

INTERNATIONAL WEEKLY

№ 15

16.09.2015 – 30.09.2015



Foreign
Policy
Research
Institute

Friedrich Naumann
STIFTUNG
FÜR DIE FREIHEIT



UKRAINE – THE EUROPEAN UNION



KEY THEME ANALYSIS

"MOREL'S PLAN": ARE EUROPE AND THE U.S. READY TO COMPROMISE WITH PUTIN?

The latter half of September was marked by intensive diplomatic preparations for the "Normandy" Quartet summit, scheduled for October 2, 2015. The meeting of four leaders should result in concrete solution to be presented as a significant step towards resolving the conflict. Apparently, it would be the political decision of "Normandy" Four on the implementation of Minsk agreements, especially with regard to the local elections in the occupied areas of Donbas.

On September 18, the Ukrainian newspaper "Mirror Weekly" published the so-called **"Morel's Plan," which is said to be the basis for the elections in self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk "people's republics"** ("DPR" and "LPR").¹ The author of the plan, Pierre Morel, is the coordinator of the working group on political issues within the Trilateral contact group on Ukraine. Mr. Morel is experienced in working with "frozen" conflicts in the post-Soviet space, including in Nagorno-Karabakh and South Ossetia. His plan to hold elections in the occupied areas of Donbas actually provides for legalization of the current Russian proxy regimes with the formal observance of Ukrainian legislation, which is to be amended specifically for this case through adopting a special law for elections "in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions."

After the "legitimate" authorities of the occupied areas are elected, Kyiv will lose the formal grounds to refuse negotiation with the separatists. ***The process of formalizing conflict as the "domestic" one would be started.*** This is exactly what Moscow is seeking, trying to force Kyiv to recognize proxy regimes in Donbas, to fund them at the expense of Ukraine's budget, and to incorporate this Kremlin's tool of destabilization into Ukrainian statehood.

Russia's plan for the "DPR" role within Ukraine is illustrated by words of ***Alexander Zakharchenko, the leader of Donetsk's militants: "If Ukraine starts preparations for the referendum on joining NATO or any other procedures, the DPR will immediately come out of the Minsk agreements and begin purification of the entire Donbas territory from Kyiv's occupation."***² The Minsk agreements provide for the right of "certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions" to have their own military forces – the so-called "people's police units;"³ so a permanent threat of conflict escalation will remain, if

¹ http://gazeta.dt.ua/internal/morelski-tezi-_.html

² <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2015/09/23/7082382>

³ <http://www.osce.org/cio/140156>

Ukraine's foreign policy does not meet the Kremlin's requirements.

Russia also seeks to deprive Kyiv of formal grounds to abandon the final voting on the Constitutional amendments regarding the decentralization with reference to the "peculiarities of local self-government in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions," determined by separate law.⁴

The interests of Moscow, Berlin and Paris coincide in the issue of lifting sanctions as soon as possible. It might become possible through the formal implementation of the majority of the Minsk II provisions, including the "elections" in the so-called "DPR" and "LPR."

In September 2015, the Russian-separatist forces generally respected the truce. **On September 29, the Tripartite contact group on Ukraine even managed to agree on conditions of withdrawal of smaller than 100 mm caliber weapons; and the appropriate agreement was sign.** The document envisages withdrawal of weapons from the contact line at 15 km on each side, to be implemented under the supervision of the OSCE, including the monitoring and verification procedures.

Russia is obviously not going to withdraw its troops from Donbas, as it rejects the fact of their presence in the region. Instead, they may get the chevrons of the so-called "people's police units" to be established in accordance with the Minsk II agreements. Russia may also interpret the reinstatement of Ukraine's control over the state border as a transfer of such control to the so-called "people's police units" – they will be formally considered as Ukrainian law enforcement forces after the separatist's governments in Donetsk and Luhansk are legalized through local elections, actually remaining under the Kremlin's control. Thus, the Minsk agreement will be implemented pro forma; and formal grounds to continue sanctions against Russia will disappear, with the exception for the minor ones directly related to the annexation of Crimea.

