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## UKRAINE – THE EUROPEAN UNION



### KEY THEME ANALYSIS

#### **POLISH PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO UKRAINE: SHAPING A PRAGMATIC PARTNERSHIP**

*The long-awaited visit of new Polish President to Ukraine did not come up to skeptical expectations of possible cooling relations between two countries. And the optimistic hopes for even greater support to Kyiv by the new Polish authorities were not met as well. The nature of the visit and the issues discussed rather indicated the course for pragmatization of the bilateral relations with emphasis on the prospects for strategic partnership.*

Ukraine expected for Andrzej Duda's visit since his inauguration hoping that Kyiv would become one of the first capitals to be visited by the newly elected Polish President. The optimists believed that tough stance of "Law and Justice" toward Russia and sympathy of the party leaders to the idea of strengthening regional cooperation, including the "Intermarium" concept, would automatically result in further strengthening of Poland's support for Ukraine. The skeptics called attention to the special sensitivity of Andrzej Duda's voters to such historical issues as the Ukrainian-Polish confrontation during the Second World War, warning about possible risk of cooling relationship due to the Poles' stance on the issue of revaluation of The Ukrainian Insurgent Army's role. Disturbing expectations increased in August 2015, when Ukrainian President actually rejected the idea of expanding the "Normandy" format, publicly proposed by Andrzej Duda (probably, without prior consultation with Kyiv). For a long time it was not clear at all, whether Polish President would visit Ukraine in 2015; and only in late September, after Poroshenko-Duda meeting on the fields of the UN General Assembly in New York, it became known that the visit would take place till the end of the year.

**Let us analyze the key messages of this long-awaited visit:**

#### **1. Military Security.**

Poland continues supporting Ukraine in the conflict waged by Russia. **Andrzej Duda called for the extending of sanctions against Russia.** With that, unlike some his European colleagues, Duda did not complain of losses for the Polish economy.

Remarkably, Andrzej Duda did not propose Poland's joining the "Normandy" format, but promised "to watch that Minsk agreements and decisions are implemented."<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the expansion of "Normandy" format would hardly be possible due to the position of Russia, which feels enough comfortable in the present composition of the "quartet," and taking into account the position of Berlin and

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2015/12/15/7092604>

Paris, which seek to avoid worsening relations with Moscow. However, Poland can strongly assist Ukraine even beyond the framework of "Normandy" format – being the EU and NATO member, whose support is critically important to put pressure on Russia to force it stop aggression and implement Minsk obligations.

**As the future host of NATO summit to be held in Warsaw in summer 2016, Andrzej Duda proposed to invite Ukraine:** "I really want Ukraine to be present at the summit, I want Ukraine's presence to be unambiguous."<sup>2</sup>

It was agreed to resume **cooperation between the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine and the National Security Bureau of Poland**. It is noteworthy that Duda's visit was held simultaneously with the **Kyiv meeting of Defence Ministers of Ukraine, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia**. Defence Ministers agreed on military-technical cooperation for the next year and on joint trainings; in particular, Ukraine accepted a proposal to take part in "Shield" exercise in Poland. Ministers also visited Yavoriv training ground, where military exercise were held with participation of the troops from Ukraine, the U.S., Canada and Lithuania.

Particular attention was paid to the prospects of joint **Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian brigade** based in Lublin. Kyiv has appointed the first 500 troops to serve in the unit. Poroshenko noted the strategic importance of the joint brigade for achieving interoperability of the Armed Forces of Ukraine with the armies of NATO member countries and for establishment of efficient dialogue and **participation of Ukraine in the Visegrad military tactical group of the EU**.<sup>3</sup> By the way, within the framework of the LITPOLUKRBRIG, **Ukrainian soldiers can share with NATO countries the experience of countering Russian "hybrid" aggression**.

## **2. Energy Security.**

**Both Presidents clearly oppose the "Nord Stream-2" pipeline project**, which is lobbied by Russia and its EU business partners. Petro Poroshenko and Andrzej Duda stressed that this political project is aimed against the Eastern European countries, is harmful for the EU as a whole, and contradicts the course for energy supplies diversification. It is clear that there is no economic feasibility in building new pipeline, given that current transit capacity is more than enough. The main goal of "Nord Stream-2" is to rid the Eastern European countries of their transit capabilities and thus to make them vulnerable for Moscow's energy blackmail and political pressure.

Andrzej Duda and Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk discussed **the construction of interconnector between Poland and Ukraine**, which would let Kyiv to buy in Poland up to 8 bln. cubic meters of gas annually.

