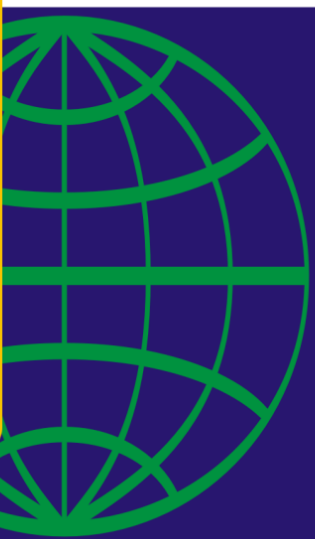


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Friedrich Naumann
STIFTUNG
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UKRAINE – THE EUROPEAN UNION



KEY THEME ANALYSIS

THE IDEA OF THE OSCE POLICE MISSION FOR DONBAS MAY RESULT IN LEGALIZATION OF RUSSIAN MILITARY PRESENCE

A threat of aggravation in Donbas and the approach of date to revise continuation of sanctions against Russia encourage the negotiation parties to intensify or to simulate their "peace" initiatives. Berlin and Paris are pushing Kyiv to schedule the (pseudo)elections in Donbas; the U.S. is hesitating between criticizing Russia and putting pressure on Ukraine; Kyiv is pushing itself into another trap – this time with the idea of OSCE police mission, and Russia is playing along hoping to maintain control over Donbas and simultaneously to get rid of sanctions.

A discussion on extension of sanctions against Russia scheduled for the end of June 2016 seems to be not an easy talk. *Greek*¹ and *Hungarian*² diplomats have already promised that sanctions would not be automatically extended, and expressed doubts about their effectiveness. Confederation of Industry of the **Czech Republic** stated that two thirds of Czech companies support lifting or at least easing of sanctions against Russia.³ On April 28, the lower house of **French** parliament voted for the lifting of sanctions.⁴ This decision is only of recommendation nature; however, it is an alarming bell indicating the strengthening of the relevant moods. It is also known that the idea of lifting sanctions is popular among the political elites in **Austria, Italy, Germany and Slovakia.**

Against this backdrop, Berlin and Paris as negotiators in the Normandy format are hastily seeking for such conditions for 'settlement' of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which will allow lifting sanctions in July or in December 2016. **Actually it is about searching ways for the pro forma implementation of the Minsk II agreements through the legalization of the Kremlin's puppet 'separatist' regimes and thus downgrading conflict from the international to Ukraine's domestic level.**

Berlin and Paris are trying to persuade Kyiv to pass the constitutional reform with granting special status for Donbas and to schedule elections in the occupied region. At the press conference following the meeting with Sergei Lavrov, **French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said he expected the corresponding Ukraine's decisions by the end of the first half of 2016.**⁵ (Actually, it is the date of

¹ <http://www.interfax.ru/world/500609>

² http://index.hu/gazdasag/2016/04/08/szijasarto_magyarorszag_erdeke_visszacsinalni_az_oroszorszag_elleni_szanciokat

³ <http://www.novinky.cz/ekonomika/400099-pomozte-zrusit-sankce-proti-rusku-tlaci-na-vladu-firmy.html>

⁴ <http://ukrainian.voanews.com/content/france-parliament/3306850.html>

⁵ <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2016/04/19/7106080>

discussing the extension of sanctions against Russia.) During a joint press conference with Barack Obama in Hanover, **German Chancellor Angela Merkel called on to implement as soon as possible the Minsk II provisions, including the active moving forward in political process.**⁶

Standpoint of the U.S. being in the midst of the presidential race is not fully clear. On the one hand, deputy spokesman of the State Department Mark Toner said that Ukraine had already taken several serious steps to implement the Minsk agreements, and now Russia should do the same.⁷ ***The U.S. permanent representative to the UN Samantha Power clearly stated that situation in Donbas did not meet necessary standards for elections.***⁸

On the other hand, according to the statement of Ukrainian MP Victoria Voytsitska, **U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, during her visit to Kyiv on April 26-27, urged the representatives of Ukrainian parliamentary factions to provide special status for Donbas in Constitution, to hold elections and to provide amnesty to the militants.**⁹ **Ms. Nuland said that her words had been inaccurately interpreted.**¹⁰ However, it was symptomatic that **immediately after Nuland's visit to Kyiv, Roman Bezsmertnyi, known for his clear statements about the impossibility of elections in Donbas in the near two years, walked out of the Minsk talks.**¹¹

It is noteworthy that **Victoria Nuland has not rejected the idea of international police mission for Donbas**, saying that it was discussed with reference to establishing conditions for free elections in the region.¹² The very same day, **a spokesperson of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, holder of the 2016 OSCE Chairmanship, said that "neither Germany nor France are involved in any agreement about changing the civilian nature of the mission – neither within the OSCE nor in the Normandy format,"** moreover, **"we find it difficult at this time to imagine what an armed OSCE mission might look like."**¹³

