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M. Puzyrov



O. Shur

SCIENTIFIC JUSTIFICATION OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE FUNCTIONS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD OF UKRAINE DURING THE POST-WAR RECOVERY PERIOD

A scientific justification for the transformation of the functions of the National Guard of Ukraine during the post-war recovery period is provided. The impact of the Russian Federation's full-scale armed aggression on the functional burden of the NGU is analysed, and the need to adjust the balance between military and law enforcement functions in the post-conflict period is substantiated. Based on historical-comparative, systemic, structural-functional and predictive approaches, the main scenarios for the development of the NGU after the cessation of active hostilities are identified. The study proves that the most promising approach is a balanced transformation model, which combines the preservation of combat capabilities with the development of stabilization, law enforcement, and humanitarian functions, thereby contributing to state and public security and societal stability.

Keywords: *National Guard of Ukraine, post-war recovery, national security, state security, transformation, security and defence sector, security and defence forces, stabilisation operations, civil-military cooperation.*

Statement of the problem. The Russian Federation's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine, ongoing since 2022, has become an unprecedented challenge for the entire national security and defence system. It has not only fundamentally reshaped the strategic architecture of European security but has also imposed new requirements on the functioning of state institutions, particularly those performing both military and law-enforcement tasks. In this context, the National Guard of Ukraine (NGU) represents a distinctive actor within the security and defence sector – not a primary one, yet a unique one – since it combines military force with law-enforcement capacity, thereby ensuring stability in the rear areas, in liberated territories, and in zones of active hostilities [1].

Although the active phase of the war is ongoing, there is already a pressing need for scientific and strategic planning of the post-war recovery process, including the adaptation of the national security system [2] to new conditions. The experience of other states demonstrates that preparation for the "post-war" period should not begin after the cessation of hostilities but should proceed in parallel with them. This approach makes it possible to minimise social risks, prevent the demoralisation of military formations, and ensure continuity of state governance.

For Ukraine, such a strategy is vital. The restoration of territorial integrity and the transition to a peaceful state will be accompanied by a number of foreseeable challenges, including:

- the demobilisation of a significant number of servicemen, which will require effective social reintegration of veterans;
- the aggravation of the economic crisis and the risks of the criminalisation of segments of society;
- potential political turbulence resulting from shifts in political balances;
- the need to restore law and order and public security in de-occupied and frontline regions;
- the persistence of military risks along the state border even after the formal cessation of hostilities.

Under these conditions, the role of the NGU requires renewed scholarly assessment. Its future transformation should take into account the experience of military (combat) operations during the period 2014–2025 and should combine functions of defence, internal security, counter-terrorism, participation in stabilisation operations, and the maintenance of public order. Equally important is the prospect of a shift in the balance of functions – namely, the gradual reduction of the purely military component and the strengthening of law-enforcement and stabilisation functions, which is typical of post-conflict states.

Preparation for such a transformation must begin now, during the course of the war, through scientific forecasting, scenario analysis, the development of demobilisation and personnel reintegration concepts, and the establishment of interagency mechanisms for security governance. The underestimation of these processes in previous periods (in particular, following the completion of the Anti-Terrorist Operation in 2018) has revealed that without systematic planning there is an increase in social tension, the demoralisation of certain groups of veterans, the illegal circulation of weapons, and the criminalisation of specific social groups. Accordingly, the advance scientific elaboration of a post-war security model is critically important for the stability of the state.

The relevance of this study is determined not only by the need to prepare for the post-war period but also by the necessity of maintaining a balance between the militarisation of society and democratic principles of governance. An excessive concentration of coercive powers may threaten political stability, whereas premature demilitarisation may create a security vacuum. For this reason, the optimal transformation of the NGU should be grounded in the principles of adaptability, civilian control, legal certainty, and functional flexibility.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

Issues related to the functioning and development of the NGU as a component of the security and defence sector continue to attract the attention of domestic scholars in the context of reforming the national and state security system, adapting security institutions to NATO standards, and transforming their tasks and functions amid the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Certain aspects of the legal status, organisational structure, and functional purpose of the NGU have been examined in the works of O. V. Ahapova, Yu. V. Allerov, Yu. P. Babkov, V. M. Batsamut, S. V. Bielai, D. O. Horbach, O. F. Kobzar, O. H. Komisarov, D. M. Korniienko, O. V. Kryvenko, A. V. Martyniuk, D. A. Morkvin, O. M. Muzychuk, O. S. Pivnenko, O. V. Pyskun, S. T. Poltorak, T. A. Sutiusev, O. V. Tkachenko, and others.