## **3. European Integration: Visa Liberalization, DCFTA and Economic Cooperation.**

Andrzej Duda confirmed **Poland's support for providing a visa-free regime to Ukraine**. Presidents agreed **to open several joint checkpoints** on the common border – to improve the comfort for citizens of both countries.

Expecting the EU-Ukraine free trade area to enter into force on January 1, 2016, **Poland promised to help Ukrainian producers in entering the European market**. Besides, the heads of Ukrainian and Polish national banks agreed to open a credit line for Kyiv, a swap at PLN 4 billion or EUR 1 billion – to facilitate the increase in Ukraine-Poland trade.<sup>4</sup>

Ukrainian expert *Grygoriy Perepelytsya* notes that **against the decrease in trade with Russia, Poland becomes the largest close market for Ukraine, which can help to diversify the production and to replace a significant part of Russian components, including the military equipment**

<sup>2</sup> <http://ukrainian.voanews.com/content/duda-in-ukraine/3104328.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/prezidenti-ukrayini-ta-polshi-obgovorili-vzayemodiyu-u-sferi-36495>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2015/12/15/7042265>

and weapons.<sup>5</sup>

#### **4. Dialogue on the Issues of Joint Past.**

**Warsaw and Kyiv proved their willingness to seek compromises** on the controversial issues of the joint past. In particular, dialogue will be held within the frameworks of the Presidential Consultative Committee; and the cooperation between Ukrainian and Polish institutes of national remembrance will be enhanced. **Petro Poroshenko hinted that Russia would not manage to make use of Ukrainian-Polish historical disputes** to deteriorate friendly relations between two nations: *"History taught us that when Ukrainians and Poles quarrel, somebody else wins. We will not allow that."*<sup>6</sup> The fact that Polish President supported position of his Ukrainian counterpart was proved by **Andrzej Duda's visit to the Polish military cemetery at Bykivnia Graves, where thousands of victims of Stalinist repression had been buried.**

*So, it is no exaggeration to call the Polish President's visit to Ukraine of December 14-15, 2015 a long hoped-for. And the fact that visit did not bring a remarkable "breakthrough" in bilateral relations should not be considered as disappointing. It is enough important that both parties express readiness to continue developing mutually beneficial cooperation and to seek compromises on delicate issues of the joint past. **Both countries may benefit from the pragmatization of their relations, if the previous "advocate-client" format is replaced with a truly equal strategic partnership.***



<sup>5</sup> <http://www.dw.com/uk/президент-польщі-в-києві-боріться-з-корупцією/a-18919779>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-ta-polsha-gotovi-do-konstruktivnogo-dialogu-z-pitan-36498>

## UKRAINE – NATO



### KEY THEME ANALYSIS

#### **NATO MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS DECIDED TO STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND THE ALLIANCE**

*Decisions taken at the NATO foreign ministers meeting indicated the Alliance's readiness to restore its previous power and to continue the policy of enlargement. Ukrainian issue was not left unattended by NATO ministers, but it was not in their focus.*

**The meeting of NATO foreign ministers, held on December 1-2, 2015,** gave reason to hope that time of slow awakening is over, and the North Atlantic Alliance is finally ready to adequately respond to Russian aggressive actions.

The first item on the agenda was **Afghanistan**. Tragic consequences of the hasty U.S. withdrawal from Iraq taught the Allies that it would be too risky to leave a new Afghan government without strong support. The NATO ministers discussed issues related to the extension of the **Resolute Support** mission, including training, advice and assistance to Afghan forces during 2016.

The next block of issues was related to the **challenges from the south, especially those threatening Turkey**. Formally it was mostly about the challenges posed by the Islamic fundamentalists and war in Syria, but threats related to the Russian actions in the region were also considered. The Alliance is surely concerned by concentration of Russian troops on the north (Crimea), south (Syria) and east (Caucasus) from the Turkey. NATO members discussed further measures to assure Turkey's security, which is especially important in view of Russian-Turkish aggravation after the incident with downing Russian jet. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg confirmed **that in enhancing Turkey's security the Allies took into account the deployment of Russian air defense systems along the NATO borders, including the S-400 systems in Syria.**<sup>7</sup>

Besides, NATO countries decided **to assist countries in North Africa and the Middle East in developing their defense capabilities**. First of all, it was about Iraq, Jordan and Tunisia.

