, and in this context, the Russian Federation began a new period of escalation of military power: a military conflict occurred between Georgia and Russia and the unrecognized republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia; in 2014, Russia began its war on Ukraine and since 2022 it has aimed to destroy the Ukrainian state. Military and humanitarian assistance from the United States and European countries has helped Ukraine not to lose the war so far.

Neither in 2008, nor in 2014 did the United States or the European Union recognize the emerging threats posed by the Russian Federation's long-term escalation of the war in Europe. For over nine years, a brutal war has been going on in Eastern Europe, and it could spread throughout Europe if the Russian Federation wins the war in Ukraine. European countries are significantly lagging behind in developing their military industry, joint actions and measures designed to deter Russia from continuing the war in Ukraine and further escalating it in Europe. This is possible only by taking comprehensive and systematic actions to prevent the escalation of the war: 1) restoring and developing the military and defense industry of the European Union countries, 2) increasing military and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, and 3) creating joint military forces of the EU countries and consolidating them with the Ukrainian army. But these actions and measures may not be enough if they do not include the support of the societies of the European Union countries. The European Union countries have so far devoted too little effort to creating an integrated EU society.

Given the current unilateral policy of the United States and the lack of political and defense unity of the EU countries, the leaders of the largest European countries have a new leadership responsibility: to urgently assemble their volunteer military forces, which, at the request of the Ukrainian authorities, must be deployed on its territory and ensure a just peace

for it. This way the political leaders of European countries could demonstrate for the first time since World War II an independent military will to defend the whole of Europe. The mobilization of and reliance on such volunteer military forces - a “security society” - would revive the hope of creating a strong European Union. The “security society” could become the basis for the integration of the EU countries.

**The object** of the current study is the policy of European countries in creating a common security and defense framework and mobilizing complex assistance to Ukraine. **The aim of the study** is to reveal the challenges inherent in reflecting on the political and social reality of the European Union countries in creating a common security and defense potential in the context of the escalation of Russian’s war on Ukraine. **Research methods:** the study is based on document analysis and historical comparative methods.

## **The Creation of a Global Security System after World War II**

This year marks 80 years since the end of World War II. During this period, an institutional system of global security, which operates on the basis of international law, was created at the initiative of the United States. The basis of this global security system consists of 1) the shared institutions of the world’s states - the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the World Health Organization, the International Criminal Court and other international security institutions; and 2) international legal norms regulating international and interstate relations and the protection of human rights. It is necessary to emphasize that for 80 years the most important hopes for global security were associated with the democratic leadership of the United States in creating and managing the global security system. Now, in 2025, the US is abandoning its leadership in building global security and is changing its geopolitical orientation. This abandonment poses existential challenges for European countries, whose security ostensibly derived from the military and NATO defensive power of the United States. Given these circumstances, we will briefly review the essential features of US leadership in the processes of building global security and preventing the threat of war.

### **The United States of America is the initiator and leader of the creation of a global security system**

After World War II, the United States of America was the largest economy in the world and accounted for about half of its economy (Nye, Jr., 2025). Therefore, only the United States was able to take the initiative to create global security institutions, define their operational functions and regulations, legal norms of interstate and international relations, human rights, and institutions for their protection. The United States successfully implemented this complex leadership role: through its efforts in complex and multifaceted processes, the US formed an international legal order, the observance of which could guarantee global peace. It should be noted that the processes of creating global security institutions required a lot of political, diplomatic, and economic efforts to unite countries promoting different ideologies and encourage them to cooperate in order to prevent the threat of a new war whether economic, political, or conventional.

In the initial stage of the creation of world security institutions, the United States of America actively cooperated with Great Britain and the Soviet Union. The former “League of Nations” was unable to prevent the Second World War and the international crimes committed during it; therefore, the need arose to establish a new international organization that would

effectively ensure world peace and security. The origin of such an organization goes back to the Atlantic Charter signed by the US President F. D. Roosevelt and the UK Prime Minister W. L. S. Churchill on 14 August 1941. It declared that in the case of the United States of America and Great Britain: (1) neither nation sought any aggrandizement; (2) desired no territorial changes without the free assent of the peoples concerned; (3) respected every people's right to choose its own form of government and wanted sovereign rights and self-government restored to those forcibly deprived of them; (4) would try to promote equal access for all states to trade and to raw materials; (5) hoped to promote worldwide collaboration so as to improve labor standards, economic progress, and social security; (6) after the destruction of "Nazi tyranny," they would look for a peace under which all nations could live safely within their boundaries, without fear or want; (7) under such a peace the seas should be free; and (8) pending a general security through renunciation of force, potential aggressors must be disarmed. The Atlantic Charter was adopted by 26 Allied countries at the Washington Conference on 1 January 1942 and later by another 21 countries. They formed the nucleus of the United Nations. In 1945, the Atlantic Charter was included in the Declaration of Fundamental Principles of the United Nations (Atlantic Charter | History & Definition | Britannica).