It is clear that Ukraine is not optimistic about such scenario; and President Poroshenko called the "Morel's Plan" as a private opinion.⁵ However, the "Deutsche Welle" informed that ***the basis for "Morel's Plan" was elaborated by the common U.S.-Russian commission of Victoria Nuland and Grigory Karasin, and was approved by Berlin and Paris.***⁶ In this context one should also recall the ***Frank-Walter Steinmeier's statement of September 12, following the "Normandy" Four foreign ministers' meeting: "The modality and timing of local elections to be drawn up in the working group on political issues within the Trilateral contact group. They will be based on proposals of the relevant working group Coordinator, Pierre Morel, and on the Minsk agreements."***⁷

On September 30, the press office of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy informed that ***Federica Mogherini discussed with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov "the situation in eastern Ukraine and the need to fully implement the Minsk Agreements, with a particular focus on local elections."***⁸ The particular emphasis on local elections, but not on those provisions of the Minsk agreements, which are considered by Kyiv as the prerequisites for local elections, indicates that the EU is inclined to agree on Russia's scenario of actual legalization of the Kremlin's proxy regimes in the breakaway republics.

It seems that the West failed to resist Russia's blackmail on Syria, including a threat of increasing flow of refugees, and decided to make concessions at Ukraine's expense. The pressure of Russia-associated business also

⁴ http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=55812

⁵ <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2015/09/20/7082005>

⁶ <http://www.dw.com/uk/план-мореля-чи-проковтне-київ-гірку-пігулку/a-18740485>

⁷ <http://www.auswaertiges->

amt.de/DE/Infoservice/Presse/Meldungen/2015/150912_BM_AM_Treffen_Normandie_Format.html

⁸ http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2015/150929_04_en.htm

contributed to such developments, as well as the dissatisfaction of the EU and the U.S. with the pace reforms in Ukraine, especially regarding the fight against corruption.⁹ The West has enough political and economic leverage to force Kyiv to agree on the chosen scenario. Symptomatically, the information appeared that the "winter" package of Russian gas supplies to Ukraine is planned to start working just after the "Normandy" Four summit.¹⁰

The "Morel's Plan", at best, can only "freeze" the conflict, and its shaping indicates that the EU and the U.S. are losing their patience. **Kyiv has a little time to propose Western counterparts its own real scenario of conflict resolution, and to stop cherishing illusion that perfect plan for Ukraine can be developed within the "Normandy" format or the Nuland-Karasin commission.**



⁹ Напр., див.: <https://www.facebook.com/usdos.ukraine/posts/10153248488506936>

¹⁰ <http://www.epravda.com.ua/news/2015/09/30/561751>

UKRAINE – NATO



KEY THEME ANALYSIS

NATO SECRETARY GENERAL VISIT TO UKRAINE: STEP-BY-STEP PROGRESS WITHOUT SHIFTING TO A NEW LEVEL OF RELATIONS

The long-awaited visit of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg was accompanied with a number of decisions to develop NATO-Ukraine relations, but was not marked by fundamental change in the level of relationships. The Alliance is deliberately cautious in its support for Ukraine; and Kyiv is not pushing the issue of membership, continuing cooperation within the framework of partnership, which provides no security guarantees.

It was eloquently indicative that **on September 21, 2015 Jens Stoltenberg and Petro Poroshenko opened in Lviv region not military, but civil emergency joint NATO-Ukraine exercises.** Yes, civil emergency exercises are important from the practical point of view, especially if «The Times» is right that American instructors help Ukrainian colleagues to improve response to the possible radioactive or chemical attack, against the rumors of "dirty" bomb possession by Russia-backed separatists.¹¹ ***However, from the political point of view, NATO Secretary General presence at the opening of non-military exercises was another wrong signal to Moscow. A signal designed "not to irritate" Russia will be interpreted in Moscow as evidence of weakness and NATO unwillingness to decisively support Ukraine.***

During the visit of NATO Secretary General, the Head of Ukraine's Mission to NATO Yehor Bozhok and General Manager of the NATO Support and Procurement Agency Michael Leiden signed the implementing agreements to start the practical phase of the two NATO trust funds for Ukraine – on reforming the logistics and standardization systems of the Armed Forces of Ukraine; and on physical rehabilitation (prosthetics) of the soldiers. With that, it should be noted that the decision on creation of those trust funds was taken over a year ago, during the Wales NATO Summit; such pace of cooperation could hardly be called adequate at the de facto time of war.

On September 22, 2015 it was for the first time that NATO Secretary General took part in the meeting of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine. Several documents on cooperation were signed: the Joint Declaration on the Enhancement of Defense-Technical Cooperation between NATO and Ukraine; the Agreement on the Status of NATO Mission to Ukraine; and the Road Map of Partnership in the Sphere of Strategic Communications. It should be noted that although raising the status of NATO Mission to Ukraine was widely announced as a shifting to the new level, but actually ***it about a new level of NATO mission, but***

¹¹ <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/europe/article4563757.ece>

not of the NATO-Ukraine relationship, which remained at the level of partnership.