For the several months, the **Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko** has been actively promoting the idea of armed police mission for Donbas. On April 22, **he said that a new armed police OSCE mission should be expected in the near future**, with tasks to supervise the ceasefire, monitor the withdrawal of weapons, ensure the withdrawal of Russian occupation forces, and to effectively control the border.¹⁴ In two days, **Petro Poroshenko said that such Ukrainian position was supported by the Normandy partners and by the U.S., and that even Russia finally agreed on such format of the mission.**¹⁵

Inconsistency of statements made by the Ukrainian President and the German Foreign Minister are obvious. But it is not the major problem. **The major threat is that pushing the idea of deploying the OSCE police mission as a prerequisite for the elections in Donbas, Kyiv seems to miscalculate the possible consequences of such initiative.** Russia's formal consent to such mission may create a number of problems, which can hardly be solved by Kyiv:

1. A consent of both parties to the conflict will be needed to introduce

⁶ <http://www.dw.com/uk/меркель-та-обама-закликають-якогого-швидше-виконати-мінські-угоди/a-19211636>

⁷ <http://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-abroad/2008442-na-vidminu-vid-ukraini-rf-ne-vikonue-minskih-ugod-derzdep.html>

⁸ <http://www.radiosvoboda.org/content/article/27705136.html>

⁹ <http://uatoday.tv/politics/u-s-insists-on-special-status-for-militant-held-donbas-638583.html>

¹⁰ http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/politics/2016/04/160427_nuland_presser_sx

¹¹ <http://www.eurointegration.com.ua/interview/2016/04/28/7048541/>

¹² <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2016/04/27/7106932>

¹³ <http://www.osce.org/node/236841>

¹⁴ <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2016/04/22/7106443>

¹⁵ <http://interfax.com.ua/news/general/339772.html>

the armed OSCE mission, while officially the other party is not Russia, but the separatists. A spokesman for Russian President Dmitry Peskov said that Kyiv should discuss the decision on such mission in "direct dialogue" with the separatists.¹⁶ Ukraine tries to avoid direct talks with the militants, for it may be considered as an official recognition of them as independent actors. But in this case Berlin, Paris and Washington may put pressure on Kyiv, who has proposed the deploying of the armed OSCE mission and thus is considered responsible for negotiating the idea with other parties to the conflict.

2. If such mission is formally approved, the question of personnel will arise. And it is highly probable that only Russia agrees to provide the necessary number of "armed police forces" and equipment. Given the large area of occupied territories and the length of uncontrolled border – dozens of thousand "armed police forces" will be needed, and the OSCE will not be able to provide them, not to mention the enormous costs. So, the EU member states will gladly accept the "assistance" of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, etc. If Ukraine refuses, it will be accused of sabotaging the own initiative, and if it agrees, **it will get the CSTO "peacekeepers" under the guise of the OSCE "police mission", that will actually mean the legalization of occupation.**

3. 'Elections' under control of the so-called 'armed OSCE mission' mainly consisting of the CSTO forces – will not differ much from the 'elections' in the current circumstances. With one important distinction – Ukraine, the EU and the U.S. will have to recognize the results of such 'elections.'

4. After Moscow's consent on the armed OSCE mission and its active participation in such mission, sanctions will be lifted, and Russia-EU relations will return to business as usual. In the same time, Donbas will remain under control and actual occupation of the Kremlin.

While promoting the idea of armed police OSCE mission, Kyiv does not consider all the possible negative scenarios of its implementation. Trying to deprive Russia of the possibility to shift on Ukraine the responsibility for the Minsk II failure, and being sure that the idea of armed OSCE mission is unacceptable to the Kremlin, Kyiv may fall into the trap created by own efforts. **The idea of international police mission may result in legalization of Russian military presence**, with simultaneous lifting of sanctions against Russia as well as depriving Moscow of the responsibility for aggression in Donbas.

¹⁶ <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2016/04/25/7106681>

UKRAINE – NATO



KEY THEME ANALYSIS

NATO RESUMES FUTILE POLITICAL DIALOGUE WITH RUSSIA; UKRAINE IS ADVISED TO NOT COUNT ON MEMBERSHIP

The NATO-Russia Council meeting held on April 20, as well as the following remarks by Jens Stoltenberg did not give reasons to believe that the Alliance's leadership has a clear strategy to deter Russia's aggressive policy.

Speaking to reporters following the NATO-Russia Council meeting, **the Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that "NATO and Russia have profound and persistent disagreements,"** and "today's meeting did not change that."¹⁷ Actually, it would be something extraordinarily, if that meeting brought any changes, given that Moscow consistently refuses the constructive dialogue. Actually, there is no place for such dialogue in the Kremlin's strategy of recovering the 'Cold War' needed to maintain the current ruling power in Russia.