The name United Nations was first officially used by President F. D. Roosevelt on 1 January 1942, when the Allies of World War II fighting against the Axis states signed the United Nations Declaration. The 26 signatories pledged to form a coalition and cooperate in the fight against the Axis states. Subsequently, at the Moscow Conference, which took place from 19 October to 1 November 1943, the Foreign Ministers of Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union as well as the Chinese Ambassador to the Soviet Union adopted the Four States Declaration on Universal Security. It recognized the need to establish as soon as possible an international organization based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all peaceful states, open to all such states and dedicated to the maintenance of international peace and security. This international organization was established at the end of World War II, when 50 nations signed the United Nations Charter at the San Francisco Conference on June 25, 1945. However, the founding date of the United Nations is October 24, 1945, when the Charter was ratified by the signatory nations. The United Nations began its activities in London on January 10, 1946, when the organization's members met for their first session (United Nations, Britannica).

The analysis of the development of European countries in the 20th century reveals that the expectations of cooperation between the USA and the Soviet Union regarding the development of the postwar world were not fulfilled. The resolutions of the Yalta and Potsdam conferences determined the postwar division of European countries into spheres of influence of liberal democracy and communist ideology. A large part of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe fell into the sphere of influence of the communist ideology of the Soviet Union, including the Baltic countries occupied in June 1940. In the second half of the 1940s, free elections were not allowed in the Central and Eastern European countries occupied by the Soviet troops, and the power of communist parties was established.

The USA hoped that the extension or termination of the assistance they provided was a measure that could force the Soviet Union to implement the resolutions of the Yalta Conference on the democratization of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union thought that by withholding economic aid, it would push the United States into an inevitable crisis of overproduction and collapse of its industry and the entire capitalist world. Both countries believed that postwar conditions were more favorable to them and pursued policies that were unacceptable to the other.



## **The leadership of the United States during the Cold War**

The US attitude towards the USSR fundamentally changed when the US ambassador to Moscow, G. F. Kennan, presented an assessment of the strategic goals of the USSR and its policies in February 1946. G. F. Kennan stated that the USSR government did not believe in long-term peaceful coexistence with the capitalist world and would be guided by the logic of force. Therefore, in 1946 US President H. S. Truman refused promises to transfer the reparations paid by Germany to the USSR and began a policy of containing the development of communist ideology, called the Truman Doctrine (Cold-War, Britannica).

The Cold War (1946–91) emerged as a political, economic, propagandist, and partly military struggle between the United States of America and the USSR (with their allies) for world domination. This term was first used publicly in 1947 by Bernard Baruch, the US representative to the UN Atomic Energy Commission (UNAEC). He used this term to describe the conflicts between the United States and the Soviet Union in the 20th century. It was at the beginning of the Cold War that the issue of nuclear security arose, as the United States dropped atomic bombs on two Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on August 6 and 9, 1945. On June 14, 1946, before a UNAEC session, Baruch presented a proposal for the creation of an international Atomic Development Authority. The presentation of the Baruch Plan marked the culmination of an effort to establish international oversight of the use of atomic energy in hopes of avoiding unchecked proliferation of nuclear power in the post-World War II period (Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations - Office of the Historian).

Under the Baruch Plan the Atomic Development Authority would oversee the development and use of atomic energy, manage any nuclear installation with the ability to produce nuclear weapons, and inspect any nuclear facility conducting research for peaceful purposes. The plan also prohibited the illegal possession of an atomic bomb, the seizure of facilities administered by the Atomic Development Authority, and punished violators who interfered with inspections. The Atomic Development Authority would answer only to the Security Council, which was charged with the power to punish by imposing sanctions on the nations that violated the terms of the plan. Most importantly, the Baruch Plan would have stripped all members of the United Nations Security Council of their veto power concerning the issue of United Nations sanctions against nations that engaged in prohibited activities. Once the plan had been fully implemented, the United States was to begin the process of destroying its nuclear arsenal.

The Soviets strongly opposed any plan that allowed the United States to retain its nuclear monopoly, not to mention international inspections of Soviet domestic nuclear facilities. The Soviets also rejected the idea of surrendering their Security Council veto over any issue as they argued that the Council was already stacked in favor the United States. The vote was held on 1946 December 30, with 10 of the UNAEC's 12 members voting in favor, while the other two members (the Soviet Union and Poland) abstained. The vote required unanimity to pass, so the Polish and Soviet abstentions thwarted the adoption of the Baruch Plan and accelerated a global nuclear arms race (Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations - Office of the Historian).

During the Cold War, distrust prevailed in international world relations, which was especially conditioned by the development of nuclear weapons and the creation of military blocs. The greatest contradictions arose in the period of 1948-1962. At the beginning of this period, the Soviet Union's opposing of the unification of the western part of Germany and closing of Berlin's land and water routes to the West gave rise to the Berlin Blockade (1948-1949) on 24 June 1948. On 28 June 1948, the USA and Great Britain began to supply the city

with essential products, equipment, and fuel by airlift. By 27 September 1949, 275,000 flights had been made, transporting about 2.5 million tons of cargo for 224 million US dollars. In response to this assistance, the Soviet Union increased its occupying forces in East Germany to 40 divisions. The Western Allies had only 8 divisions, so the US sent three groups of bombers to Great Britain. The Allies applied countermeasures: the roads to East Germany were closed, an embargo was imposed on Eastern Bloc goods. Under pressure from the countermeasures, the Soviet Union lifted the blockade on 12 May 1949 (Berlin blockade, Britannica).

