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UKRAINE – THE EUROPEAN UNION



KEY THEME ANALYSIS

RUSSIA DOES NOT SUCCEED IN DIVIDING EUROPE OVER THE ISSUE OF SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

When launching the aggression against Ukraine Russia reckoned on its traditional policy of 'divide and rule', trying to provoke a confrontation on several levels at once: the interregional conflict in Ukraine, the political conflicts within the EU countries, the split in the European Union, and the split between the EU and the U.S. However, Moscow has not succeeded in reaching these goals: people from all regions of Ukraine are united against the external aggression and around the idea of European integration; the EU and the U.S. express solidarity in support for Ukraine. The efficiency of Russian multimillion 'investment' in a number of European political parties and 'expert groups' has not met the Kremlin's expectations.

It is no secret that Europe's politics is being determined not so much in Brussels as in Berlin. For a long time Russia has managed to profitably use this situation, literally paying salaries to a number of influential German politicians and 'experts' who have 'fed' German public opinion with fairy-tales about the almost critical dependence of the German economy on trade with Russia (while the latter is only 11th in the list of the largest German trade partners).

The pro-Russian line in Germany is headed by the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), whose former leader and ex-Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder for many years has been 'working' in the 'Gazprom' company 'Nord Stream AG'. Recently his fellow party member Matthias Platzeck (the former chairman of the SPD and the current chairman of the German-Russian Forum) in his interview to 'Passauer Neue Presse' actually called for the legalization of the annexation of Crimea. Some high ranking representatives of the Christian Social Union (which is the SPD partner in the ruling coalition) sharply criticized Mr. Platzeck for his statements.

It is not surprising that the Kremlin puts its hopes on the German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who also represents the SPD. On 18 November 2014 Moscow invited him to talk with Vladimir Putin, despite the fact that just three days before, in Australia, the Russian leader had had a long talk with Chancellor Angela Merkel. **After his return from Moscow Mr. Steinmeier had nothing to say about the possible scaling back of Russia's military aggression, but he said that he did not see Ukraine "on the path to NATO,"**¹ stressing that he wanted complete clarity on this issue. It was hardly accidental that on the eve of Mr. Steinmeier's statement, the Russian presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov had publicly

¹ Don't see Ukraine joining NATO: German foreign minister. - http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/don-t-see-ukraine-joining-nato-german-foreign-minister-114113000570_1.html.

demanded the "100% guarantee" that Ukraine would not join NATO.

However, the tone in German policy is set by Angela Merkel, who recognized in March 2014 that Putin had 'lost touch with reality.'² It is apparent that many hours of fruitless talks with the Russian leader in Australia reconfirmed to Frau Merkel the correctness of her conclusion. German society is also gradually realizing the falseness of the 'appeasement' policy. During the last month the number of Germans who support sanctions against Russia has increased from 52% to 58%. It is worth noting that sanctions are supported by 63% of CDU/CSU voters and by the same percentage of SPD voters.³ So the leaders of the latter will have to choose between the support of the Kremlin and of their own electorate.

For a long time the postwar complexes and Russian money have been preventing Berlin from a rational evaluation of Moscow's policy, but **the complete lack of negotiability of Putin has forced Merkel to review relations with Russia** and to get rid of the illusion that it is possible to cooperate with the current master of the Kremlin. The Germans appreciate the predictability and the ability to keep one's word; and Putin demonstrates the opposite qualities. **Angela Merkel in her speech at the Australian Institute of International Politics on 17 November 2014, sharply criticized Putin's bid for power and attempt to divide Europe into spheres of influence.** Particular attention should be paid to the Chancellor's statement that this crisis is not only about Ukraine and Russia's actions pose a risk to other countries, especially to Moldova, Georgia and Serbia.⁴

Thus Angela Merkel made it clear that Germany will not leave without reaction Russia's attempts to expand its 'sphere of influence' in Europe. Articles in the German press indicate the anxiety of the German Foreign Office with the strengthening of Russia's influence in the Balkans; and Berlin intends to counteract this trend.⁵ Against the background of Russia's activity in Serbia, German President Joachim Gauck paid a visit to Slovenia. Angela Merkel continues to assert the need for economic sanctions against Russia, thus constraining those who want to lift them. At the Chancellor's request, the Russian-German forum 'Petersburg Dialogue', scheduled for November 2014, was canceled. Instead, a conference to discuss the prospects of attracting German investments to Ukraine was held on 20 November 2014 at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs.

It is remarkable that after the two visits to Germany during the last month, **Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán reduced his pro-Russian rhetoric.** He said that he supported the independence of Ukraine and even the prospect of its membership in the EU; he promised to increase Hungary's military spending to 2% of GDP, and he visited the NATO military mission in Lithuania, thus demonstrating his solidarity with the Baltic Allies, which felt the Russian threat most of all. Besides, in late November 2014 the Hungarian parliament ratified the EU-Ukraine Association agreements.