Jens Stoltenberg said that NATO and Russia discussed three topics: "The crisis in and around Ukraine. Issues related to military activities; transparency and risk reduction; and an assessment of the security situation in Afghanistan, including regional terrorist threats." Secretary General believed that **NATO and Russia "had a frank and serious discussion."**¹⁸

The very wording "crisis in and around Ukraine" indicates the unwillingness to talk frankly about the real state of affairs. Because in fact **there is no "crisis in Ukraine," there is Russian aggression against Ukraine. Even more questionable are Jens Stoltenberg's words about the frankness of discussion.** It is very unlikely that Russia actually acknowledged its aggression and the presence of its troops in Ukraine. So, was it really frank discussion?

Of dubious effectiveness was expression of NATO's concern "about last week's incidents in the Baltic region involving Russian military aircraft." **Russian aircraft intentionally performed that provocative manoeuvre to make the Allies being anxious;** so, the NATO's "concern" just indicates that Moscow's tactic of intimidation effectively works. The Allies would better clearly warn the Kremlin that in future such provocations would meet a firm rebuff. But they did not do that. **In fact, the NATO-Russia Council meeting provided the Kremlin with grounds to make a clear conclusion: the West reckons with Moscow, and Russia's actions instill fear, hence, its aggressive course effectively works and**

¹⁷ http://www.nato.int/cps/uk/natohq/opinions_129999.htm?selectedLocale=en

¹⁸ http://www.nato.int/cps/uk/natohq/opinions_129999.htm?selectedLocale=en

should be extended.

Interesting conclusions about the Washington's strategy towards Russia can be made based on the statements of **the U.S. Ambassador to NATO Douglas Lute**. During the Aspen Security Forum in London, he said that ***given the Russia's "internal weakness and perhaps steady decline, it may not make sense to push further now and maybe accelerate or destabilise that decline."*** Therefore, according to Douglas Lute, ***"There's no way we're going to get consensus any time in the near future on adding ... Georgia or Ukraine."***¹⁹ Actually, such words indicate that NATO enlargement depends on its policy towards Russia. **The unsound Western fear of Russia's decline and destabilization is a factor, which has been skilfully exploiting by the Kremlin for a long time,** forcing the EU and the U.S. play by Russia's rules. Actually, the Western concessions only contribute to further degradation of Russia, deprived its government of the sense of reality and turning into the loose cannon. Only the tough Western posture could help the Kremlin return to reality.

Berlin followed even further in the appeasement policy. Operational Commander of the Poland's Armed Forces, General Marek Tomaszewski said that **Germany argued against Ukraine's participation in NATO's Anakonda-2016 exercises to be held in June in Poland.** Besides, Berlin does not want to let the U.S. troops go through the Germany's territory toward Poland for those exercises.²⁰

Given such position of the key NATO member states, it is difficult to expect that significant assistance will be proposed to Ukraine at the Warsaw Summit. **NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg officially invited the Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko to visit summit,** at which the NATO-Ukraine Commission meeting at the highest level is to be held to discuss further Alliance's efforts to strengthen Ukraine's defence capabilities. Preparations for the Warsaw Summit were among the key topics of the **NATO-Ukraine Commission meeting on April 19,** as well as of the meetings held during **Chairman of the NATO Military Committee Petr Pavel's visit to Ukraine on April 21-22.** General Pavel met with Ukrainian Minister of Defence Stepan Poltorak and Chief of the General Staff Viktor Muzhenko; they discussed reforming of the armed forces of Ukraine in accordance with the NATO standards.

*In the near future, Ukraine will have to build its cooperation with NATO in a situation when several key Allies prefer the policy of appeasement Russia. With that, Ukraine can rely on support of such NATO chiefs as **EUCOM nominee Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, who said at the hearing in the Congress that the U.S. should provide the lethal weaponry to Ukraine, including the anti-tank Javelin system.***²¹ So, more resolute assistance is still possible, but to get it Kyiv should implement effective reforms and elaborate a clear strategy toward NATO membership, rather than current vague phrases about achieving the membership criteria.

¹⁹ <http://in.reuters.com/article/nato-expansion-idINKCN0XJ1ER>

²⁰ <http://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-abroad/2008508-nimeccina-ne-hoce-ucasti-ukraini-v-navcannah-anakonda2016.html>

²¹ <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/land/weapons/2016/04/21/eucom-nominee-scaparrotti-javelin-ukraine-russia-weapons/83336854/>

FOREIGN POLICY OF UKRAINE



KEY THEME ANALYSIS

THE VISIT OF UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT TO ROMANIA – RECONSTRUCTION OF GOOD NEIGHBOURLINESS, AND PLANS FOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Due to a number of geopolitical factors, Ukraine and Romania would naturally have to be the strategic partners. However, over the past years the development of relations between the two countries have been overshadowed by the territorial disputes (over the Black Sea shelf, usage of Danube channel, and territorial claims on Bukovina by the Romanian right-wing politicians), as well as by mutual claims regarding the rights of minorities. The visit of Ukrainian President to Romania opens up the opportunities to improve bilateral relations. The question is whether the two countries have a clear strategy to build a strong partnership, or it will remain 'strategic' only in words.

