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UKRAINE – THE EUROPEAN UNION



KEY THEME ANALYSIS

THE VISIT OF THE PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE TO GERMANY IN HIS OPINION WAS HELD AT AN 'UNPRECEDENTIAL LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE'.

On May 20, a working visit of the President of Ukraine to Germany took place. During the meeting with the German Chancellor the sides discussed a number of issues concerning the situation in Ukraine, the implementation of the Minsk Agreements, as well as relations between Ukraine and the European Union. Note, between Ukraine and Germany there continues to be intensive dialogue and this is the third official meeting of Petro Poroshenko and Angela Merkel this year and 11th during his tenure as President. According to the Ukrainian president, the countries have currently reached an *'unprecedented level of trust'* [1].

What is this 'unprecedented level'? 'Unprecedented' according to the President means that during lengthy negotiations the whole range of issues was covered ranging from security issues and support by Germany and the European Union for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine. Poroshenko also thanked Germany for its role in the issue of granting a visa-free regime for Ukraine [2]. 'This decision means the final dissolution with the Soviet empire, the final return of Ukraine to the family of European nations', - Poroshenko has said [3].

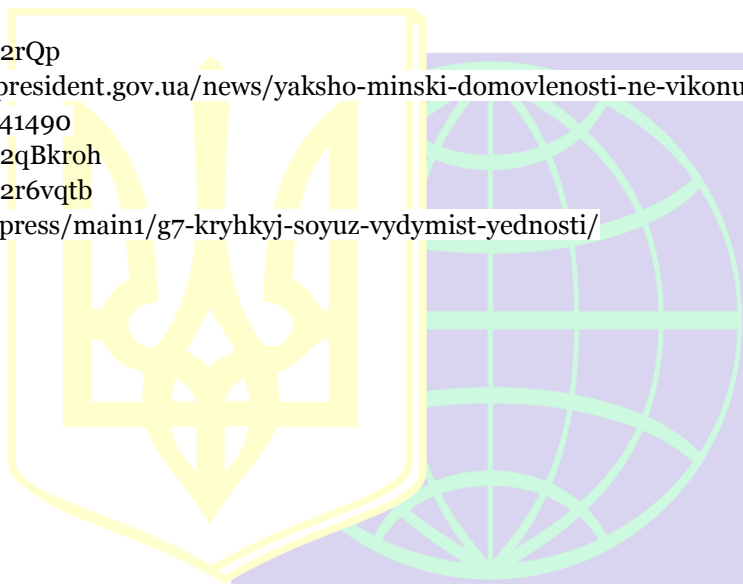
But the main theme of the meeting was the situation in Donbas and problems in the implementation of the Minsk Agreements. As is known, the Federal Government of Germany is making great efforts towards a political settlement on the situation in Eastern Ukraine, the principle of which is to mediate in relations between the Russian and Ukrainian sides. On the eve of the meeting with the President, Merkel said she will inform Poroshenko about the results of the previous negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Sochi and with the new French president Emmanuel Macron.

Quite obviously, Germany as a European leader seeks to stabilize the situation in Europe. Solving the situation in Ukraine would also reduce tensions in the EU. Thus, during a meeting with Poroshenko, Merkel said that to achieve a political solution to the present conflict in Donbas there needs to be held a new round of negotiations at the highest level as soon as possible. This refers to the so-called 'Normandy format'. In addition, Merkel assured the head of the Ukrainian state that newly elected President of France Emmanuel Macron is ready to conduct such negotiations. Against this background, it was also promised to restore contacts between the heads of the three countries involved in the negotiations and with Merkel as soon as possible. Poroshenko, in turn, said that he saw 'no other alternative' to the Minsk process [4]. The last, however, means that President Poroshenko sees no alternative to the current reality, that is, the continuation of hostilities in the Donbas with low intensity.

Russia takes advantages of this. Gradually, it is forming in Donbass quasi-state institutions, recognising the passports of DPR and LPR, bringing into circulation the Russian Ruble, nationalising companies and in every way ‘sabotaging’ the Minsk process.