Resistance to the Berlin Blockade brought together the countries of North America and Western Europe. On 4 April 1948, they signed the North Atlantic Treaty in Washington, thus establishing NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization). NATO's primary purpose was to defend itself against the Soviet Union and to discipline Germany. As a result, in 1955, the Federal Republic of Germany was admitted to NATO. As a counterweight to the North Atlantic Alliance, the Soviet Union and its satellites, the pro-Soviet bloc states of Central and Eastern Europe, signed a military and political cooperation agreement (the Warsaw Pact) on 14 May 1955. As a result, the North Atlantic Treaty countries expanded NATO's defensive purpose to counter potential threats from the Warsaw Pact members. During the Korean War of 1950–1953, NATO strengthened its military forces. In 1962, NATO helped the United States resolve the Cuban Missile Crisis, which was caused by the Soviet Union secretly placing nuclear-tipped missiles in Cuba.

The threat of nuclear war that prevailed between the military blocs led to the spread of the international peace movement. Since 1950 its activities have been coordinated by the World Peace Council, established at the initiative of the Soviet Union and financed by it for 90 percent of the costs (World Peace Council - Universal Lithuanian Encyclopedia). It is therefore no coincidence that the view that the aggressive behavior of capitalist countries, rather than the Soviet Union, poses a greater threat to peace has taken root in the pacifist movement. Countries not belonging to hostile blocs were united by the Non-Aligned Movement, which sought only to solve important international issues through cooperation (Non-Aligned Movement).

Tensions between the military blocs needed to be controlled due to the threatening prospect of a “nuclear winter”. Therefore, the United States proposed a return to arms control policy. Bilateral arms control was carried out by the United States and the Soviet Union (later the Russian Federation). They signed the Strategic Armaments Limitation Treaties (SALT I, 1972; SALT II, 1979) and the Strategic Armaments Reduction Treaties (START I, 1991; START II, 1996). In 1991, a multilateral arms control regime was agreed upon – NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries signed the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE). This treaty provided for the limitation of five main types of conventional weapons (tanks, armored vehicles, warships, artillery and missiles) and established procedures for monitoring compliance with the treaty (arms-control, Britannica).

The Treaty on Conventional Arms in Europe was revised in 1999, as international security conditions changed. In the mid-1980s, the Soviet Union had to admit that it was economically unable to withstand the new round of the arms race initiated by the United States in the context of the costs of the ongoing war in Afghanistan. As a result, the Soviet leadership softened the ideological dimension of its policy and eventually stopped supporting the communist worldview. This process led to the collapse of the Warsaw Pact bloc and to the end of the Cold War. The victors of World War II - Great Britain, the United States, France and the Soviet Union - signed the Moscow Treaty in 1990, which allowed for the reunification of Germany and the end of the Cold War (Cold War, Britannica).

The ideological conflict between the two blocs throughout the Cold War did not stop the colonized and occupied countries of the world from seeking independence. The struggles for

independence often escalated into internecine wars, and the countries that regained their independence were forced to either join the bloc or define their “non-alignment.” Nevertheless, the number of states in the world increased from 50 (in 1945) to more than 150 by the end of the Cold War (Leonard, 2023, Project- syndicate).

### **Differences in the sociocultural and political experience of security in European countries**

The victorious powers of World War II agreed at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences to divide Europe into two spheres of influence, the development of which was controlled by the United States and the Soviet Union, respectively. The European division was oriented along the historical boundaries of the Russian Empire, which the Soviet Union sought to “restore”. The United States supported the development of liberal democracy and market economies in Western Europe. The Soviet Union, in turn, occupied the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and imposed communist ideology and a planned economy on them. In both cases, this ideological division determined the long-term dependence of the further development of European countries on the military power of the United States and the Soviet Union.

### **The Baltic States’ Military and Peaceful Resistance to the Occupation of the Soviet Union**

The Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – were the first Eastern European states to be occupied and annexed by the Soviet Union at the beginning of World War II. In June 1940, these states were attacked by the Soviet Union, which “based” its actions on the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (24 August 1939), signed by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. In August 1940, the Soviet Union annexed Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and forcibly incorporated them into the Soviet Union. In June 1941, the Soviet Union carried out the first deportations of the Baltic populations to special detention camps in Siberia and Central Asia (“GULAG” camps). As the societies of the Baltic States sought to free themselves from the new occupation by the Soviet Union, an organized partisan resistance movement arose. The Soviet government consolidated the occupation through military control, repression, and deportation. However, resistance movements of varying intensity and nature continued until the restoration of statehood in the Baltic States in 1991.

