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Friedrich Naumann
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UKRAINE – THE EUROPEAN UNION



KEY THEME ANALYSIS

UKRAINE MANAGED TO DEFEND ITS NEGOTIATING STANCE AT PARIS MEETING OF "NORMANDY" FOUR, BUT TIME IS NOT ON KYIV'S SIDE

On February 3, 2016, at the "Normandy" Four meeting, Berlin, Paris and Moscow were pushing Kyiv to schedule local elections in the occupied territories of Donbas without waiting for solving security issues. Ukraine managed to defend its stance; and Frank-Walter Steinmeier finally had to admit that security issues should be resolved before the elections are scheduled.

Participants to the "Normandy" Quartet came to Paris meeting with similar list of issues, but their priority ranking was fundamentally different. **Kyiv made it clear that security should be guaranteed in Donbas first of all** and hostages should be released – only after that the issue of local elections could be addressed.¹ **On the contrary, Berlin, Paris and Moscow insisted that a law on elections should be primarily adopted, and then security issues would be considered.** Two days before the Paris talks, *Frank-Walter Steinmeier said: "If elections take place, and everyone says this, then we need two things: first an election law and second security conditions which allow an election to be held."*²

Such distinctions in approaches reflect different priorities of Kyiv and its "Normandy" partners. **Ukraine's** priorities are conflict settlement, withdrawal of Russian troops and resuming sovereignty over own territory. **Russia's** goal is to legalize puppet regimes in Donbas through pseudo-elections and thus to preserve Moscow's influence on political situation in Ukraine. The Kremlin hopes that sanctions are lifted and West returns to business-as-usual with Russia. **Berlin and Paris** seek cessation of hostilities to consider their peacekeeping mission accomplished, remove sanctions from Russia and focus on issues, which the EU consider more vital – immigration crisis, economic problems, Grexit and Brexit, etc. **Unfortunately, Ukraine's resuming sovereignty over own territory is not listed among those top priorities.**

Ukrainian delegation headed by Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin honourably withstood the pressure of "Normandy" partners. Moreover, the Ukrainian side managed to convince Mr. Steinmeier that priority of elections and safety should be reversed; and in his statement, published on the website of German Foreign Ministry, security was set as a **prerequisite** for elections.³

¹ <http://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-politycs/1975476-zustric-normandskoi-cetvirki-u-parizi-cogo-cekati.html>

² <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-germany-idUSKCN0W333N>

³ http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/sid_629681058E0ED191F298B389F306289D/DE/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Aktuelle_Artikel/Ukraine/Aktuell/160303_Normandietreffen.html

The "Normandy" Quartet reaffirmed two important points previously agreed in Minsk by the Trilateral contact group. **The first** one was to cease firing exercises along the contact line – that should deprive the militants of the excuse to violate heavy weapon withdrawal. **The second** agreement was to map the areas subject to mine disarming. So, the implementation of these important arrangements became a political responsibility of the "Normandy" Four. Foreign Ministers also decided to urge the conflicting sides release all hostages before April 30, 2016; to provide the OSCE monitors with all the necessary information on heavy weapons withdrawal; and provide free access of humanitarian aid to all civilians.⁴

In the coming weeks, diplomatic work on Minsk implementation will focus at shaping **the concept of international mission, which must ensure the security of elections in Donbas**. "Normandy" Foreign Ministers expect that the OSCE presents the relevant concept by the end of March. It is clear that Russia will try to limit the powers and functions of such mission reducing it to observation. To the contrary, **Ukraine insists that it must be an armed OSCE police mission** with strong mandate ready to fully ensure security.⁵ It is an open question, whose vision will get the support of Berlin and Paris, but it is clear that time is not on Kyiv's side. **Germany and France clearly seek to associate the election date with time when the EU is to discuss extension of sanctions against Russia, i.e. July 2016**. However, the previous experience⁶ indicates that deploying missions to secure elections in conflict zones requires substantial institutional, human and financial resources and much more time than is left before July.

Moreover, political subgroup of the Trilateral contact group fails to find a common vision on the key issues of elections modalities, because the Kremlin-backed separatists reject to recognize participation of Ukrainian parties in the elections, they ban Ukrainian media, and deny the right to vote of temporarily displaced persons.⁷ How one can hold democratic elections under such circumstances – it is a good question for those "Normandy" Four partners, who push that issue.