The works of the aforementioned authors address issues related to the transformation of Ukraine's security and defence sector, the determination of the place and role of military formations within the system of ensuring state security, as well as problems associated with improving the regulatory and organisational framework governing the activities of the NGU. At

the same time, an analysis of scholarly sources indicates that the overwhelming majority of existing studies focus either on the functioning of the NGU under conditions of martial law or on specific aspects of its reform. By contrast, issues concerning the scientific substantiation of the transformation of the NGU's functions specifically during the period of post-war recovery – taking into account new security challenges, the need to stabilise societal processes, and the restoration of public (civil) order – remain insufficiently explored. This situation necessitates further scholarly research aimed at developing a comprehensive theoretical and methodological approach to the transformation of the NGU's functions in the post-conflict period.

The purpose of the article is to provide a scientific substantiation of the need to transform the functions of the National Guard of Ukraine under conditions of an ongoing war and in preparation for post-war recovery, as well as to identify the mechanisms that will ensure the effective role of the NGU within the future system of state security.

Summary of the main material. The application of the historical and comparative method in the course of the research made it possible to identify the principal theoretical approaches to the transformation of military formations in the post-war period. In particular, the historical experience of post-war Europe in the twentieth century (notably Germany and Italy) [3, 4, 5] demonstrates that the successful transformation of military formations is possible only if a number of key principles are observed, namely:

1) civilian control over military and security (law-enforcement) structures, which ensures democratic legitimacy and prevents the concentration of powers in the hands of individual groups or personalities;

2) clear legal regulation of the powers of the security and defence forces, which defines the scope of responsibility and the limits of the use of military and law-enforcement institutions in peacetime;

3) effective social adaptation of veterans, including psychological rehabilitation, vocational retraining, and integration into civilian society;

4) economic stabilisation of post-conflict regions, as economic destabilisation exacerbates social tensions and creates a potential basis for the criminalisation or radicalisation of former combatants.

At the same time, an analysis of unsuccessful cases of the transformation of military formations in post-conflict countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Afghanistan) shows that the absence of a long-term strategy, the blurring (uncertainty) of the functions of security structures, and weak coordination among state institutions lead to recurrent crises, the escalation of internal conflicts, and the erosion of governmental legitimacy. Studies by R. Dahrendorf [6] and S. Huntington [7] indicate that post-war reconstruction is invariably accompanied by a phase of "social displacement", during which military structures must adapt to new functions – from defensive to stabilisation roles, including the performance of tasks related to civilian law enforcement and the protection of critical infrastructure.

In this context, the NGU occupies a distinctive position, as it is the only domestic security formation that combines military and law-enforcement functions, which makes it a universal institution capable of comprehensive transformation in the post-war period. The National Guard of Ukraine may act as a stabilisation force in liberated (de-occupied) territories, participate in maintaining public order and countering organised crime, and facilitate the integration of veterans and demobilised combatants into a structured system of state security.

An important element of this transformation is the planning of changes in the functional balance: the gradual reduction of the active military component alongside the expansion of law-enforcement and stabilisation functions. Such an approach makes it possible to minimise the risks of the militarisation of society, the criminalisation of demobilised veterans, and political instability, while ensuring the sustainable integration of the NGU into the national security system in peacetime.

In addition, theoretical approaches to the transformation of military formations incorporate a dedicated methodology, the core elements of which include the following methods:

– a historical and comparative method, which takes into account Ukraine's experience during the period 2014–2025, as well as international experience of post-conflict stabilisation;

– a systems approach, which envisages the NGU as part of an integrated national security system in which each subsystem (the defence forces, security forces, civil society/the civilian sector, and other actors) interacts and adapts;

– a structural and functional approach, aimed at optimising the balance between the military and law-enforcement functions of the NGU at different stages of post-war recovery;

– a prognostic method, which makes it possible to model scenarios of demobilisation, social adaptation, and the integration of veterans into civilian life.

