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IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM IN THE CONTEXT OF NEOREALISM THEORY

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The *article describes* the development of Iran's nuclear program in the framework of Waltz's "nuclear peace" concept within the context of the theory of structural realism. Considering that in the context of international relations, generally related to the nuclear weapons dimension issues, and the problems of its non-proliferation, in particular are developed most extensively, if not comprehensively in its neorealism direction. This theory explains the need for states to obtain nuclear weapons at several levels. At the level of the theories of the highest level of abstraction, security dilemma explains the need to obtain nuclear weapons. The basic provisions of the "nuclear peace" concept are highlighted. Within the proposed approach, Waltz concludes that, under certain conditions nuclear weapons can contribute to stability and decrease the likelihood of the development of full-scale conflicts between the nuclear countries. The concept of "nuclear peace" has received a new interpretation in the light of consideration of a particular situation around Iran's nuclear issue. The dynamics of the development of the conflict around Iran's nuclear program is explored through Waltz's theoretical approach. Also, in the article is considered fears of a possible nuclear proliferation in the region after Iran's acquisition and the commencement of a nuclear arms race in the Middle East are unwarranted.

The article outlines, that according to the hypothesis of neorealism, nuclear weapons are the "weapon of peace" and the most effective security guarantee; therefore states like Iran, being rational actors in international relations must strive to possess it or to acquire it. Also, in this study presented criticism of Waltz's theory and explains another vision of nuclear proliferation and the possibility of conflict between nuclear-weapon States.

Key words: *structural realism, Waltz, Iran's nuclear program, nuclear weapons, balance of power.*

ЯДЕРНА ПРОГРАМА ІРАНУ В КОНТЕКСТІ ТЕОРІЇ НЕОРЕАЛІЗМУ

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Розглянуто розвиток ядерної програми Ірану крізь призму концепції "ядерного миру" Волца в межах теорії структурного реалізму. Ця теорія пояснює необхідність держав отримати ядерну зброю на декількох рівнях. Так на рівні теорій найвищого рівня абстракції пояснюється необхідність отримання ядерної зброї, яка зумовлена дилемою безпеки. Виділено основні положення концепції "ядерного миру". В межах запропонованого підходу Волц робить висновок про те, що за певних умов ядерна зброя може сприяти стабільності і знижувати ймовірність розвитку повномасштабних конфліктів між країнами. На основі теоретичного підходу Волц показав динаміку розвитку конфлікту навколо ядерної програми Ірану. У статті наголошено, згідно з гіпотезою неореалізму ядерна зброя є "зброєю миру" та найефективнішою гарантією безпеки, тому держави, наприклад, такі, як Іран, будучи раціональними акторами міжнародних відносин повинні прагнути володіти нею чи здобути її.

Ключові слова: *структурний реалізм, Волц, ядерна програма Ірану, ядерна зброя, баланс сил.*

One of the main problems of global politics of the XXI century is the nuclear program of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Over the past few years, the situation around the Iranian nuclear program several times has balanced on the brink of war, then getting back to the diplomacy direction, to negotiations that were taking place against the background of the West and the UN Security Council severe sanctions implementation. The

international community is concerned about the prospect of Iran's acquisition of the nuclear weapons and therefore endeavors to restrict such aspirations of the Islamic Republic of Iran, however some structural realism or neorealism supporters, in particular Waltz, consider such a perspective as the best option for further development. Therefore, the practical significance of this article is the analysis of key arguments of the theory of structural realism supporters, concerning the development of Iran's nuclear program.

Among the Ukrainian scholars, this topic has not been thoroughly investigated, only fragmentary, thereby requires further development. This study is mainly based on the works of foreign scholars such as Waltz, Sagan, Rauchhaus, Tsygankov, Konyshev.

Special attention should be given to the Waltz work "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons". It reflects his concept of "nuclear peace", where he notes that, under certain circumstances, weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, can contribute to the stability of relations between states and reduce the risk of high-intensity conflicts escalation.