Amid Berlin's and Paris' conformist position toward Russia, **it is especially important for Ukraine that Washington shares Kyiv's vision of the Minsk implementation priority**. State Department spokesperson Mark Toner said that the U.S. insists on full implementation of the Minsk agreements, however, sustainable truce, full access of the OSCE monitors, and Ukraine's regaining control over the border – are the top-priorities.⁸ At the same time, without additional pressure on Moscow in the form of new sanctions or arms assistance to Ukraine, this verbal support does not have any significant effect and can not force the Kremlin to begin Minsk implementation.

It becomes more and more difficult for Ukraine to count on support of its European partners in the issue of conflict settlement in Donbas. A number of EU countries seek to lift sanctions in July, and this fact does not encourage Moscow to be constructive at peace talks. Given the unwillingness of the EU to live in uncertainty about the prospects of peace process, Kyiv should propose as soon as possible its own detailed peace plan with a clear list of steps, responsibilities of the parties, and deadlines. Such clear scenario would make it easier for the Western counterparts to understand who actually inhibits the agreements, and the EU would get more arguments to extend the sanctions.

⁴ <http://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-politycs/1976878-zustric-normandskoi-cetvirki-ci-taka-vze-vona-bezrezultatna.html>

⁵ <http://ukranews.com/ru/interview/2016/03/06/722>

⁶ нап., див.: <http://gazeta.dt.ua/international/za-ramkami-minskih-ugod-chomu-i-yak-mirotvorcha-misiya-on-mogla-b-virishiti-problemu-v-donbasi-.html>

⁷ <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2016/03/10/7101689>

⁸ <http://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-abroad/1978137-ssa-nazvali-prioritetni-punkti-minskoi-ugodi.html>

UKRAINE – NATO

KEY THEME ANALYSIS**TEMPO OF NATO–UKRAINE PRACTICAL COOPERATION DEPENDS ON SPEED AND QUALITY OF UKRAINIAN REFORMS**

In the second half of February and early March of 2016, Kyiv continued active dialogue with NATO on the issues of security and defence sector reform. However, the most important is to ensure that a large number of meetings and consultations results in a high quality of reforms and cooperation.

In late February 2016, the Alliance's delegation led by Commander NATO Special Operations Forces HQ Marshall Webb visited Kyiv. A Letter on **intent for cooperation in sphere of Special operations** between the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the NATO Special Operations Headquarters was signed. Besides, the Ukrainian Air Force Command hosted experts in **NATO Regional Airspace Security Program (RASP)** led by the NATO Communications and Information Agency representative Rene van der Heiden. The parties discussed continuation of consultations on technical and operational study of RASP capabilities.⁹

On March 4, the meeting of **NATO-Ukraine Joint Working Group on Defence Reform** was held at the Alliance's Headquarters, in Brussels. Ukrainian delegation led by Deputy Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine Oleksandr Lytvynenko discussed with NATO experts a **draft Concept of Ukrainian security and defence sector development**, and presented the concept of **Ukrainian Defence Ministry's Reforms Office**.

On March 8, at NATO Headquarters, a special **meeting of the NATO–Ukraine Commission was held with participation of Ukrainian Defence Minister Stepan Poltorak**. The Minister briefed NATO representatives on defence reform and **draft Strategic Defence Bulletin of Ukraine**. A plan of NATO–Ukraine cooperation in defence sector reform for the period up to the Warsaw Summit was outlined.

In Brussels, **Stepan Poltorak met with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg**, who promised to continue assisting reforms, noting that **the scope of aid would depend on the quality of reforms**.¹⁰ These words make clear that NATO employs the same principle in assisting Ukraine as the EU does – "more for more," thus encouraging accelerating reforms.

