UKRAINE'S SECURITY OPTIONS:

Time for Strategic Choices, Smart Partnerships, and Comprehensive Reforms

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by Dr Hanna Shelest and Hennadiy Maksak

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*The reform of Ukraine's security sector needs to serve the country's needs in the current conflict situation, but also to place the country's security on a longer-term footing. **UKRAINE'S SECURITY OPTIONS: Time for Strategic Choices, Smart Partnerships, and Comprehensive Reforms** assesses the current and perspective threats and challenges, and the strategic choices and alliances that will strengthen Ukraine's security and build confidence in the Black sea region.*

Clear Threats, Strategic Choices

Since Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014, and the subsequent war and separatist activities in Eastern Ukraine, the perception of national security and the accompanying military strategy of the government of Ukraine have been substantially revised. This response corresponds to a keener understanding of current threats, risks and challenges, and resulted in the significant update of the main strategic documents of the state. If the previous strategy (from 2010) was a result of the internal political situation and foreign policy orientation (more pro-Russian), so the new strategy reflected both internal transformations and the immediate threat to the country's territorial integrity. The necessity of military and security sector reform is now stated as a priority.

Both the government and civil society now recognise the urgent necessity of

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

• **Ukraine** should participate in joint maritime patrol and exercises activities with NATO members, and work with non-Black Sea member states' navies to enhance the navy potential and skills of Ukraine and other Black Sea states.

• **Ukraine** should adopt a National Information Security Strategy that incorporates the latest strategies adopted by NATO and the EU to enhance co-operation in the security sphere.

• **Ukraine** has to demonstrate more leadership within the Eastern Partnership region, especially in shaping a joint agenda on security issues.

• Reforms are needed to separate the overlapping of the General Staff and the MoD, and Ukraine should discuss the possibility of transferring the responsibility for the appointment of the Minister of Defence from the President to the Prime Minister – with the requirement of further approval by the Parliament.

• The creation of an **expert council** under the **National Security and Defence Council** would allow both an increase in the level of expertise in the preparation of recommendations, and also serve as a mechanism for civilian control over the security sphere.

• **Civil society** and the expert community can assist in the evaluation of existing agreements between Ukraine and its partners – both organisations and states – in the sphere of security and military co-operation, supporting necessary revisions.

• **Civil society in Ukraine**, together with **civil society in the other Eastern Partnership countries, Visegrad Four, and the Baltic states**, should elaborate a system of periodical monitoring of Russian influence on different target groups inside their countries. The resulting database would enable the measurement of dynamics and trends, and thus facilitate the development of appropriate regional responses.

comprehensive reform of the entire security sector, which had been almost destroyed in recent years (under-financed, understaffed armed forces, antiquated and insufficient military equipment and supplies, and dangerous changes in command structures, including the presence of Russian agents). There is also agreement on the necessity of an active fight against corruption.

In 2014, the new government of Ukraine inherited an imbalanced and underfinanced military structure, the loss of the biggest part of its Navy (due to the annexation of Crimea), and an ill-prepared and highly corrupt Ministry of Defence and General Staff. The immediate challenge of defending the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine also influenced the military reform priorities.

The reform of the national security sphere is further complicated by the fact that it is necessitated at a time of war, not in peace time, when either domestic political understanding or the desire for integration into NATO could be a trigger for changes, and reforms could be made gradually in the light of extended public and expert discussions. Instead, the reforms and transformation have to be undertaken rapidly, and simultaneously both at tactical and strategic levels, to address immediate threats and put in place future security arrangements. This approach resulted at the first stage of reforms in an absence of strategic vision and a lack of a comprehensive perspective.

In the new National Security Concept of Ukraine, adopted in 2015, the external threats comprise almost solely Russian aggression against the country.[1] If previous security concepts and military doctrines were more about general hypothetical threats and challenges, so in 2015 for the first time they were associated with a particular state, the Russian Federation. International security is considered in strategic documents of the government of Ukraine only in the framework of sub-regional security or Euro-Atlantic integration.[2] The urgent need to concentrate

on internal security problems has in fact forced Ukraine to freeze its participation in many formats of regional and international security (BLACKSEAFOR, Black Sea Harmony) or reduce its participation in mediation activities (Transnistria), paying less attention to global issues (such as non-proliferation).