NATO ministers also decided to approve **a new strategy on hybrid warfare and to improve the intelligence and early warning mechanisms**. One can only regret that it took over year and a half (since Russian hybrid aggression against Ukraine started) for the NATO to take such important decisions.

Special attention was paid to the **maritime and missile defense, as well as the surveillance drones**. The importance of these issues is caused by the increased

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_125358.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_125358.htm)

role of drones in modern armed conflict, and by Russia's intensive development of its missile capabilities. By the way, at the time of NATO ministerial meeting, the U.S. Ambassador to Poland, Paul W. Jones said that in 2016-2018 the United States would build a missile defense base in Poland.<sup>8</sup>

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini took part in the NATO ministerial meeting. **It was agreed to enhance cooperation between NATO and the EU** in three areas: addressing hybrid threats; helping partners to become more capable of securing themselves in Europe and in the Middle East and North Africa; and boosting the capabilities of European Allies.<sup>9</sup>

Another important NATO decision was **to invite Montenegro to talks on accession**. The decision was predictable already in summer, and caused a furious reaction of Moscow. Pro-Serbian and pro-Russian politicians in Montenegro organized protests trying to destabilize the country. Russian Foreign Ministry threatened to "respond accordingly" and stated that Montenegro's accession to NATO would result in "additional destabilising consequences for the system of Euro-Atlantic security."<sup>10</sup> Obviously, Moscow's protests result from the awareness that Montenegro's joining NATO will facilitate the Euro-Atlantic integration of other Balkan countries. Thus, Russia will be pushed out of the region, which Moscow considers as own zone of influence.

**NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg called decision to invite Montenegro "an important step in the Euro-Atlantic integration of the entire Western Balkans region,"** which "makes clear that NATO keeps its door open, to complete our vision of a Europe whole, free and at peace."<sup>11</sup> By the way, in November-December 2015, Jens Stoltenberg visited not only aspirant countries Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also Serbia. The latter has not declared the Euro-Atlantic aspirations, but cooperates with NATO and has started the negotiations on accession to the EU.

At the ministerial meeting, Jens Stoltenberg reaffirmed **NATO support for the aspirations of Georgia's, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina to become members of the Alliance**.

Probably, trying to soften Russia's reaction, **Jens Stoltenberg** at the press conference with Montenegrin Prime Minister said that **NATO was going to resume contacts with Moscow through the NATO-Russia Council**.<sup>12</sup> This step was unlikely to be duly appreciated by Moscow, but it is more than possible that some Allies insisted on such proposal, in particular, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier mentioned such idea.<sup>13</sup>

Ukrainian issue was the last one on the NATO ministerial meeting's agenda. **NATO-Ukraine Commission at the level of Foreign Ministers** discussed reforms of the defense sector in Ukraine, as well as the Alliance's practical assistance to Kyiv in such areas as modernization of command and control, cyber security and logistics. Jens Stoltenberg underlined NATO support for the implementation of Minsk agreements by all sides as "the only path to a political solution" for the Russia-Ukraine conflict.<sup>14</sup>

It is worth noting that **in November 2015 the level of public support for Ukraine's joining NATO reached its maximum: 75% of voters would support**

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.radiopolsha.pl/6/136/Artykul/231317>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_125361.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_125361.htm)

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.mid.ru/foreign\\_policy/news/](http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/)

[/asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/1963259?p\\_p\\_id=101\\_INSTANCE\\_cKNonkJE02Bw&\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_cKNonkJE02Bw\\_languageId=en\\_GB](http://www.nato.int/cps/uk/natohq/news_125370.htm?selectedLocale=en)

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.nato.int/cps/uk/natohq/news\\_125370.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/uk/natohq/news_125370.htm?selectedLocale=en)

<sup>12</sup> <http://tass.ru/en/world/840861>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.dw.com/ru/глава-мид-фрг-выступил-за-восстановление-совета-нато-россия/a-18887838>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.nato.int/cps/uk/natohq/news\\_125371.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/uk/natohq/news_125371.htm?selectedLocale=en)

**Ukraine's accession. For the first time, the majority of respondents in all regions including south and east of Ukraine support joining the Alliance.<sup>15</sup>**

*NATO finally returns to strong policy with focus on strengthening the security of own members, and not the appeasement of Russia. Decision adopted by the Allies created a good basis for further decisive steps at the Warsaw Summit to be held next summer. **The level of attention paid to Ukraine at the meeting, clearly contrasts with the record level of support for NATO membership among the Ukrainians. However, this is a question to Kyiv first of all, which continues postponing a referendum "for the future," thus losing an opportunity to turn the strong public support into important foreign policy factor.***