The fact that NATO considers insufficient the pace and quality of Ukrainian reforms is indicated by Jens Stoltenberg's words that **quick decisions on reforms**

⁹ <http://www.mil.gov.ua/en/news/2016/02/23/alliance-experts-visit-ukrainian-af-command/>

¹⁰ <http://www.mil.gov.ua/dlya-zmi/vistupi-ta-intervyu/2016/03/08/ens-stoltenberg-nato-i-nadali-nadavati-time-dopomogu-ukrainskomu-oboronnomu-vidomstvu>

are obviously needed, as well as their effective and full implementation.¹¹ NATO Secretary General also urged Ukraine **to fully implement the principles of democratic civilian control over the armed forces.** Given the extraordinary tolerance of Mr. Stoltenberg, his hint at the insufficient pace and results of reforms is an **alarming signal.** By comparison, NATO leadership do not need to remind Tbilisi on the need to accelerate and effectively implement reforms; so, no wonder that Georgia's accession to NATO is almost not questioned, and the Allies just wait for the right time to take the appropriate decision. To the contrary, the EU and NATO have to regularly remind Kyiv of the importance of reforms – as if they need those reforms more than Ukraine does itself. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker says that "Ukraine will definitely not be able to become a member of the EU in the next 20-25 years, and not of NATO either."¹²

Kyiv is not too active in **preparing for the NATO Warsaw Summit,** scheduled for July 8-9, 2016. To compare, Poland clearly declared its main goal long before the summit – it demanded to increase NATO presence in the Eastern European members. Warsaw made a great preliminary work and it succeed. Five months before the summit, Polish Defence and Foreign Ministers, Antoni Macierewicz¹³ and Witold Waszczykowski¹⁴ express confidence that all necessary decisions will be taken at the Warsaw summit.

It is still unknown what does Ukraine expect from the Warsaw Summit. Poland supports the idea of holding the NATO-Ukraine meeting at the level of heads of state during the summit, but possible agenda of such meeting is unclear. Of course, one should not expect any breakthrough in NATO-Ukraine relations, but at least some steps could be made towards the aim of future membership – something alike to the current agenda of NATO–Georgia cooperation. Just preparing another declaration of support should be considered as losing an opportunity.

*Shaping agenda of cooperation with NATO, Kyiv should be aware of the fact that no one would push it to accelerate partnership and to raise the issue of membership. **Barack Obama makes it clear that Ukraine is not listed among the core U.S. interest, and being a non-NATO country, it is vulnerable to military domination by Russia, and no one will fight for its territory.***¹⁵ Kyiv should not expect that U.S. stand would radically change for the better after the presidential elections. Ukraine's safety is, first of all, its own trouble, and it is Kyiv who should intensify reforms, promote proposals on deeper cooperation, and push the issue of membership.

¹¹ http://www.nato.int/cps/uk/natohq/news_128903.htm?selectedLocale=uk

¹² http://en.europeonline-magazine.eu/ukraine-will-not-join-eu-nato-for-another-20-25-years-juncker-says_442069.html

¹³ <http://www.radiopolsha.pl/6/136/Artykul/244360>

¹⁴ <http://www.polradio.pl/5/38/Artykul/244168>

¹⁵ <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525>

FOREIGN POLICY OF UKRAINE



KEY THEME ANALYSIS

UKRAINE – TURKEY: WILL THE TACTICAL ALLIANCE BECOME A STRATEGIC ONE?

The visit of Ukrainian delegation headed by the President Poroshenko to Turkey was officially named as deepening strategic partnership between two countries, with particular emphasis on security cooperation and joint efforts to de-occupy Crimea. The question is what current Ukraine-Turkey rapprochement is really about – strategic vision or just tactical considerations due to the aggravation of relations with Russia.

On March 9, 2016, in Ankara, the fifth session of the Ukraine-Turkey High Level Strategic Council was held. Following the meeting Kyiv and Ankara agreed to strengthen cooperation in a number of issues that can be grouped into two major blocks –security and economics.