It is obvious that Berlin is slowly coming to the opinion, expressed by the new **President of the European Council Donald Tusk in his interview to 'The Financial Times': "Russia is not a strategic partner. Russia is our strategic problem."**⁶ Mr. Tusk said that the security of the EU border and the support for the

² Pressure Rising as Obama Works to Rein In Russia. -

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/03/world/europe/pressure-rising-as-obama-works-to-rein-in-russia.html?_r=1.

³ Опитування: У Німеччині зростає підтримка політики санкцій проти Росії. - <http://www.dw.de/опитування-у-німеччині-зростає-підтримка-політики-санкцій-проти-росії/a-18100342>.

⁴ Меркель: Путін ставить на право сильного та вважає Україну сферою впливу Росії. -

<http://www.dw.de/меркель-путін-ставить-на-право-сильного-та-вважає-україну-сферою-впливу-росії/a-18068633>

⁵ Russische Machtpolitik: Putins Balkan-Strategie alarmiert Bundesregierung. -

<http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/putin-russland-vergroessert-einfluss-in-serbien-und-bosnien-herzegowina-a-1003180.html>

⁶ Lunch with the FT: Donald Tusk. - <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/72d9b928-7558-11e4-b1bf-00144feabdco.html>.

neighbors who share European values – are among his priorities in his post in the European Council. **Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Johannes Hahn** at the press conference following his visit to Kyiv called "realistic" the reform plan of President Petro Poroshenko, which envisages Ukraine's readiness to apply for EU membership in 5 years.⁷ The support of the EU member for Ukraine was also shown by the invitation of Petro Poroshenko to the Visegrad Four summit (16 November 2014, Bratislava) and by the decision of Hungary and Slovakia to build by 2015 a gas hub to enhance the capability of reverse gas supplies to Ukraine.

Thus, despite Moscow's efforts to split the EU, the member states maintain a unified position to support Ukraine. Berlin is likely to adequately 'evaluate' the Kremlin's attempts to divide the ruling German coalition. Farewell to the pro-Russian illusions that will enable Germany, which is learning to take responsibility for the fate of Europe, to finally discover Ukraine as an independent state and a prospective partner.



⁷ Єврокомісар: план Порошенка щодо інтеграції до ЄС – реалістичний. - <http://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2014/11/28/7028255>.

UKRAINE – NATO



KEY THEME ANALYSIS

THE CERTAINTY OF DIRECTION TO JOIN NATO RESULTS IN INTENSIFIED NATO-UKRAINE COOPERATION

The end of November 2014 brought significant changes to the development of Ukraine-NATO relations. Previously the Alliance's chiefs declared their "respect" for Ukraine's decision to be non-aligned, but at the November 2014 monthly press conference the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg talked about "respect" for the decision of the new Ukrainian government's rejection of Ukraine's neutral status; he also said that NATO would be ready to consider Ukraine's bid to join the Alliance and decide whether the country fulfils all the criteria.⁸ Such changes resulted from two interrelated developments: ***on the one hand, the decision of a new Ukrainian Parliamentary Coalition to define joining NATO as the official aim; on the other hand, the leadership of the Alliance is finally becoming aware of the high probability of further proliferation of Russian aggression.***

It is remarkable that the new Parliamentary Coalition agreement was signed on 21 November 2014, strictly on the day of U.S. Vice President Joseph Biden's visit to Kyiv. One may assume that Washington sent a diplomatic signal to Kyiv, hinting at the need to avoid delaying with the formation of a new coalition and a new government. Joe Biden's statement says in favor of such an assumption – he called for the formation of a new government "in days, not weeks", and to begin the implementation of the reforms plan.⁹ It seems that the U.S. is ready for a more active participation in the fate of its strategic partner. One can also assume that the U.S. Vice President did not object to the plans for joining NATO, fixed in the new Ukrainian Parliament's Coalition agreement.

It is possible that Joe Biden's visit was also designed to prevent the offensive of Russian-separatist forces, possibly dedicated to the first anniversary of the Ukrainian Euro-revolution (the previous massive invasion of Russian troops 'happened' to coincide with Ukrainian Independence Day). The preparation of a new Russian attack is indicated by the new massive supplies of Russian heavy armament to Donbas, by the renewal of shelling Ukrainian army positions from Russia's territory and by the increase in the number of separatist attacks.