It should be emphasized that the President's visit to Germany took place after Macron winning in France, who is one side of the ‘Normandy format’, and on the eve of the G7 Summit, where the situation in Ukraine was on the agenda. Therefore, it was a hope that Germany, as European leader could have an impact on the consolidated position of the G 7 in supporting Ukraine. Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron was trying to secure an opportunity for new sanctions in case of violation of the Minsk Agreements. However, the final communiqué of the summit included only part of the statement that ‘the G7 states recognize the connection between the duration of sanctions until the full implementation of Minsk by Russia’. At the same time, the G7 countries confined themselves to an assurance that they are ‘ready for tougher sanctions in case of violations’ [5]. Recall the situation in Ukraine will also be discussed at the meeting of the G20 which Merkel will soon host in her country.

1. <http://bit.ly/2rQp>
2. <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/yaksho-minski-domovlenosti-ne-vikonuvatimutsya-z-visokoyu-do-41490>
3. <http://bit.ly/2qBkroh>
4. <http://bit.ly/2r6vqtb>
5. <https://uain.press/main1/g7-kryhkyj-soyuz-vydymist-yednosti/>



UKRAINE – NATO



KEY THEME ANALYSIS

WHAT HOPES EMERGED FROM THE MEETING OF NATO HEADS OF STATE FOR UKRAINE?

On May 25, in Brussels a meeting of the NATO heads of state took place. On the eve of the event, on May 24, NATO announced it was removing the status of Summit from this meeting. Reducing the status of summit actually means that at the meeting there would not be adopted a summit declaration, namely a formal decision of the Atlantic Council. As known, the presidents of the US and France participated in such a meeting for the first time.

The main results of the meeting can be considered:

1. Donald Trump said that Washington would adhere to its commitments to collective security within NATO, but did not mention that America guarantees fulfillment of art. 5 of the NATO Charter, while demanding increased financial expenses of member states on defense;
2. NATO joins the coalition against the terrorist group 'Islamic State' (however, the Secretary General of the organization said that it does not mean that the Alliance will participate directly in fighting against Islamists but will execute coordination functions and participate in political discussions of its members);
3. NATO countries support a dual strategy of Angela Merkel and confirmed the Alliance's approach to relations with Russia, which provides a combination of dialogue with security measures [1].

For Ukraine, the NATO leaders meeting has become a landmark, since the majority of Allied leaders called for strengthening partnerships with Ukraine and continuing to support our country. '... NATO supports the fact that we will continue to strengthen our partnership with Ukraine, to provide practical and political support', - said Stoltenberg on Thursday evening, May 25, after the meeting of NATO leaders in Brussels [1].

According to Acting Head of Mission of Ukraine to NATO Yegor Bozhko, Ukraine and the issue of Russian aggression is often referred to in official statements and unofficial discussions [2]. On the eve of the meeting, Donald Trump, against whose team there is a continuing investigation into the US contacts with the Russian leadership, confirmed the general position of the West that *Moscow should be responsible for the annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea and for their actions in Eastern Ukraine* [3].

In this context, the renowned expert on Eastern Europe and Russia, lecturer at King's College in London, Alexander Clarkson on Twitter said: ' If level of GDP spent on

defence is a measure of commitment to the Western alliance then Ukraine should be allowed to join NATO immediately' [4].

However, a number of influential media criticized Trump for his sharp tone with the NATO partners. In the NATO countries a more or less clear position towards Russia has been formed, but on the issues of terrorism and migration, which Trump accentuated, there is still no unity. Therefore, there sounded a criticism towards the US President that he divides NATO, although he should strive for unity. As for the Ukrainian issue, after the talks with Donald Trump, Tusk said: 'I can not say that we have a 100 percent common position on Russia. However, with regard to the conflict in Ukraine, it seems that we are on the same line' [3].