Estonian military resistance emerged when the Red Army approached Estonia during the war between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. The declared general mobilization enabled the creation of Estonian units (about 40,000 people), which prevented the Soviet troops from crossing the Narva River from February to June 1944. When all of Estonia was again occupied by the Soviet Union, about 70,000 Estonians fled to the West, mainly to Sweden and Germany. In the period of 1939–1945, due to deportations, hostilities, mobilization, and emigration, the population of Estonia decreased from 1,136 million to 854,000. About 5 percent of the territory of Estonia was transferred to the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. Further repressions and deportations of Estonian society gave rise to a partisan resistance movement, in which about 15,000 people died. After its suppression, forced collectivization of peasant farms was carried out in Estonia in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It was accompanied by mass deportations: for example, more than 20,700 Estonians were deported on 25–26 March 1949. More than 200,000 foreigners, mostly Russians, moved to Estonia. If in 1940 Estonians made up 90 percent of their country’s population, then in 1990 they made up only 60 percent. Resistance to the Soviet occupation regime acquired an intellectual character - a struggle for their native language, culture, and faith. Despite the repressions, Estonians managed to resist russification and preserve their national identity (Estijos istorija, VLE).

The Latvian military resistance began at the beginning of the war between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. On June 28, 1941, a Latvian uprising against the Soviet occupiers broke out in Riga. Nazi Germany quickly occupied the entire territory of Latvia and did not seek to restore its independence. On the contrary, the "Ost" plan developed by Nazi Germany provided for the Germanization of the Baltics and other conquered countries. To fight on the Eastern Front in 1943, Nazi Germany formed the Latvian Legion. From July 1944 on, hostilities continued to take place on the territory of Latvia; in October 1944, the Red Army occupied Riga, but fighting in Courland continued until the capitulation of Nazi Germany. Fleeing from the Soviet occupation, about 160,000 Latvians escaped to the West. The Latvian partisan resistance lasted until the beginning of 1950. During the mass deportations of the Latvian population in the late 1940s and early 1950s, about 180,000 people were deported. Due to the migration of Russians and Russian-speaking people to Latvia, as encouraged by Moscow, in 1989 Latvians made up only 52 percent of Latvia's population. Although Latvia was one of the most economically developed republics of the Soviet Union, this did not stop its intellectual resistance to the Soviet occupation (Latvijos istorija, VLE).

Lithuanian military resistance arose at the beginning of the war between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union: on 22–27 June 1941, the "June Uprising" took place and the Lithuanian Provisional Government was formed. It operated in Kaunas from 23 June 1941 to 5 August 1941, until it was dissolved by the Nazi authorities. Until the end of July 1941, Lithuania was ruled by the German military administration, after which civilian occupation rule was introduced. Lithuania became part of Ostland. In the summer of 1944–early 1945, the German occupation of Lithuania was replaced by the second occupation of the Soviet Union: a totalitarian Soviet regime prevailed again, based on the powers of the Communist Party, state security institutions, the army, Soviet officials, the prosecutor's office, courts, and military tribunals. Against this regime, an organized armed resistance movement arose in 1944, which lasted until 1953. In order to quickly break the anti-Soviet armed and other forms of resistance in Lithuania, the Soviet leadership resorted to mass imprisonment and deportations of the Lithuanian population. In the periods of 1944–1947 and 1950–1953, more than 1,100 political prisoners were killed in Lithuania. In 1944–1952, more than 142,500 prisoners were deported from Lithuania to the Soviet Union's "GULAG" camps. In 1944–53, 1,651 representatives of the scientific and creative intelligentsia were arrested: most of them were exiled or imprisoned, some were killed. In 1946–47, most Catholic bishops were repressed. In 1944–1953, more than 5% of the population was exiled from Lithuania. In 1948–1951, forced collectivization took place. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union sought to further suppress the national, civic, and religious consciousness of the Lithuanian people; 42 Catholic churches were closed down between 1953 and 1985. But all the repressive measures did not stop the intellectual resistance of the Lithuanian Catholic Church and other social groups to the Soviet occupation (Lietuvos istorija, VLE).

### **Central European countries' military resistance to the Soviet Union and communist regimes**

Hungary was the first Central European country to experience military coercion by the Soviet Union after World War II. The first postwar parliamentary elections in Hungary in November 1945 were won by the Independent Smallholders' Party with a large majority (57% of the vote), and on February 1, 1946, Hungary was proclaimed a republic. But the Hungarian communists did not accept the democratic defeat and began a fierce campaign to discredit their political opponents. The Left Bloc, formed by the Communists, Social Democrats, and the



Peasants' National Party, won the August 1947 parliamentary elections. The communist-dominated government in 1947–1948 nationalized the banks and industrial enterprises and began the collectivization of agriculture. The 1949 constitution was drawn up on the model of the Soviet Union and a communist political regime was introduced.