It is important that Joe Biden has brought to Ukraine the first serious military assistance, namely the radar systems to combat enemy mortar calculations. Although radar systems are not considered a lethal weapon, the Ukrainian army really needs them

⁸ NATO chief is ready to consider Ukraine's bid for membership . - http://mw.ua/WORLD/nato-chief-is-ready-to-consider-ukraine-s-bid-for-membership-573_.html

⁹ Ukraine leader, under pressure from West, pledges new government soon. -

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/24/us-ukraine-crisis-lithuania-idUSKCN0J8oUK20141124>.

a lot, and this time one can speak about real military assistance, not dry rations and body armor. A few days later Lithuania President Dalia Grybauskaitė said that her country would also provide military assistance to Ukraine. Within another few days the plane with the first military aid from Canada (protective equipment, medicines and warm clothes) landed in Kyiv. **A tendency to enhance military assistance to Ukraine is evident and it should be a serious signal to Moscow.**

U.S. Deputy National Security Advisor and nominee for the Deputy Secretary of State Tony Blinken said in Congress that the Administration should consider rethinking its policy of not providing lethal military aid to Kyiv. The Russian Foreign Ministry responded with a sharp statement,¹⁰ but the Kremlin itself continues supplying heavy weapons to its militants in Donbas, including the latest types of weapons. Russia is hardly ready for a real 'arms race' in the region. The more weapons the Ukrainian army has, the more weapons and troops Russia has to send to be sure of the success of its new offensive, which is obviously being prepared by the Kremlin.

The Supreme Allied Commander in Europe General Philip M. Breedlove's visit to Kyiv on 26 November 2014 was another important signal to Moscow. Gen. Breedlove supports more decisive aid to Ukraine. Philip M. Breedlove said that Russia's new weapon supplies to separatists indicated their plans to capture more Ukrainian territories. Gen. Breedlove noted the high level fighting qualities of the Ukrainian army and promised "a comprehensive and realistic program to meet the needs of the Ukrainian Armed Forces."¹¹

The Resolution of the 60th Annual Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly to support democracy and sovereignty of Ukraine, adopted on 24 November 2014 in the Hague, indicates that Kyiv's intention to join NATO will be supported. The first paragraph of the document stresses *the moral imperative of the Euro-Atlantic community to support Ukraine in its struggle for territorial integrity and sovereignty, as well as for the chosen way towards greater Euro-Atlantic integration.* It is stressed that *no third party has the right to veto this process.* The Resolution also referred to the decision of the Bucharest summit, that *Ukraine and Georgia will join NATO if they have the intention and meet the membership criteria.* The Parliamentary Assembly encouraged *the constantly growing support of the Ukrainian people for NATO membership.*¹²

Russia contributed to the appearance of NATO's statements in favor of Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic prospects. The inadequate statements and threats by Russian officials could not remain unanswered. On 19 November 2014 the Russian presidential press-secretary Dmitry Peskov said that Russia needed a "100% guarantee that no one would think about Ukraine's joining NATO;" he also threatened that the Donbas scenario might be repeated in Latvia.¹³ On 24 November the Permanent Representative of Russia to NATO Alexander Grushko threatened to "reply" to NATO increasing its presence in the Baltic States. On 25 November the Speaker of the Russian Parliament Sergei Naryshkin suggested that European NATO members "should expel the U.S. from the bloc."¹⁴

The Allies have responded to the Kremlin's aggressive actions and statements with measures to strengthen military capabilities. The U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck

¹⁰ Russia warns U.S. against "destabilizing" Ukraine. - <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/russia-responds-to-blinken-on-supplying-ukraine-weapons>.

¹¹ NATO promises to 'meet the needs' of Ukrainian army. - http://mw.ua/UKRAINE/nato-promises-to-meet-the-needs-of-ukrainian-army-544_.html.

¹² Резолюція щорічної сесії ПА НАТО на підтримку України – один з найрішучіших публічних демаршів міжнародної спільноти проти агресії Росії. - <http://nato.mfa.gov.ua/ua/press-center/news/30054-rezolyuciya-shhorichnoji-sesiji-pa-nato-na-pidtrimku-ukrajini--odin-z-najrishuchishih-publichnih-demarshiv-mizhnarodnoji-spilynoti-proti-agresiji-rosiji>

¹³ Песков: НАТО заставляет Россию нервничать. - http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/international/2014/11/141119_peskov_bbc_interview

¹⁴ Europeans should expel US from NATO - Russian lawmaker. - <http://itar-tass.com/en/world/763573>.

Hagel announced in November 2014 the intention to conduct a large-scale modernization of the U.S. Armed Forces. Poland announced its plans to relocate its military bases from the west to the east of the country. Lithuania has decided to increase its defense budget by 40%.

Ukraine has taken an important first step towards NATO membership by public declaration of the corresponding intention. Although President Poroshenko says that it is not the right time to officially apply for membership, he supports the provision of the Parliamentary Coalition agreement, which envisages Ukraine's transition to NATO standards by 2019. Then The President is going to hold a referendum, the positive results of which can be expected due to the fact that 51% of Ukrainians support joining NATO, while only 25% oppose.¹⁵ **Russian aggression gave the answer to the question of whether Ukraine will join NATO by demonstrating that the appeasement policy does not work. The Allies are more than ever interested in the rapid strengthening of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, for their own security depends now on this issue.** Ukraine is becoming de facto an important part of the NATO security system, and the terms of its joining the bloc depend on Kyiv's ability to seize the new opportunities.