The major objective of the article is to analyze the development of Iran's nuclear program through the prism of Waltz's "nuclear peace" concept within the framework of the theory of structural realism.

Neorealism or structural realism is the theory of international relations which emerged after the Waltz's work "Theory of International Politics" was published in 1979 [Waltz 1979: 251]. Other well-known researchers in this field of international relations such as Gilpin, Kennedy, Modelski, Walt, Snyder, Wohlforth, Snow, Holsti. In particular, within the realistic field of the theory of international relations, issues related to the nuclear weapons in general, specifically the problems of its proliferation are being in detail and comprehensively developed. This is the case for both, the theory of classical realism and modern neorealism.

This theory explains the need for sates to obtain nuclear weapons at several levels. Security dilemma defines this need within the theories of the highest level of abstraction.

According to Waltz, the state of the world can be interpreted as an indefinite international anarchy. In conditions of international anarchy, the prerequisite for achieving other goals by the states is to guarantee their own security, which thus makes them to implement hardline politics [Waltz 1979: 93].

Although, according to Waltz, states play a major role in international politics and are similar in terms of needs, but differ in their ability to achieve them. These capabilities and potential determine their place in the world. The structural division of powers between states is limited by the most powerful of them for fear of relative success, other minor states, and also because of the threat of dependence on these new states. Therefore, commitments of each state to maximize its power on the world arena determine the current balance of forces which forms international relations [Waltz 1979: 99].

Accordingly, the initial concepts in the Waltz theory are the structure and system of international politics. "The system is a set of interacting units. At one level the system consists of a structure, which is a component of the systemic level and enables to examine, by what means the units form a certain spectrum, different from the simple set. On the other level, the system consists of interacting units" [Конышев 2004: 62–63]. The main provisions of neorealism are the following:

1. Neorealism does not attempt to be methodologically rigorous. Therefore, the main actors in the system are the states and their unions. Their principal objectives are protection of national interests, security of the state and the preservation of the status quo in international relations. The principal means of securing these objectives are the strength and unions of states.
2. Neorealism provides an explanation of international behavior at the level of the international system, whose structural properties are independent from the efforts of "small" and "middle" states, but are the result of interaction between the great powers.
3. International relations are an integral system that functions in accordance with public law. Consequently, only systemic analysis can reveal their nature.
4. The momentum of international relations is a rigid, restraining influence of the international system structural constraints [Цыганков 2003: 126–132].

Waltz adheres to a systemic approach: the international structure operates as a limiter of the behavior of states, so only those survive, who act within the expected by the rest of the actors' range. Despite criticism, neorealism retains the position of a leading theoretical direction.

A systemic view on the politics clarifies the issues how organized environment (international system) in the capacity of a guide affects policy actors. However, the article also draws attention to the fact that virtually state's political course depends both on systemic influence, and on its internal political factors [Конышев 2004: 58–59]. The key features of a systematic approach towards the analysis of international relations are as follows:

– international relations are social relations in their nature, hence, international systems are a kind of social systems;

– unlike physical or biological types of systems, social systems, including international systems, as a rule,

belong to a special type of public, low-organized systems whose spatial boundaries are frequently conditional;

– social communities, groups and individuals represent the core elements of international relations. Consequently, international systems are systems of human interaction, to be guided in their actions by the will, consciousness, and value perspectives;

– international relations are mainly political relations, which central element is the interaction between states;

– lack of supreme power and "pluralism of sovereignty" characterize fundamental specific feature of international relations. This causes the inherent to the international systems low level of external and internal centralization of the mentioned above weak organization. That is to say, international systems are special social systems characterized by a weak level of integration of their elements, low unity and subsequently, significant autonomy of these elements [Цыганков 1994: 68–70].