Many factors can contribute to facilitating Ukraine-Romania close cooperation in the international arena. First of all, **a common Russian threat** that comes from **the Kremlin's troops in occupied Transnistria**. Both Kyiv and Bucharest are interested in peaceful return of this Russian-occupied region to Moldova. Both countries consider **Russian Black Sea Fleet** as a threat, especially intensified after the occupation and militarization of Crimea. Besides a threat of armed aggression, the Russian navy also threatens safe Black Sea shelf mining as well as operation of Ukrainian and Romanian commercial fleets.

Kyiv and Bucharest also have many other reasons for convergence, including the prospects of more efficient **common usage of the Danube channel**, unused opportunities for **transit**, and potentially mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of **tourism**. Ukraine and Romania have the largest **Orthodox congregation** in Europe, and Bucharest could assist Kyiv in getting autocephalous for its Orthodox Church, one half of which is still under the Moscow's control, and the other one remains unrecognized by Constantinople.

Romania was the first European Union member state to ratify the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement; Bucharest consistently support sanctions against Russia; and Romania is one of the few countries in the region, which does not depend much on Russian energy supplies, and therefore can afford an independent energy policy. Romania contributed €500 thousand in the NATO-Ukraine Trust Fund for cyber

security, and took decision to provide Kyiv military-technical assistance at €250 thousand – quite considerable sums for not very rich Romania.

So, there are objective grounds for the development of **"strategic partnerships" between the two countries, as Ukrainian President called them during his visit to Romania on April 21, 2016.**²² But the opportunities for cooperation have not been effectively used previously, and the strategic partnership is just a preferred perspective, not a fait accompli. In this sense, Petro Poroshenko's visit to Bucharest and his talks with Romanian leadership can become the first steps in this direction.

During the visit, **a work of the Ukrainian-Romanian Joint Presidential Commission was resumed**, which had not functioned for almost ten years. Petro Poroshenko offered his Romanian counterpart to accelerate work over the agreement on establishing **interconnectors between the gas transport systems** of the two countries, through which Ukraine might become able to import gas from Romania, and Romania would be able to use the Ukrainian gas storage facilities. The prospects of developing the **transport links in the Danube Delta** were discussed, including the construction of new bridges. An **agreement on joint patrolling of the Romanian-Ukrainian state border** was signed that will speed up the process of crossing the border, and will contribute to fight against smuggling. It was agreed that during the **opening of the Romanian Consulate in Solotvyno**, in May this year, an agreement on **free of charge long-term visas for Ukrainian citizens** is to be signed. Presidents of both countries discussed the need to **improve mutual transport** links, including the restoration of direct air and rail links between Kyiv and Bucharest, as well as the launching of bus service between Bucharest and Chernivtsi. The prospects of **the Odessa-Reni road repair** were also discussed.

All these issues are very important for the normal development of good neighbourly relations between Ukraine and Romania. However, it should be clearly understood that is just about the normal development of good neighbourliness between the two countries, and **it is too early to call these relations a strategic partnership.**

Of strategic importance is **the proposal of Ukrainian President to join the Romanian initiative on establishing the joint Black Sea flotilla under NATO auspices.**²³ But two important obstacles are still to be overcome. Firstly, Romanian initiative has to be approved and supported by the Alliance, as well as Ukraine's accession to it. Secondly, the major part of Ukrainian fleet was recklessly lost during the Russian occupation of Crimea, thus, so far Kyiv does not have enough warships to join the flotilla. In this sense, more realistic seems to be the prospects for **establishing joint Ukrainian-Romanian-Bulgarian brigade** discussed by the Presidents of Ukraine and Romania.²⁴ Though, no concrete decision on this issue has been agreed so far.

So, common interests and threats provide enough grounds for Ukraine and Romania to become the strategic partners in future. But is it a distant prospect, and during Petro Poroshenko's visit to Bucharest the issues of rebuilding good neighbourly relations were discussed. The realization of promising strategic opportunities will depend on the quality of practical implementation of the current agreements, as well as on the intensity of working out further steps to deepen cooperation.

²² <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/vidnovlennya-ukrayinsko-rumunskoyi-spilnoyi-prezidentskoyi-k-37015>

²³ <http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-ta-rumuniya-vistupayut-za-stvorennya-flotiliyi-pid-37013>

²⁴ <http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-rumuniya-ta-bolgariya-obgovoryuyut-mozhlivist-stvor-37014>