In general unity on all questions at a meeting of NATO leaders was not reached. The statements of Donald Trump were somewhat blurred. And obviously, because of some of Donald Trump's unpredictable behavior it was decided to remove the summit status from the meeting of the Alliance members.

Since the coming to power of Trump's administration, inside NATO there exists some uncertainty. The US still does not have a permanent representative in NATO and the State Department remains without leaders in key areas. Under these conditions, lowering the status of the meeting to 'a dinner' NATO has been able to avoid the adoption of a final document – 'Summit Declaration' - on which it failed to reach a final agreement.

However, the NATO leaders meeting gave clear signals to the world about further support for Ukraine and rejection of Russia's aggressive policy. NATO's leadership statements show that Ukraine is in the zone of its priority attention. Obviously, the Alliance will continue to provide logistical support for the development of the defense and security sector of Ukraine. Note, in recent years the cooperation between Ukraine and NATO has been on a much larger scale than ever before. In addition to the changes in the armed forces, now 'Ukroboronprom', with the participation of NATO, is organising an academy, where representatives of the defense industries of our country will be taught according to the methods of NATO standards [5].

The Deputy Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Rose Gottemoeller, in a video speech dedicated to the 20 anniversary of the NATO Information and Documentation Centre to the students of the Institute of International Relations of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, stressed that 'the Alliance will continue to help Ukraine to implement all the reforms that will make it stronger and more stable' [6]. She also assured that NATO's allies will not recognize the illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea. At the same time she noted that Ukraine is one of the most valuable partners of NATO. Therefore, the meeting of Alliance Heads of State outlined the main perspective vector of cooperation with Ukraine - assistance in reforms. The main question is whether there is enough political will in the leadership of our country to lead the country to a logical result of such cooperation.

1. <http://bit.ly/2rTgVuo>
2. <http://bit.ly/2rTuGJ6>
3. <http://bit.ly/2qF5GAS>
4. <https://twitter.com/APHClarkson>
5. <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/experts/2017/05/25/7066190/>
6. <http://m.day.kyiv.ua/uk/article/den-planety/20-rokiv-poryad-ale-ne-razom>

FOREIGN POLICY OF UKRAINE



KEY THEME ANALYSIS

BSEC SUMMIT: ECONOMY OR SECURITY?

On May 22, 2017, the 25th anniversary of the BSEC summit took place in Istanbul. Ukraine was represented by the Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine for Economic Development and Trade Minister Stepan Kubiv.

In his speech during the summit Kubiv congratulated the Turkish presidency on the successful running of the event. The Head of the Ukrainian delegation emphasized that in today's security situation in the region, the threats of termination of further economic cooperation and the cooperation's intensification between the BSEC member countries are rising. Having emphasized the obvious crisis effects in the BSEC which impede the regional project's realization, Kubiv noted that the effective cooperation in the Black Sea region, founded in 1992 on democratic importance and principles, is possible only with the restoring of peace and stability, and also respect for national law [1]. Moreover, Kubiv blamed Russia for the impossibility of projects' realization in the framework of the BSEC. He cited as an example the ring road project around the Black Sea, which could not be realized because of Russian occupation. It should be noted that this question was one of the main ones on the BSEC agenda [2].

The important act of the Ukrainian side was that the Foreign Minister of Ukraine Pavlo Klimkin, during the Ministerial conference, the highest BSEC governing body, demanded to include the definition of the Russian Federation as an aggressor to the 25th anniversary summit declaration. His position was maintained by Georgia. It's predicted that Russia and Armenia refused to vote for the new 25th BSEC summit declaration variant proposed by Ukraine and Georgia. Vasily Nebenzya, the Deputy Foreign Minister of the RF, who represented Russia at the summit, accused Ukraine of summit politicization and claimed on that occasion: '...the Ukrainian leadership seems to have no priorities in Foreign Policy, except for representing Russia as the aggressor'[3].