Only in 1956 did Hungarian society regain the hope of changing the country's political and economic order, when the Soviet Union replaced the Stalinist-style leader of the Hungarian Workers' Party. The workers' uprising in Poznan (Poland) on 23 October 1956 prompted Hungarians to express solidarity: a rally was held at the monument to J. Bem in Budapest; in the evening, the monument to Stalin was toppled; after short battles, the radio station was occupied. About 300,000 people gathered outside the parliament and demanded freedom of the press, freedom of speech, free elections, greater independence from the Soviet Union, and the appointment of the reformer Imre Nagy as the head of the country's government. During the days of 23 and 24 October, the uprising spread to other Hungarian cities. This frightened the Soviet leadership: on 25 October, it appointed Janos Kádár as the new party leader and ordered Hungarian security forces to shoot at people gathered outside the parliament. About 100 people were killed.

Imre Nagy, the appointed Prime Minister of Hungary, sought to control the situation: on 27 October he formed a new government and dissolved the security institutions; the next day he asked the Soviet Union to return its troops to their bases; on 30 of October he included representatives of the Independent Smallholders' Party and the National Peasants' Party in the government; the day after he announced Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact; and on 01 November he asked the United Nations to guarantee Hungary's neutrality. But the puppet government led by Janos Kádár, formed on 03 of November, "asked" the Soviet leadership to suppress what it called a counter-revolutionary rebellion. On the night of 03–04 November, Soviet troops attacked Budapest and by 10 November the Hungarian revolution had been suppressed. About 2,700 rebels died during the revolution; after the uprising was suppressed, about 350 people were sentenced to death, about 30,000 were imprisoned. By the end of 1956, about 200,000 people had fled to the West (Hungarian-Revolution, Britannica).

Czechoslovakia did not escape the military coercion of the Soviet Union either. The new Czechoslovak government formed in early April 1968 took real steps to create a more democratic socialism, introducing freedom of speech, assembly, and movement, strictly controlling the activities of security institutions, liberalizing prices, and allowing private business to operate. This caused resistance from the Soviet Union, which demanded that the reforms be stopped and threatened military intervention. On the night of 20–21 August 1968, the Warsaw Pact troops (about 300,000 people and 7,000 tanks) entered Czechoslovakia. The pretext for the invasion was an appeal to Moscow for help by Czechoslovak Communist Party figures published in the Soviet press. The Czechoslovak government urged the population not to resist, but about 80 people died during the first weeks of the military intervention. The leaders of Czechoslovakia, who were taken to Moscow after negotiations with the Soviet leadership on 23–27 August, were forced to sign the so-called Moscow Protocols, which allowed the deployment of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia. The reforms that had been initiated were interrupted and reversed. Public protests against the suppression of the Prague Spring lasted until mid-1969; they were brutally suppressed by security forces (Prague-Spring, Britannica).

Polish society closely followed the military actions of the Soviet Union in suppressing resistance to communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe. On 28 June 1956, workers in Poznan began a general strike and mass demonstration, which spontaneously turned into armed action. Chanting economic and political slogans (bread and freedom), the workers occupied the prosecutor's office, the court, and other government institutions, freed 257 people from prison,

and attacked the building of the Voivodeship Security Committee. Both sides used firearms in the attack, as the workers armed themselves by occupying militia posts and commissariats, disarming the militia and internal security forces. On 30 June 1956, the uprising was suppressed by military forces. But it had an impact on the further liberalization of the Soviet regime in Poland (Poznan-Riots, Britannica).

The historical experience of the occupation by the Russian Empire oriented Polish society towards peaceful forms of resistance to the communist regime. Peaceful resistance was promoted by the Polish Catholic Church. In August-September 1980, workers at the Gdansk shipyard founded an independent trade union "Solidarity", consisting of strike committees. Very soon, "Solidarity" became a social movement and covered the whole of Poland. Due to the efforts of the communist authorities to limit the activities of "Solidarity", it became radical. In December 1981, martial law was introduced in Poland, Solidarity leaders were arrested, and strikes were suppressed by military force. Underground "Solidarity" organizations operated under conditions of repression: self-government expanded, alternative social institutions were created, demonstrations and strikes resumed. Public support for the activities of "Solidarity" forced the communist Polish government to undertake reforms of the political system. After two months of negotiations, representatives of the government and "Solidarity" adopted the Round Table Agreement on 17 April 1989 to legalize "Solidarity". In 1989, "Solidarity" won the first democratic elections since World War II and formed the first non-communist majority government (Solidarity, Britannica).

### **The formation of Western European countries' security dependence on US power**

After World War II, many Western European countries did not have the funds needed to rebuild their devastated economies and buy new equipment and materials. It was beneficial for the United States to rebuild the economies of those countries: rich European countries could become a good market for US products; without US support, the ideas of communism could have become popular in Western Europe; the influence of the Soviet Union could have expanded. Therefore, US Secretary of State G. C. Marshall announced on June 5, 1947, that if Europe created a long-term reconstruction program, the United States would finance it. The Marshall Plan was also offered to Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union, if the latter agreed to have the United States control the implementation of the plan. The Soviet Union refused and began to develop its own plan to integrate the Central and Eastern European countries which had fallen under its influence.