In the joint declaration adopted after the talks, security issues come first. The parties agreed to strengthen coordination, cooperation and contractual framework between Turkey and Ukraine in the field of security and defense; to facilitate strengthening of the regional security mechanisms in the Black Sea region; to increase cooperation and joint efforts aimed at ensuring international security, including those within the NATO framework; to deepen cooperation in the modernization of the military-industrial complex; to develop a roadmap for implementation of joint high-tech projects in space, aviation and defense industry; to cooperate in the framework of international organizations to de-occupy Crimea.¹⁶ A protocol on enhancing cooperation between the Secretariat of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine and the General Secretariat of the National Security Council of Turkey was signed.¹⁷

The priority of security issues for both sides is obvious due to their strained relations with Russia, which annexed Crimea, wages war in eastern Ukraine, and deteriorates security situation on Turkey's southern borders by military intervention in Syria. Kyiv and Ankara have broad options for mutually beneficial military-industrial cooperation and common promoting security in the Black Sea region.

The question is – how far both parties are really ready to go on a practical level of security cooperation? The fact that Turkey is a NATO member makes its security

¹⁶ <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/spilna-deklaraciya-za-rezultatami-pyatogo-zasidannya-strateg-36831>

¹⁷ <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/ukrayina-ta-turechchina-pogliblyuvatimut-strategichne-partne-36833>

situation fundamentally different from the Ukraine's one. Russia will hardly dare to open confrontation with Turkey, and Ankara will respect the Alliance's common policy towards Moscow not daring to confront Russia over Ukraine. Ankara is not in a hurry to agree on Kyiv's proposal to jointly patrol the Black Sea. Turkey promised to transfer mobile hospitals and other military assistance to Ukraine, but not the weapons.

Not everything is clear about the declared intentions **to unite efforts for de-occupation of Crimea**, in particular, to include Ankara in "Geneva Plus" talks with participation of the guarantors of the Budapest Memorandum.¹⁸ Given that Russia rejects any format of discussion on Crimea, the determination of participants to the negotiation is a merely hypothetical question. Besides, it is difficult to foresee possible Turkey's role in such hypothetical talks, given that Ankara did not join in sanctions against Russia imposed after the occupation of Crimea, and Turkish transport vehicles continued visiting Crimean ports.

The second set of issues discussed in Ankara was an economic one.

Ukraine and Turkey agreed to complete by the end of 2016 negotiations on a Free Trade Area Agreement; to ensure signing of bilateral agreements on mutual protection of investments and avoidance of double taxation; to expand cooperation in international combined / container shipping; to strengthen tourism cooperation; to study the possibility of joint projects on natural gas supply from the Caspian basin to Europe.¹⁹

Kyiv and Ankara declared extensive plans, but it is not clear whether they are implemented. Negotiations on free trade are not easy; implementation of economic cooperation projects, declared during the previous Strategic Council meeting, is stalled; and mutual trade turnover fell by 22% in 2015, instead of significant increase expected by the parties.²⁰ Ankara is still one of the most important trade partners for Kyiv, but the overall difficult economic situation in Ukraine is not conducive to increase cooperation.

Summing up his visit to Turkey, **Petro Poroshenko said that "strategic partnership" of the two countries "should be a catalyst for change for the better in the whole region."**²¹ Two Presidents signed a **joint Declaration on deepening strategic partnership between Ukraine and Turkey.**²² However, Kyiv and Ankara need strong political will and extraordinary efforts to make their partnership truly strategic. **So far, relations between Ukraine and Turkey look like the situational political alliance emerged against the backdrop of deteriorating relations with Russia.** And it should be kept in mind that Kyiv's confrontation with Moscow may last much longer than deterioration in Turkey-Russia relations.

*Kyiv's intention to strengthen cooperation with Turkey, particularly in the field of security, is timely and correct as well as an attempt to engage Ankara to solving the Crimean issue. To succeed on this way, **two countries need to find common ground for their long-term strategic interests.** As for the prospects of a truly strategic security partnership of Kyiv and Ankara – it may become possible only after Ukraine becomes at least a candidate for NATO membership.*

¹⁸ <http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-ta-turechchina-obyednayut-zusillya-zadlya-deokupaci-36834>

¹⁹ <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/spilna-deklaraciya-za-rezultatami-pyatogo-zasidannya-strateg-36831>

²⁰ <http://fpri.kiev.ua/?p=19379>

²¹ <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/pogliblennya-ukrayinsko-tureckogo-spivrobotnictva-stane-kata-36835>

²² <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/ukrayina-ta-turechchina-pogliblyuvatimut-strategichne-partne-36833>