The result of the summit was the signing of a common declaration which more or less suited all sides, although it has some very idealistic positions about the mutual respect of the states, the mutual outlooks for cooperation and development etc. Terrorism is condemned in the document, attention is drawn to the refugees problem, the importance of cooperation development is emphasized in such branches as agriculture, agro-industries, the banking and financial spheres, the organized crime prevention campaign, customs issues, education, energy, environmental protection, the information and telecommunication technologies, institutional renewal and appropriate

management, science and technology, tourism, culture, economic and trade development, transport etc.

Not coincidentally, the day before publication, Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin called this document 'empty'. It was principally for Ukraine to include in the document the norm about the organization's devotion to the key rules of international law, the UN Charter [3].

It's obvious that nowadays the BSEC has no unity amongst its members concerning the main questions of the Black Sea region. And despite the organization having an economic vector, the political moments have a more important role. Note that, on the territory of the BSEC member, it is stated that a big number of 'frozen conflicts' are concentrated and a war between Russia and Ukraine is ongoing. It should be noted that Russia provoked these conflicts and committed aggression against Ukraine by military annexation and occupation of a large part of its territory. All these complicate even more the purely economic approach in the organization's work. Kubiv spoke up about it having cited Ukraine as an example. He emphasized that **there can't be peace in the region while Ukraine remained geographically split and cooperation in the BSEC should be intensified 'in the light of democratic values and ideals' [5]. Accordingly, the region's conflicts bring the issue of security to the forefront.**

About the Ukrainian role in the BSEC, the Ambassador of Turkey pointed out 'I can't imagine the BSEC without Ukraine and its contributions. Ukraine, despite all the difficulties, is a country with huge potential and, in fact, at this moment it is reforming and trying to break down walls and to find new ways' [6]. **Therefore, despite Erdogan's calls for peace and stability to be the overall aim of the BSEC members countries, and that the organization itself should be the instrument for the solution to all the main regional problems, in many countries there remains a difference in views about further cooperation in the framework of this organization.**

1. <http://mfa.gov.ua/ua/news-feeds/foreign-offices-news/57438-vice-premjer-ministr-ukrajiniministr-jekonomichnogo-rozvitku-ta-torgivli-ukrajini-stepan-kubiv-zdijsniv-vizit-do-turechchini-z-metoju-uchasti-u-juvilejnomu-samiti-z-nagodi-25-richchya-organizaciji-chornomorsykogo-jekonomichnogo-spivrobitnictva>
2. <http://ua.interfax.com.ua/news/general/423060.html>
3. <https://day.kyiv.ua/uk/article/den-planety-svitovi-dyskusiyi/oches-u-gluhomu-kuti>
4. http://www.mfa.gov.tr/site_media/html/bsec-summit-declaration.pdf
5. <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/05/22/black-sea-countries-should-focus-on-common-values-not-differences-erdogan-say>
6. <https://day.kyiv.ua/uk/article/den-planety-svitovi-dyskusiyi/pro-platformu-dlya-dialogu-ta-chornomorsku-identychnist>

COUNTERING RUSSIAN HYBRID WARFARE



KEY THEME ANALYSIS

THE REACTION TO THE CLOSURE OF RUSSIAN SITES AND MANIPULATION OF THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

On May 16, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko signed Decree № 133/2017 on sanctions against '1C', 'VKontakte', 'Odnoklassniki', 'Yandex' and other informational resources of the Russian Federation. There was also published a list of natural and legal persons against whom were applied sanctions. 1228 natural persons and 468 legal persons were included on the list [1].

This decision led to a barrage of reaction from both Ukrainian society and international partners. Secretary General of the Council of Europe Thorbjørn Jagland expressed anxiety about Kyiv's decision on sanctions against a number of Russian websites in Ukraine. 'Blocking social networking sites, search engines, postal services and news websites contradicts our common understanding of freedom of speech and freedom of mass media. In addition, such wide bans do not correspond to the principle of proportionality', Jagland said.