The US Congress allocated \$13 billion to support the Marshall Plan. 70 percent of this amount was allocated to the purchase of US goods. The largest share of funds went to Great Britain, France, Italy and West Germany. From 1949, as the Cold War intensified, an increasing share of funds was allocated not to economic reconstruction, but to military spending. The Marshall Plan was implemented successfully: when the support ended in 1952, Western European industrial production exceeded the pre-war level by 35 percent. Only West Germany did not reach this level. The Marshall Plan was also one of the first factors in European integration, because during its implementation, trade customs barriers were eliminated, and supranational institutions were created to coordinate the economy (Marshall-Plan, Britannica).

After World War II, as international tensions rose again, Jean Monnet and his team began to develop the concept of a European Community. On 9 May 1950, on behalf of the French government, he drafted and published the so-called Schuman Declaration. This declaration proposed that all German and French coal and steel production be placed under the control of a single High Authority. The declaration was based on the idea that sharing the production of

these resources between the two most powerful countries on the continent would help to avoid future wars. The governments of Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg supported the declaration, and this document became the basis for the European Coal and Steel Community – the predecessor of the European Economic Community and the subsequent European Union. In 1954, when the creation of a European Defense Community failed, Monnet established the United States of Europe Action Committee. This committee was established to revive the spirit of European integration and became one of the main driving forces behind many of the changes in the process of European integration.

At the time of NATO's founding, US military support was seen as a bridge to European independence. This assumption was not entirely justified, as evidenced by the complaint of US President Dwight D. Eisenhower ten years later. In 1951 November 24 in his diary, he wrote that without some kind of “European unification” that led to a unity of economic power and a European military, much of the spending by the United States “will simply be a waste...” (Waging Peace: Eisenhower and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization).

Every U.S. president since then has reiterated this complaint. But behind Washington's repeated call for Europe to “do more” usually came a second one: “Not like that.” The worst-kept secret of the trans-Atlantic security policy is that from the dawn of the Cold War, the United States sought not only to bind Europe into a common defense framework against the Soviet Union but also to keep it in a state of tutelage. That meant strangling all attempts to build independent European defense structures or strategies (Lucas, 2025, Foreign policy).

Thus, it can be said that at the beginning of the Cold War, a trend towards the economic unification of Western European countries emerged. But it did not include defense unification, as this was hindered by the contradictory behavior of the United States. The European community grew and expanded as a voluntary union of countries for economically and politically beneficial joint activities. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the strength of the European Union is still defined not by military power, but by the “democratic community” that was formed over the past fifty years. Its development model particularly emphasizes the role of human rights protection and legal regulation. Indeed, the security needs of the “democratic community” are satisfied through the protection of human rights. This is illustrated by the “quiet revolution” that took place in the Western world in the second half of the 20th century (Inglehart, 2016), in the process of which the concept of the quality of life was linked to the pacifist cultivation of peace, which turned into an important part of the social lifestyle in the West. In this context, the pacifist political thinking of the “democratic community” developed, which gradually limited the significance of military means in ensuring the national security and defense of European societies.

The pacifist mindset of Western European societies is a strong socio-cultural factor that can significantly limit the political decisions of EU countries: 1) to quickly develop the potential of the military industry and joint EU military forces; 2) to involve society in building security resilience; 3) to deploy parts of its military forces in Ukraine to ensure its military resilience.

### **Changes in the world order - a complex challenge to the creation of European security**

The year 2025 is a sign of the disarray caused by the end of the old-world order. The old-world order does not match the challenges of climate change management and the global market economy, in the context of which the new world order is spontaneously taking shape. The political scientist Joseph S. Nye, Jr. is absolutely right when he states, that “world order is a matter of degree: it varies over time, depending on technological, political, social, and ideological factors that can affect the global distribution of power and influence norms. It can

be radically altered both by broader historical trends and by a single major power's blunders" (Nye, Jr., 2025, Project-syndicate).

Over the past 80 years, the world order has been at a turning point several times: in 1945, 1990, and 2008. Under the influence of the United States, the world order was created in 1945 and developed until the end of the bipolar world in 1991. Reflecting on the end of the Cold War, Michael Mastanduno predicted three realistic models for the further development of the international order: 1) the growth of economic competition between the major industrial power countries; 2) a return to the traditional multipolar balance of the system of power; 3) a unipolar international system in which the United States continues to play a dominant role (Mastanduno, 1999, p. 19). Until 2008, it seemed that the third model of international order could reign indefinitely, upholding a unipolar world controlled by US political, economic and military power. After 2008, however, a model for a new world order began to emerge, one which would be based on the creation of a multipolar balance of the system of power among the world's strongest countries.