Thus, the theoretical and methodological basis for the transformation of the NGU in the post-war period is based on a combination of historical experience, international practice, and contemporary approaches to the governance of security and defence forces. This provides a foundation for the development of scientifically grounded strategies for integrating the NGU into the peacetime security and defence sector, minimising social and political risks, and ensuring the sustainable development of the state in the post-war period.

Alongside the formulation of the theoretical foundations for the transformation of military formations in the post-war period, attention should also be directed to an analysis of the current state and the problems of the NGU's functioning.

When examining *the regulatory and legal framework, the tasks, and the evolution of the functional orientation* of the institution under study, it should be noted that the NGU is a component of the state's security and defence sector and performs a specific function – the combination of military and law-enforcement tasks within a single institutional structure. Unlike the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), which are focused on the defence of Ukraine, the protection of its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inviolability [8, 9], the NGU simultaneously ensures rear-area stability, the protection of strategic facilities, participation in counter-sabotage activities, the maintenance of public order, and the protection of critical infrastructure.

In accordance with the Law of Ukraine "On the National Guard of Ukraine", the main tasks of this military formation with law-enforcement functions include: participation in repelling armed aggression against Ukraine; the protection of public order and the provision of public (civil) security; the guarding of important state facilities and special cargoes; countering sabotage and reconnaissance groups and illegal armed formations; participation in emergency response and disaster relief operations; the protection of the state border in cooperation with the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine; and participation in territorial defence measures [1].

Prior to 2022, the NGU's principal efforts were concentrated on maintaining law and order, guarding state facilities, and participating in the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) and the Joint Forces Operation (JFO) in eastern Ukraine. However, following the launch of the full-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation in 2022, the functional vector of the NGU underwent a substantial transformation – from a stabilisation and law-enforcement orientation to a predominantly military one [10].

As of 2025, NGU formations are carrying out tasks to repel the armed aggression of the Russian Federation as part of:

- the Azov and Khartia corps [11];
- battalion- and company-sized groups formed from military units responsible for the protection of critical state facilities and the maintenance of public order, operating under the operational command of brigades, tactical groups, and operational-tactical groupings of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, as well as NGU brigades.

At the same time, military units stationed at their permanent deployment locations continue to perform service and combat tasks, including counter-sabotage measures; stabilisation and control activities at checkpoints; enforcement of the legal regime of martial law; protection of important facilities within territorial defence zones; and the conveying of convicted persons, among others [1].

However, the lack of balance between the military and law-enforcement components has led to a deformation of the systems of command and control, training, and personnel recruitment. The vector of recruitment, material and technical support, and personnel training has shifted almost entirely towards the military domain, resulting in a decline in the effectiveness of tasks performed in the sphere of state security.

In addition, due to the prioritisation of force generation for the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the Territorial Centres for Recruitment and Social Support are unable to provide the NGU with an adequate mobilisation resource. In some regions, personnel shortages in units responsible for the maintenance of public order and the protection of critical state facilities reach 30–50 per cent, which directly affects the state of law and order and the protection of strategic facilities.

When proposing mechanisms and directions for the transformation of the NGU in the post-war period, it is appropriate to begin with the general preconditions for such transformation. Thus, following the end of the active phase of the war,

Ukraine will face an exceptionally complex challenge – the transition from a state of wartime mobilisation to sustainable peace. In this process, the NGU will play a key, though not dominant, role as an institution of dual nature combining military and law-enforcement functions. Its hybrid character enables it to act as an intermediary between the security agencies and civil society, which is of critical importance during the transitional period.

Historical experience demonstrates that the post-war stage of state development is a period in which war ends on the battlefield but continues in politics, the economy, and collective social consciousness. Therefore, under contemporary conditions, the transformation of the security and defence sector should not be limited to administrative reform; rather, it must constitute an institutional restructuring aimed at achieving a balance between demilitarisation, the stabilisation of internal order, and the long-term protection of state interests.

For Ukraine, such a transformation must take into account three fundamental factors:

- 1) the probable militarisation of society, manifested in the large number of veterans, the widespread availability of weapons, elevated levels of aggression, and public distrust of state authorities;
- 2) an economic crisis, characterised by declining GDP, rising unemployment, increased criminalisation, and the expansion of the shadow economy;
- 3) political turbulence, including elite fragmentation, regional tensions, and attempts at revanchism by pro-Russian forces.