<sup>15</sup> <http://www.dif.org.ua/en/publications/press-relizy/fdsgfdhh.htm>

## FOREIGN POLICY OF UKRAINE



### KEY THEME ANALYSIS

#### **BIDEN'S VISIT TO UKRAINE: SUPPORT AND WARNING OF STRATEGIC PARTNER**

*The U.S. Vice President Joseph Biden brought to Kyiv two main messages: on the one hand, a demonstration of the U.S. support for Ukraine; on the other hand, a warning that Kyiv is close again to missing a chance for successful reforming and Western integration.*

The two-day visit of December 6-7, 2015 was the fourth Joseph Biden's visit to Ukraine since the beginning of Russian aggression. It should be noted that Biden is the most senior U.S. official, who strongly supports Ukraine, including the issue of arms supplies.

**Apparently, it was due to the Biden's strong attention to Ukraine, that he was invited to speak to the Ukrainian parliament.** The previous U.S. official, who had such honor, was President George H.W. Bush with his August 1991 infamous speech, in which he actually urged the Ukrainians not to declare independence. To the contrary, Joseph Biden expressed full support for Ukraine, and **pledged that the United States would never recognize the annexation of Crimea and would maintain pressure until Moscow fulfills its commitments under the Minsk Agreement.**<sup>16</sup>

Mr. Biden promised that **the U.S. would increase financial assistance to Ukraine** for implementing reforms. At the same time, he reminded the Ukrainian authorities: "It's within your hands. Nobody else's – yours. You can bend the arc of history of this nation toward greater justice and opportunity for the Ukrainian people, and you can do it now." **Indisputably, the main message of the U.S. Vice President's speech was his appeal to the Ukrainian authorities not to miss a chance to change Ukraine: "It may be your last moment. Please for the sake of the rest of us, selfishly on my part, don't waste it. Seize the opportunity. Build a better future for the people of Ukraine."** It is easy to guess what Biden meant, given his appeal to fight "historic battle" against "the cancer of corruption."<sup>17</sup>

During his visit, Joseph Biden met with the representatives of civil society and

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/09/remarks-vice-president-joe-biden-ukrainian-rada>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/09/remarks-vice-president-joe-biden-ukrainian-rada>

with all top Ukrainian officials. Vice-President promised to grant Ukraine **another \$300 million to enhance security and \$190 million to implement reforms and fight corruption.**<sup>18</sup>

As for the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Biden's statements let us suggest that **Washington is inclined to support the position of Berlin and Paris and to actually agree on Russian scenario for the "Minsk" settlement.** On the one hand, Vice President said that the U.S. and Europe would maintain pressure until Moscow fulfills its commitments under the Minsk Agreement.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, **Mr. Biden actually urged Ukraine to unilaterally fulfill its Minsk obligations,** stressing that *Ukraine should fulfill its obligations within Minsk agreements, even if Russia did not fulfill its commitments – otherwise Europe would say that Ukraine and Russia "are the same."*<sup>20</sup>

It remains unclear whether Joseph Biden meant only constitutional reform and decentralization, or he was also speaking about holding elections in the Russian-occupied territories. Anyway, it is obviously that the Obama Administration seeks by all means to avoid aggravation in Donbas before the presidential election in the U.S., for it may do harm to the Democrats reputation. On the one hand, such White House position is disadvantageous for Ukraine, but there is another side of the coin – the reluctance of Democrats to lose rating points before the elections may facilitate their pressure on Barack Obama to prevent the proliferation of Russian aggression. It gives Ukrainian diplomacy possibilities to oppose the policy of appeasement preferred by the current White House leader.

*Kyiv should give serious consideration to the Joseph Biden's statement that everything is within the Ukrainians' hands, and to follow the Vice President's advice not to miss a chance. European allies are tired with refugees crisis and economic problems, and the United States enters an active phase of election race with President awaiting for the end of his term. **It would be an exaggeration to say that the Western actors are not concerned about Ukraine, but the latter should not overestimate own role on the global agenda.** The Western counterparts are interested in successful Ukraine, but they would not like to explain their constituents why to support a country, which put itself at risk of missing the second chance in a decade to overcome corruption, to reform the country and to become a full member of the Euro-Atlantic community.*

<sup>18</sup> <http://ukrainian.voanews.com/content/biden-ukraine/3092295.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2015/12/8/7091782>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2015/12/7/7091719>