### **Changes in world order after 2008**

This year marks another turning point in the world order. As Nye observes, "With the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, the US enjoyed a brief "unipolar moment," only to overextend itself in the Middle East, while permitting the financial mismanagement that culminated in the 2008 financial crisis. Believing the US was in decline, Russia and China changed their own policies. Putin ordered an invasion of neighboring Georgia, and China replaced Deng Xiaoping's cautious foreign policy with a more assertive approach. Meanwhile, China's robust economic growth allowed it to close the power gap with America" (Nye, Jr., 2025, Project-syndicate).

At the beginning of this period, the Russian Federation finally formulated its revanchist ideology and, by attacking Georgia, tested its power and the international, especially European, reaction to its military aggression. Neither the USA nor the EU countries recognized the very dangerous further development of Russian revanchism. On the contrary, the USA and the EU countries sought to develop business relations with Russia. They were convinced that the development of economic relations was the best means of preventing Russia's revanchist moods and imperialist ambitions. Therefore, they did not adequately respond to the 2008 speech of Russian President V. Putin in Bucharest, in which he warned the West that if Ukraine joined NATO, it risked losing Crimea and Eastern Ukraine.

After Ukrainian President V. Yanukovych refused to sign the Association Agreement with the EU and later fled Kiev, Russia carried out a pre-planned occupation of Crimea on the night of 27 February 2014. Russia's hostile actions were condemned by NATO and the G7 countries. On 27 March, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 68/262, which declared the Crimean referendum illegitimate and the peninsula's annexation to the Russian Federation illegal. On 15 April, the Ukrainian parliament adopted a resolution declaring Crimea a territory temporarily occupied by Russia. During the annexation of Crimea, about 10,000 Crimean residents became refugees (Krymo aneksija, VLE).

In 2014, the US and EU countries again failed to see the possibility of Russia further escalating the war in Ukraine. By contrast, the Russian government took the appeasement policy of the US and EU leadership as a political and military weakness that does not help Ukraine create the necessary military and security resilience. World security institutions and existing international law did not prevent further escalation of the war either. Therefore, in the period of 2014-2021, Russia prepared for war and on 24 February 2022 invaded Ukraine. It



hoped to win the war quickly, but the heroic resistance of the Ukrainians curbed this ambition, and a brutal war is still ongoing in Ukraine. The military and humanitarian assistance provided by the US and EU countries is helping Ukraine fight against the aggressor.

### **Changes in the world order in 2025**

Earlier this year, the United States abandoned its historical position as the world's leading security provider. The new US administration has formulated an ideology of economic revanchism, as its economic power in the world economy has shrunk to 25 percent. (Nye, Jr., 2025). The US administration believes that with the help of high tariffs it will be able to revive its large-scale industries and successfully expand its economic power. The provision of any past and new aid to foreign countries is now defined as a business that should provide significant benefits to America itself. Geopolitical relations are interpreted as business transactions.

The radical changes in the geopolitical leadership of the US have caused confusion among its long-time allies. From the current point of view, the US sees the European Union as its second largest economic competitor, after China. Therefore, it constantly threatens NATO countries to reduce military assistance to them and even encroaches on their territorial sovereignty. In turn, EU countries are asking whether it is still possible to trust US military support for Ukraine and the presence of parts of its army in Europe.

Current US political and military assistance to Ukraine is focused on two fronts: 1) obtaining long-term economic benefits from Ukraine and 2) restoring business relations with the Russian Federation. In this respect, today's US geopolitics is more in line with Russian interests than with Ukrainian and European interests. But in the context of the war in Ukraine, the leaders of major European countries do not feel ready to prevent the escalation of the Russian war in Europe without US military assistance. The solution to this dilemma requires great political determination to quickly create an EU volunteer army and the courage to deploy it in Ukraine, even in the absence of assured US support. Provided EU leaders do not lack political determination and courage, this would open up new opportunities for creating a European Union state that could be a strong leader in the security of the future multipolar world. This could also encourage the US and the EU to build a relation of equal partnership. If the US were to maintain strong alliances with Japan and Europe in the future, they would represent more than half of the world economy, compared to only 20 percent in the case of China and Russia (Nye, Jr., 2025). Therefore, the creation and deployment of a European volunteer army in Ukraine provides a great opportunity to prevent a Russian war in Europe and to engage in a new process of creating a global security system.

### **Conclusions**

After the end of World War II, the United States of America alone had the political, economic, and military power to take the lead in creating a global security system. Its efforts created an institutional system of global security, which consisted of: 1) common institutions of the world's states - the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Criminal Court, and other international security institutions; and 2) international legal norms, regulating international and interstate relations and the protection of human rights.

The resolutions of the Yalta and Potsdam (1945) conferences determined the postwar division of European countries into the spheres of influence of liberal democracy and

communist ideology. A large number of Central and Eastern European countries, including the Baltic states occupied in June 1940, fell into the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union's communist ideology.

The expectations of cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union after World War II were not fulfilled. The Cold War raged between them, which, due to the parity of military power, did not escalate into a conventional war. But the escalation of the Cold War undermined the economic power of the Soviet Union and led to its collapse.