Under these conditions, the NGU may serve as a centre of stabilising power capable of containing destructive processes by acting as a "bridge" between the Armed Forces, the police, and civil society (the civilian environment).

In order to identify an optimal model of transformation, it is expedient to employ a historical and comparative approach and to examine relevant historical examples (analogies).

The first example is post-war Europe (1945–1950). After the Second World War, most European states experienced waves of criminalisation, the disorganisation of armed forces, and mass unemployment among veterans. This led to the establishment of gendarmerie-type structures, such as the Carabinieri (Italy), the Gendarmerie Nationale (France), and the Bundesgrenzschutz (Germany). These institutions became key instruments of stabilisation, combining military

discipline with civilian control and policing (law-enforcement) functions [3, 4, 5].

The second example concerns the Balkan states following the conflicts of the 1990s. In particular, in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the militarisation of society contributed to social unrest and political fragmentation. Only the integration of military formations into an internal security system under civilian control ensured gradual stabilisation [12, 13].

The third example is Ukraine after 2014. It should be noted that following the end of the active phase of the Anti-Terrorist Operation (2015–2018), Ukraine faced significant challenges related to demobilisation, the proliferation of illicit weapons, and rising levels of criminal activity. The reform of the Internal Troops into the NGU made it possible to partially stabilise the situation, particularly in the liberated areas of Donbas. It was during this period that the NGU demonstrated its effectiveness as a stabilising force in crisis regions [10, 14].

Thus, the above examples demonstrate that effective post-war transformation of the security and defence forces is possible only under conditions of democratic civilian control, depoliticisation, and analytically grounded adaptation of the functions of the relevant institutions.

At the same time, the application of the prognostic method in the course of the research makes it possible to identify *the key challenges of the post-war period*:

1. Demobilisation and reintegration of veterans. The return of a substantial number of service personnel from the frontline will generate an increased demand for employment, psychological support, and social adaptation. In the absence of effective monitoring and support mechanisms, combat experience may be transformed into criminal behaviour or protest activity.

2. Persistence of a high level of threats. Even after the cessation of active hostilities, the risks of sabotage, hybrid attacks, terrorist activities, and information influence by the Russian Federation will remain. Consequently, any reduction in the strength of the NGU must be gradual and structurally justified.

3. Overburdening of the command and control system. The transition to a peacetime posture requires a new model of command – one that is analytical, flexible, and based on the active involvement of civilian specialists, as well as decentralised management structures.

4. Risk of politicisation of the NGU. During the transitional period, attempts may be made to use the Guard as an instrument of political influence. To prevent this, it is necessary to strengthen legislative safeguards and ensure that the NGU remains subordinated exclusively to state institutions rather than to political centres of power.

Under these circumstances, the following prognostic scenarios for the development of the NGU in the post-war period are proposed (Table 1).

Table 1 – Prognostic scenarios for the development of the NGU in the post-war period (*elaborated by the authors*)

Scenario	Key Characteristics	Risks	Expected outcome
Conservative	Preservation of the existing structure subordinated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs; reduction of combat units; focus on patrol activities	Loss of combat capability; demoralisation of veterans	Transformation of the NGU into a police-type force similar to a military police
Balanced	Preservation of a combat core (territorial brigades); development of stabilisation and humanitarian functions	High financial costs; need for a new legislative framework	Formation of a modern European-type gendarmerie structure
Militarized	Expansion of combat functions; integration into the Armed Forces of Ukraine as a reserve component	Risk of duplication of tasks with the Armed Forces of Ukraine; excessive militarisation	High level of defence capability combined with low social stability

It is considered that the balanced scenario is the most promising among those presented, as it combines the preservation of combat capability with the development

of law enforcement, analytical, and humanitarian functions. This approach corresponds to contemporary

models of national security forces functioning in NATO member states.

Conclusions

Thus, on the basis of the scientific substantiation of the transformation of the functions of the NGU in the period of post-war recovery, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. The full-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has caused a fundamental change in the functional burden of the NGU, which has transformed from a military formation with a stabilisation and law-enforcement functions into a predominantly military component of the defence forces. At the same time, the post-war period objectively requires a reverse functional rebalancing in order to ensure state security, public (civil) order, and the stabilisation of social processes.