President Petro Poroshenko said that "the achievement of criteria necessary for membership in the EU and NATO" were "the top priority for the Ukrainian authorities,"¹² noting that Ukraine was not yet ready to join the Alliance. Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters: "NATO is ready to expand. But before deciding on the accession of a new member, we need to find out whether the country meets NATO standards. To join NATO, Ukraine must improve its army, modernize it."¹³

In this context, it should be noted that **readiness for NATO membership is actually more political issue than the military-technical one**. Let's take Montenegro for example, a country to join NATO soon, – is its army better combat-ready than the Ukrainian one? Moreover, the Ukrainian Armed Forces, despite all the shortcomings, are by several orders stronger than the armies of a number of actual NATO members. As for the issue of compatibility, one should remember that for many years the Armed Forces of Ukraine successfully participated in peacekeeping missions and joint military exercises with NATO member states. Actually, the issue of criteria for membership depends solely on the political will of the Alliance's members. Political decision on accession of Greece, Turkey and Germany were taken without consideration of criteria for membership.

*An expert in international security issues, Professor Grigory Perepelitsa believes that Ukraine is ready for membership, and all it needs is the political will of the leadership: "Ukraine is ready; it accomplished the Intensified Dialogue in 2005-2006. In other words, we have passed the first phase of NATO membership."*¹⁴ This opinion is shared by the Chairman of the Ukraine-NATO Civic League **Serhiy Dzherdzh, who reminds that "None of the countries that gained membership in NATO was a hundred percent ready. However, the political decision had been made, and those countries, which acquired membership in the Alliance, continued reforms much faster than outside NATO."**¹⁵ **On September 19, 2015 a non-governmental organization "Movement for Ukraine in NATO" was established**, headed by the ex-President Leonid Kravchuk. The Movement intends to **demand a referendum on joining NATO**, to encourage authorities to act more decisively.¹⁶

NATO's and Kyiv's excessive caution on the issue of the Alliance's expansion did not help to prevent Russia's invasion to Ukraine in 2014, as well as war against Georgia in 2008. On the contrary, the policy of "appeasement" fuels Moscow's sense of impunity and pushes the Kremlin to start new military adventures. Syrian rebels, who had been trained by the U.S. instructors, became the next victims – they were killed by Russian air strikes.¹⁷ Moscow will continue its military adventures as long as the most powerful military and political Alliance demonstrates excessive caution instead of resoluteness.

¹² <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/vistup-prezidenta-ukrayini-poporoshenka-na-zasidanni-radi-na-36007>

¹³ <http://podrobnosti.ua/2061579-gensek-nato-nazval-uslovie-vstuplenija-ukrainy-v-aljans.html>

¹⁴ <http://www.day.kiev.ua/uk/article/den-planety/ukrayina-nato-nevykorystani-shansy>

¹⁵ [http://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-politics/1888555-](http://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-politics/1888555-ukraine_absolutely_ready_to_join_nato_experts_334608.html)

[ukraine_absolutely_ready_to_join_nato_experts_334608.html](http://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-politics/1888555-ukraine_absolutely_ready_to_join_nato_experts_334608.html)

¹⁶ <http://www.pravda.com.ua/columns/2014/09/14/7037456/>

¹⁷ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/russian-air-strikes-in-syria-did-hit-us-funded-free-syrian-army-rebels-says-john-mccain-a6675291.html>

FOREIGN POLICY OF UKRAINE



KEY THEME ANALYSIS

UKRAINIAN ISSUE AT THE 70TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

UN General Assembly 70th session took place in New York, in the last days of September 2015. Apparently, the main task for Kyiv's diplomacy was to prevent the Ukrainian from possible dropping out of the agenda, as Russia stepped up its military presence in Syria on the eve of the UNGA session.

Ukrainian delegation headed by the President worked hard in New York: in addition to making speech at the General Assembly session, **Petro Poroshenko met with a number of world leaders**, and participated in such important events as the **UN Peacekeeping Summit** and the **11th annual CGI meeting**. Meeting of Petro Poroshenko with **Barack Obama** was short (much shorter than the meeting of the U.S. President with his Russian counterpart), but effective – on September 29, it became known that Obama signed a memorandum on providing nonlethal military assistance to Ukraine at \$21.5 million.¹⁸ Besides, during meeting with Petro Poroshenko, the U.S. Vice President **Joe Biden** informed that this fall the United States will transfer to Ukraine the Q36 mobile counter-battery radar systems.¹⁹

Petro Poroshenko also held important bilateral meetings with the European leaders, namely Prime Minister **David Cameron**, German Chancellor **Angela Merkel** and French President **Francois Hollande**. Judging by the information on the Presidential website, the main purpose of those talks was to clarify "that the issue of Syria cannot be mixed with the issue of Ukraine;"²⁰ and the appropriate assurances were provided to the Ukrainian leader. Besides, Mr. Poroshenko discussed with Ms. Merkel and Mr. Hollande the basic points of the upcoming summit of the "Normandy" Four, scheduled for October 2, in Paris.