Jurgis Vilcinskas, Head of the Press and Information Department of the EU Delegation in Ukraine stated 'We know about the decision of The National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine to block a series of Russian online services, including popular social media platforms in Ukraine within limited measures accepted by Ukraine'. He added that the EU is waiting for an explanation from Ukrainian authorities, particularly about the temporary nature of sanctions [3].

About the prohibition of Russian sites NATO responded with a statement that such a decision is an issue of security, not freedom of speech. 'Freedom of speech is covered by this dialogue. We believe in Ukrainian devotion to its international obligations, and because the country has a system of checks and balances', NATO stated. [4].

As always, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation stated cynically 'the indifferent attitude of the authorities to any international law and morality and its obligations in the field of protection of human rights has become commonplace. Fearing the smallest sign of dissent in the country, Kyiv's regime is moving in leaps and bounds towards the construction of an authoritarian state in which freedom of speech and free access to information are subjected to strict restrictions'. [5]. And these words were said by Russia, who violated and violates international law, intervened in Ukraine and occupied part of its territory and recalls about law and morality. One of the manifestations of hybrid warfare against Ukraine is demonstrated in this statement. As it

known, later after the publication of this statement there began hacking attacks on the site of the President of Ukraine.

The Security Service of Ukraine noted that the Russian special services lead hybrid warfare against Ukraine's population using in their special information operations 'VKontakte', 'Odnoklassniki', 'Mail.ru' etc. The Security Service of Ukraine constantly records an active widening through such resources of anti-Ukrainian appeals to radical protests with the use of such weapons. The leadership of the Internet resources that got onto sanctions list never responded to numerous appeals of the Security Service of Ukraine [6].

Nowadays, not only does Ukraine feel the consequences of Russia's cyber army, but the facts about Russia's intervention in the elections in the USA and France speak for themselves. Therefore, the decision about blocking Russian internet resources in terms of Russian hybrid warfare is justified. Furthermore, it has to be accepted much earlier. Nevertheless, we continue to catch up on what we miss but we still did not learn how to foresee and use preventive methods in information security.

Another 'swing' that shook society in Ukraine was the reaction of the parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate on the draft of laws about church-state relations in Ukraine: №4128 – 'On freedom of conscience and religious organizations (in regard to the change of the obedience by the religious community)' and № 4511 – 'On the special status of religious organizations, the guiding centers of which are located in the state recognized by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine as the state-aggressor'. On the day of the drafting of laws for the consideration of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate showed support by a considerable part of Ukrainian society. Thus, within the walls of the Verkhovna Rada came over 6000 believers who were against the adoption of these laws.

Law №4128 foresees amendments to the Law of Ukraine 'On freedom of conscience and religious organizations'. Its essence consists in the fact that parishioners will be able to freely determine their Church community subordination. To do this, they gather together, discuss and vote. The bill introduced in the agenda of the Parliament №4128 foresees special status and working conditions for religious organizations 'the guiding centers of which are located in the state-aggressor'. The document has neither names of churches or religious communities nor any particular country : it only refers to the state recognized by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine as the state-aggressor [7].

The issue of religion has always been sensitive. Obviously, that aggressor state has influence on the minds of parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, which has an openly subversive nature. Thus, the draft of laws № 4511 and № 4128 are also applied to national security and written in the spirit of democratic principles, which give religious communities the right to choose to which church they belong. The state can not allow the Church which has foreign subordination to become an instrument of aggression against Ukraine, so such laws are strictly necessary. At the same time it is important to build a strategy of communicative policy with the believers and explain the main reasons for the drafting of such laws.

1. <http://www.president.gov.ua/documents/1332017-21850>
2. <http://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2017/05/17/7065808/>
3. <http://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2017/05/19/7065927/>
4. <https://www.unian.ua/politics/1926284-pitannya-bezpeki-v-nato-prokomentovali-blokuvannya-rosiyskih-saytiv-v-ukrajini.html>
5. http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2756619
6. <https://ssu.gov.ua/ua/news/1/category/2/view/3356#sthash.6GaMqYB6.dpbs>
7. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28494970.html>