During the Cold War, different sociocultural and political models of building security in European countries were formed. The societies of Central and Eastern European countries resisted the occupation of the Soviet Union and communist regimes by military and other means. They preserved their cultural identity, but did not have the opportunity to create their own security resilience. Western European countries created a market economy and liberal democracy, but their military defense became dependent on the military power of the United States. These countries emphasize economic power, equating it with security resilience and reinforcing a pacifist attitude towards peace. This attitude may limit the creation of armed resilience in European security in the future.

A retrospective analysis of the Russian Federation's revanchist breakthroughs revealed that changes in the world order began in 2008. Believing the US was in decline, Russia and China changed their own policies. Putin ordered an invasion of neighboring Georgia, and China replaced Deng Xiaoping's cautious foreign policy with a more assertive approach. Meanwhile, China's robust economic growth allowed it to close the power gap with America.

In 2025, changes in world order finally became apparent. Earlier this year, the United States abandoned its historical position as the world's leading security provider. The new US administration has formulated an ideology of economic revanchism as a basis for geopolitical relations, including the role of the US as a mediator in achieving a ceasefire and peace in Russia's war in Ukraine. Such a role for the US does not guarantee peace in Europe. To that end, the leaders of the largest European countries must show political determination and courage by quickly creating a joint European volunteer army and deploying it in Ukraine. In turn, such political determination and courage can become a basis for building a strong EU state and European security resilience.

## References

1. Arms-control, Britannica. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/arms-control> (Accessed: 01 June 2025).
2. Atlantic Charter | History & Definition | Britannica. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Atlantic-Charter> (Accessed: 01 June 2025).
3. Berlin-blockade, Britannica. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Berlin-blockade> (Accessed: 01 June 2025).
4. Cold War, Britannica. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Cold-War> (Accessed 01 June 2025).
5. Estijos istorija, VLE. Available at: <https://www.vle.lt/straipsnis/estijos-istorija/> (Accessed: 24 May 2025).
6. Hungarian-Revolution, Britannica. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Hungarian-Revolution-1956> (Accessed: 01 June 2025).
7. Inglehart, R. (2016). The Silent Revolution. Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

8. [Yalta Conference](https://www.britannica.com/event/Yalta-Conference). Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Yalta-Conference> (Accessed 20 May 2025).
9. Krymo aneksija, VLE. Available at: <https://www.vle.lt/straipsnis/krymo-aneksija/> (Accessed: 23 May 2025).
10. Latvijos istorija, VLE. Available at: <https://www.vle.lt/straipsnis/latvijos-istorija/> (Accessed: 26 May 2025).
11. Lietuvos istorija, VLE. Available at: <https://www.vle.lt/straipsnis/lietuvos-istorija/> (Accessed: 24 May 2025).
12. Lucas, E., 2025, America Will Miss Europe's Security Dependence When It's Gone. Available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/04/23/us-europe-trump-nato-eu-defense-military-weapons-intelligence-security-russia/> (Accessed: 25 May 2025).
13. Leonard, M., 2023. This Cold War Is Different. Available at: <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/new-us-china-cold-war-global-order-fragmentation-not-polarization-by-mark-leonard-2023-09> (Accessed: 20 October 2023).
14. Marshall-Plan, Britannica. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Marshall-Plan> (Accessed: 26 May 2025).
15. Mastanduno, M., 1999. A realist view: three images of the coming international order. In: International order and the future of world politics. Edited by T. V. Paul and J. A. Hall. Cambridge University Press.
16. Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations. Available at: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936> (Accessed: 20 May 2025).
17. Monnet, J. The unifying force behind the birth of the European Union. Available at: [https://european-union.europa.eu/system/files/2021-06/eu-pioneers-jean-monnet\\_en.pdf](https://european-union.europa.eu/system/files/2021-06/eu-pioneers-jean-monnet_en.pdf) (Accessed 20 May 2025).
18. Non-Aligned-Movement. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Non-Aligned-Movement> (Accessed 23 May 2025).
19. Nye, J. S., Jr. How World Order Changes. Available at: <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/world-order-what-it-is-and-how-it-could-change-under-trump-by-joseph-s-nye-2025-04> (Accessed 26 May 2025).
20. Potsdam Conference. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Potsdam-Conference> (Accessed 01 June 2025).
21. Poznan-Riots, Britannica. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Poznan-Riots> (Accessed 01 June 2025).
22. Prague-Spring, Britannica. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Prague-Spring> (Accessed: 01 June 2025).
23. Solidarity, Britannica. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Solidarity> (Accessed: 01 June 2025).
24. United Nations, Britannica. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/United-Nations> (Accessed: 01 June 2025).
25. Waging Peace: Eisenhower and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Available at: <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/eisenhower-and-nato.htm> (Accessed 01 June 2025).
26. Westphalia, Britannica. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Westphalia> (Accessed: 01 June 2025).
27. World War II, Britannica. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-II> (Accessed: 01 June 2025).



This article is an Open Access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 \(CC BY 4.0\) License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).