Accordingly, the theoretical basis of the work is the theory of systems, adapted as an element of political science – the theory of international systems. In turn, the methodological basis of this article is the systemic analysis combined with other logical, general scientific and empirical methods. Accordingly, the pressure of the international system and especially of the great powers on Iran under the pretext of its nuclear program, in particular the policy of Russian Federation, the USA, and the EU towards Iran's nuclear program and the geopolitical aspects of this program are being analyzed as the context of interconnected events in a unipolar system on a global scale and multipolar in a regional one. In this regard, particular attention is devoted to the hypothesis of the "threshold" nuclear status of the neorealistic concept of the theory of international relations. It refers to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the role of the "threshold" nuclear status as a deterrent between states, which existence strengthens the stability of the system of international relations.

Since, in the context of international relations, issues related to the general nuclear weapons dimension and the problems of its non-proliferation, are being developed, in particular, most detailed, if not comprehensively, in its neorealistic direction.

One of the Waltz's early works "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons" (1981) describes his concept of "nuclear peace": under certain circumstances, weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, can contribute to the stability of relations between states and reduce the risk of high intensity conflicts escalating [Waltz 1981: 32].

Waltz in his article "The Origins of the War in the Theory of Neorealism" names nuclear weapons a means of maintaining peace [Waltz 1988: 624]. He states that the very nuclear factor, namely the threat to strike back, became one of the crucial reasons that under the Cold War there was no direct large-scale armed conflict between the USSR and the United States and their coalitions. Waltz also believes that Nuclear weapons and the threat of using it keeps states from a full-fledged war far more effective than the threat of conventional weapons [Waltz 1988: 625]. According to this hypothesis when none of the two states has nuclear warheads, the first one is ready at any moment to attack the other and vice versa if the war probability success seems to be greater for its ruling elite, rather than the likelihood of defeat and irreparable damage. Instead, between two states which possess nuclear weapons, no elite will order to attack as they have no confidence that the enemy will not cause a nuclear strike in response. In so doing, the consequences of using weapons of mass destruction are too serious, even horrible, to allow such an opportunity, even if it is anticipated that the activation of nuclear warrants guarantees the victory. The main problem of the hypothesis is how nuclear states can consolidate the state of peace between them, since the anarchic structure of international relations does not allow eliminating all the causes of conflicts. Therefore, nuclear Powers remain competing in military sphere; exert efforts to strengthen their own security. Instead, nuclear weapons and state defense strategies that hamper to strike and successful offensive reduce the likelihood of a war [Waltz 1988: 626]. Although its capability remains, it is significantly reduced in relations between states, which possess nuclear weapons. The probability of a global war between them is approaching almost zero. Waltz assumes that the nature and probability of "hot" wars are laid down in the anarchic structure of international relations. Instead, only the availability of nuclear weapons in two superpowers – the US and the USSR deprived them of the ability to turn the Cold War into a "hot" one [Waltz 1988: 628]. K. Waltz in the article "Structural Realism after the Cold War" [Waltz 2000: 5–41] observes that the emergence of nuclear weapons has not change the anarchist structure of the international system, but has influenced how the elites of individual states initiate measures to ensure their own security and can perceive the security of other states [Waltz 2000: 5].

Profound changes in global politics increase the tension and conflict between states. But only nuclear weapons keep the peace between those who are under its protection [Waltz 2000: 32–36]. K. Waltz, along with Sagan, developed the concept of "nuclear peace" in the work "Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: Restoration of Debate" [Sagan 2002: 288]. They confirmed the thesis that there is an abyss between the world of conventional weapons and nuclear world. Also, nuclear weapons make war practically impossible. According to Waltz, the United States less relies on nuclear weapons, since it has

become the state with the largest number of conventional weapons on the planet. The United States is atop the list of all the world states at the defense spending, as evidenced by the annual amounts, the country allocates to the military sphere [Sagan 2002: 110].