In New York, the President of Ukraine met with his Polish counterpart as well. Besides the issues relating to the Russian aggression, the parties agreed on the next meeting of the "Visegrad Group + Ukraine" format, and on this year's visit of **Andrzej Duda** to Ukraine. Petro Poroshenko also met with the leaders of the states-participants to the Joint Group on Investigation into MH17, namely **Australia, the Netherlands,**

¹⁸ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/29/presidential-memorandum-delegation-authority-under-sections-506a1-and>

¹⁹ <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/prezident-u-nyu-jorku-proviv-zustrich-iz-vice-prezidentom-ss-36066>

²⁰ <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/prezident-pid-chas-zustrichej-v-ramkah-genasambleyi-oon-z-li-36038>

Belgium and Malaysia, to discuss further coordination aimed to investigate the tragedy.

Statement by the President of Ukraine at the UNGA session was aimed to enlist support of the international community, and to prevent the issue of Russian aggression from dropping out of the agenda. Key messages were the following:

- **Russia wages undeclared war against Ukraine**, as previously it waged its "hybrid" wars in Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia;

- **International community should intensify pressure on Russia** to force it release all Ukrainian political prisoners and stop the harassment of Tatars in annexed Crimea;

- **The usage of veto by permanent members of the UN Security Council should be limited** with the following cancellation of veto; because Russia's abusive use of veto undermines the effectiveness of the Security Council;

- **Information warfare and aggressive propaganda, including Russian one, should be condemned**;

- Petro Poroshenko proposed to start preparatory work on elaborating **the draft UN Convention on prevention and fight against terrorism**.

Of considerable interest for Ukraine were **the speeches of the U.S. and Russian Presidents**, for they could indicate on how these two powers were going to act in the future, including towards Ukraine. Unfortunately, the speeches of both leaders gave an impression of their living in own parallel worlds. Thus one should not expect radical changes in the political courses of those leaders, both of which are harmful for the world order, though in different manner. **Vladimir Putin** repeated all the major Russian propaganda clichés about that parallel world, where Russia was the main peacekeeper, and the West was violating the international law. Mr. Putin also proposed to create the wide "anti-terrorist" coalition in cooperation with the bloody regime of Syrian dictator Bashar Assad.

Barak Obama's speech also did not match the realities of the world situation, and was full of romantic illusions about the global cooperation. Mentioning the inadmissibility of Russian aggression against Ukraine and ISIL's terrorism, Mr. Obama, however, urged to continue focusing on diplomacy and international cooperation, such as cooperation with Russia on the Iranian issue; and criticized the "bellicose words" of those, who seek to show the U.S. military force.²¹ It seems that the U.S. President does not realize the interrelation between his soft foreign policy and Russian aggression against Ukraine, as well as between the precocious withdrawal of the U.S. troops from Iraq and the emergence of ISIL.

Barack Obama's consent to hold the bilateral meeting with Vladimir Putin hardly made good sense. They predictably failed to find common views on both the Ukrainian and Syrian issues, but **provided good stuff for Russian propaganda, and convinced Putin that his military blackmail tools work** – as Obama stopped ignoring him. So, no wonder that Putin continued his aggressive course, and in a few days the Russian military aircrafts began bombarding on American allies in Syria – the rebels, who were trained by the U.S. instructors.²²

Given the universal power vacuum that emerged due to the U.S. weak foreign policy, it is unclear whether the **Declaration to strengthen United Nations peacekeeping**, signed during the UNGA session by more than 50 countries, including the U.S., China, Germany, France and Ukraine (but not Russia), could be really effective in practice. The parties agreed to increase by 40 thousand the UN peacekeepers

²¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/28/remarks-president-obama-united-nations-general-assembly>

²² <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/russian-air-strikes-in-syria-did-hit-us-funded-free-syrian-army-rebels-says-john-mccain-a6675291.html>

contingent, and to provide it with 40 helicopters and 10 field hospitals. However, if Russia continues its aggressions and blocking the UN Security Council's decisions with impunity, the increase in the number of the UN peacekeepers will not stop the world from sliding into chaos and violence.