2. It has been proven that post-war recovery of the state is impossible without advance scientific forecasting of the transformation of the components of the security and defence sector. In this context, the NGU, due to its functional nature and the combination of military and law-enforcement functions, represents a unique actor capable of performing the role of a stabilisation force during the transitional period from war to peace.

3. The generalisation of the historical experience of post-conflict states has demonstrated that effective transformation of security and defence forces in the post-war period is achievable provided that the principles of democratic civilian control are observed, powers are clearly regulated by law, veterans are socially reintegrated, and a balanced combination of military and law-enforcement functions is maintained.

4. It has been substantiated that under current conditions the most promising model for the development of the NGU is a balanced scenario, which envisages the preservation of its combat potential alongside the development of stabilisation, law-enforcement, analytical and humanitarian functions. Such a model corresponds to European and Euro-Atlantic approaches to the functioning of gendarmerie and guard-type structures and contributes to minimising the risks of the militarisation of society.

5. It has been established that the transformation of the functions of the NGU in the post-war period should be implemented gradually, taking into account projected threats, demobilisation processes, the reintegration of

veterans, economic and political factors, as well as the need to ensure state and public security in de-occupied and frontline territories.

Overall, it has been proven that a scientifically grounded transformation of the functions of the NGU is a necessary prerequisite for the formation of an effective state security system in the post-war period and an important component in ensuring the sustainable development of the Ukrainian state.

Further research will focus on the development of a conceptual model for the functioning of the NGU in the post-war period, including the determination of its place within the system of national and state security, its functional priorities, and mechanisms of inter-agency cooperation.

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М. С. Пузырьов, О. М. Шур

НАУКОВЕ ОБҐРУНТУВАННЯ ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЇ ФУНКЦІЙ НАЦІОНАЛЬНОЇ ГВАРДІЇ УКРАЇНИ У ПЕРІОД ПІСЛЯВОЄННОГО ВІДНОВЛЕННЯ

Здійснено наукове обґрунтування трансформації функцій Національної гвардії України у період післявоєнного відновлення держави з огляду на сучасні безпекові виклики, наслідки повномасштабної збройної агресії РФ та перспективи розвитку сектору безпеки і оборони України. Установлено, що тривале виконання Національною гвардією України бойових завдань в умовах воєнного стану викликало істотні зміни у її функціональному призначенні, які потребують наукового переосмислення у контексті переходу від війни до миру.

З використанням історико-порівняльного, системного, структурно-функціонального та прогностичного методів проаналізовано еволюцію функцій Національної гвардії України, визначено основні сценарії розвитку НГУ після завершення активних бойових дій, а також ключові чинники, що впливатимуть на трансформацію функцій НГУ у післявоєнний період. Узагальнено міжнародний досвід діяльності гвардійських і жандармерійських формувань у постконфліктних державах. Доведено, що післявоєнне відновлення потребує не зменшення ролі Національної гвардії України, а її адаптації до нових умов безпеки, пов'язаних із забезпеченням громадського порядку, стабілізацією суспільних процесів, реагуванням на внутрішні загрози та підтриманням правопорядку на деокупованих територіях.

Обґрунтовано доцільність реалізації збалансованої моделі трансформації функцій Національної гвардії України, яка поєднує збереження бойового потенціалу з розвитком стабілізаційних, правоохоронних та гуманітарних функцій. Наголошено, що така модель відповідає європейським і євроатлантичним підходам до функціонування сил жандармерійського типу та сприятиме підвищенню інституційної стійкості системи державної безпеки у постконфліктний період.

Зроблено висновок, що науково обґрунтована трансформація функцій Національної гвардії України є важливою передумовою забезпечення внутрішньої стабільності, громадської безпеки та сталого розвитку держави у період післявоєнного відновлення.

Ключові слова: Національна гвардія України, післявоєнне відновлення, національна безпека, державна безпека, трансформація, сектор безпеки і оборони, сили безпеки і оборони, стабілізаційні дії, цивільно-військове співробітництво.

Puzyrov Mykhailo – Doctor of Law, Senior Researcher, Head of the Department of Legal Disciplines, National Academy of the National Guard of Ukraine
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7814-9476>

Shur Oleksandr – Adjunct, National Academy of the National Guard of Ukraine
<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0152-1967>