Rauchhaus criticizes the concept of "nuclear peace". Although, he agrees with the statement that nuclear weapons availability in two states may reduce the likelihood of an armed conflict between them, but believes that the probability of an armed conflict is greater among the two states where one has nuclear weapons, and the other does not [Rauchhaus 2009: 258–277].

In turn, Bell and Miller questioning the Waltz thesis that between two nuclear Powers the likelihood of an armed conflict is lower than between states, which have only ordinary weapons [Bell 2015: 74–92]. Clarified methods for analyzing the probabilities of the beginning of an armed conflict between two states suggest that the availability of nuclear weapons is not a significant factor to affect the probability of the beginning of an armed conflict.

Waltz insists that during the "Cold War" the fact of nuclear weapons possession itself was more important than characteristics of a nuclear Power. Instead, he contests the assumption that the effectiveness of nuclear deterrence depends on the country itself and its place in the system of relations with other countries. According to Waltz, the identity of a country's leader, the characteristic of a state itself or its national behavior depend on the outside world. Possessing only conventional weapons, the state which is in the defensive mode, for example modern Ukraine, has to ask itself the question of how much weapons will protect it from the victorious attack of the aggressor. Particularly, it is difficult to defend it against states willing to bear high military risks. In this case, the elite of the defending state must take into account everything: in particular, characteristic of its political system, and a leader. In case of nuclear weapons possession any state will refrain from attacking its owner, fearing a nuclear strike in response. Therefore, in the nuclear world, the elite of any state, whether its leader, Stalin, Mao Zedong, Saddam Hussein or Kim Jong Il, will hold back the knowledge that their aggressive actions against a nuclear opponent can cause its own destruction, as shown by the example of the United States and DPRK in the XXI century. Thereby, Waltz believes that nuclear weapons make leaders act rationally, although in other conditions they could behave in an irrational and inadvertent way [Sagan 2002: 122].

In 2012, Waltz published an article under the provocative title "Why Iran Should Own a Bomb. Nuclear Balance Would Mean Stability" in Foreign Affairs Magazine [Waltz 2012]. The concept of "nuclear peace" has received a new interpretation in the light of consideration of a particular situation around Iran's nuclear issue. An American political scientist argued that the crisis is caused by the Israeli regional monopoly on nuclear weapons, and entails constant instability in the Middle East. Instead, the development of a military component of Iran's nuclear program and the creation of nuclear warheads could stabilize the geopolitical situation and normalize the balance of power in the region between Tel Aviv and Tehran. In this article, Waltz sought to dispel the fears of Western elites that the terrorists could obtain nuclear weapons through Iran. He also assumed that fears of a possible nuclear proliferation in the region after Iran's acquisition and the commencement of a nuclear arms race in the Middle East were unwarranted. According to Waltz, "dissemination" means rapid and uncontrolled proliferation of nuclear weapons and the explosive expansion of the nuclear club, but this have not happened in the 70 years of the atomic era. Moreover, since the 1970s, the growth in the number of nuclear states has slowed down.

If Iran becomes a nuclear power, it will hold back Israel and vice versa, as always happens in the relations between nuclear powers. Walt emphasized that there has never been a full-scale war between the two nuclear powers.

Consequently, according to the hypothesis of neorealism, nuclear weapons are "weapons of peace" and the most effective security guarantee, so, for example, Iran, as rational actors in international relations, must strive to possess or gain it. Simultaneously, possession of nuclear charges does not grant the state a special status, but only reduces pressure on it from the outside and the probability of war is rather a means of intimidation than a real attack. The concept of "nuclear peace" has received a new interpretation in the light of consideration of a particular situation around Iran's nuclear issue. This theory has become especially relevant when in the 2000s; Iran's nuclear program was resonated in the world when Tehran achieved significant progress in technology development needed to enrich armed uranium. Also, in this research is presented criticism of Waltz theory and explains another vision of nuclear proliferation and the possibility of conflict between nuclear-weapon States.

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