¹⁵ Оцінка ситуації на Сході. Зовнішньополітичні орієнтації населення. - <http://ratinggroup.com.ua/products/politic/data/entry/14117>

FOREIGN POLICY OF UKRAINE



KEY THEME ANALYSIS

RUSSIA CONTINUES TO NARROW THE WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY TO EMERGE FROM THE CRISIS WHICH IT HAS CREATED

The 'cold shower' at the G-20 summit clearly indicated to Vladimir Putin that he had lost the confidence of the international community and that his policy has lead Russia to isolation. The OPEC refusal to reduce oil production and the oil prices going down below \$70 per barrel, as well as the sharp devaluation of the ruble, which has lost half of its value in 2014, are even more clear signals to the Kremlin. Moscow was forced to abandon the idea of building 'South Stream', to postpone the 'Roscosmos' space projects and to make a decision on the need to sell 19.5% of 'Rosneft.'

So Mr. Putin should not have any illusions that things are going right. Thus his refusal to change the present course is even more eloquent and his deliberate increasing of tensions is apparent. Rather than taking the opportunity to open communication with Angela Merkel in Australia, Vladimir Putin preferred trying to make arrangements with her minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier a few days later in Moscow. Instead of a constructive position that would guarantee the lifting of Western sanctions and stop the falling down of the Russian economy, Mr. Putin signed unfavourable contracts with Beijing and proposed gas discounts to Ankara aiming at persuading it to agree to a new pipeline, which might compensate for the failure of 'South Stream'.

It is obvious that Mr. Putin is not going to reconcile with the West. His probable main reasons are the following:

1) *His desires for lifelong rule* cannot be embodied without the self-isolation of Russia from the West (Putin knows that the temporary raising of people's well-being in Russia depended on the exorbitant oil and gas prices, which should go down after the shale revolution in the U.S.);

2) *Putin hopes that a number of local wars, launched by Moscow, will collapse the existing international legal and security system, will trigger a chain reaction, and the chaos will grant Russia the opportunity to take revenge for the defeat of 1991.*

That is why Russia is not going to stop the destabilization in Ukraine, as well as not intending to stop at Ukraine. **The expected expansion of the Russian military presence in Belarus will enable its troops to threaten Kyiv and to attack Lithuania and Poland, 'punching' a land corridor to Kaliningrad** (under any possible pretext, from a 'people's uprisings' to the simulation of a Polish or Lithuanian invasion of this Russian enclave). **The agreement between Russia and self-**

proclaimed Abkhazia, signed on 24 November 2014, envisages the creation of joint armed forces and indicated the intention to escalate the situation on Georgia's border with the following seizure or the whole country by the 'Abkhazian' troops.

Moscow's proposition to Kyiv to hold negotiations with the leaders of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk 'peoples republics' is an obvious attempt to gain time and to shift to Kyiv the burden of funding these Russia-occupied territories (by the way, Kyiv continues to deliver for free the electricity and gas to these occupied areas). The Kremlin's real goals are indicated by the separatists' statements that they intend to capture the entire territory of Donetsk and Luhansk provinces,¹⁶ and by their appeal to the UN Security Council to introduce Russian 'peacekeepers' to the Donbas region.¹⁷ Russia has not stopped supplying heavy weapons and 'volunteers' to Donbas, making preparations to take control of the whole region and to capture the land corridor to Crimea.

Only the achievement of a high level of military and defense preparedness of the Ukrainian Armed Forces could convince Russia of the impossibility of the offensive without significant losses, and thus force Moscow to abandon the idea of expanding the aggression. However, one should not expect any constructive peace proposals from the Kremlin in any case. **It is most likely that without confidence in a successful offensive, Moscow would try to 'freeze' the conflict and to agree with Kyiv on the technical issues necessary for survival of the annexed Crimea and of the self-proclaimed Donbas 'republics'.** Mostly it might be talks about the transit and supplies of energy, food and water (to Crimea). Kyiv should be prepared for such a development with an elaborated position and strong arguments.

But the most important thing is to make clear to the leaders of world powers and international organizations that we should all together ***seek the solution not to the artificial 'Ukrainian crisis', but to the real 'Russian problem', which is rapidly moving us towards the Third World War, in the chaos of which the Kremlin hopes to regain control over the lost 'colonies' and to restore lost influence.***

¹⁶ Пушилин: ДНР видит свои границы в пределах Донецкой области. - <http://ria.ru/world/20141117/1033734776.html>

¹⁷ Бойовики "ДНР" просять ООН надіслати російських "миротворців". - <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/11/25/7045353>