> " *In 2014, the new government inherited an imbalanced and underfinanced military structure, the loss of the biggest part of its navy, and an ill-prepared and highly corrupt Ministry of Defence and General Staff.* "

A strong call from civil society was one of the main driving forces for military reforms. Experts from prominent Ukrainian think-tanks with a track-record in defence and security sector studies were engaged in the consultation process.[3] Moreover, the non-partisan RAND Corporation of USA was consulted by the Ukrainian authorities. Roundtables where external experts were invited to provide constructive criticism on reforms became commonplace, with discussions on the Strategic Defence Bulletin and similar documents.[4]

As a result of military actions in Eastern Ukraine, many volunteers from the Maidan protests and civic activists joined the process of reforming the defence sector and increasing the accountability of the military, building on their experience of interactions with soldiers on the ground. Volunteers joined at all levels – field assistance, internal

1 Указ Президента України Про рішення Ради національної безпеки і оборони України від 6 травня 2015 року "Про Стратегію національної безпеки України" [Decree of President of Ukraine on the decision of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine on 6 May 2015 "On Strategy of National Security of Ukraine"], President of Ukraine, 2015, http://zakon5.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/287/2015
2 *Ukrainian Prism: Foreign Policy 2015*, Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism", 2016, p. 130, http://prismua.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Prism-en.pdf

3 *Ukraine's Security Sector Reform Progress: Achievements and Major Problems.* Discussion Paper, Razumkov Centre, 2016, http://razumkov.org.ua/upload/1453966743_file.pdf
4 "At Last, Military Reform Makes Headway in Ukraine", Motyl, A., *World Affairs Journal*, 3 February 2016, http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/blog/alexander-j-motyl/last-military-reform-makes-headway-ukraine

by Dr Hanna Shelest and Hennadiy Maksak

reform process, accountability monitoring, and experts' evaluation and elaboration of recommendations. This participation has been a positive element, not only through bringing in additional expertise, but also guaranteeing the transparency of the process, a feature that was previously lacking in the security sphere in Ukraine.

The Law "On democratic civilian control over the military organisation and law enforcement bodies of the state", which strengthened the legal basis of the principles of democratic control over the security sector, was adopted back in 2003. However, the strong constitutional powers of the President stood in the way of the establishment of a relevant democratic/civilian control mechanism over the security sector from the side of the parliament and the government, let alone civil society. It is not likely that this problem will be resolved before the stabilisation of the security situation or even resolution of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

By 2015, Ukraine had four strategic options to choose from, all of which had their advantages and disadvantages in the light of the existing threats to national security.[5] The variants were closely interconnected with the general political and foreign policy strategic choices of the country.

The four options were:

1. Neutrality, or continuation of the so-called "non-bloc status", which envisaged not only a rejection of Euro-Atlantic integration but also limiting integration with the EU – maybe including possible signature of a revised Association Agreement but without membership aspirations;

2. European integration without membership in NATO;

3. NATO and EU membership;

4. Creation of a system of bilateral and multilateral security arrangements and alliances, mostly with neighbouring states or big powers to guarantee national security and capabilities for response to threats.

In spring 2015, the discussions concluded in favour of cancellation of the non-bloc status of the state and signature of the EU Association Agreement. However, the strategic choice was not elaborated with an exact timeframe and defined goals, limiting current NATO integration to the issue of achieving conformity with NATO standards and increasing military co-operation. Furthermore, the discussion within society of possible alternatives to a NATO membership perspective has continued, in part to prevent a nervous response from Russia.

Currently, security sector reform is happening with the support of NATO and advisers from individual NATO member-states. A separate group has been established for Navy reform, and a Multinational Joint Commission (USA, United Kingdom, Canada, and Lithuania) was created in October 2014.[6]

According to the Report of the Folke Bernadotte Academy (Sweden) in 2015, there were approximately 250 projects implemented in Ukraine aimed at security sector reform directly or having implications for security sector reform.[7] These numbers are strong evidence of the NATO member-states' support for the transformation of Ukraine's security sector. Although this support could be regarded as a substitute for the direct military support or supply of weapons that Ukraine had been expecting in 2014, Ukraine would not be able to recover and reform its armed forces without such assistance and knowledge-sharing.

At the end of February 2016, the Minister of Defence of Ukraine approved the creation of the Committee of Reforms within the MoD,[8] an advisory body whose tasks are the management of reforms from their concept to control over their implementation. Each working group within the Committee will include MoD staff, foreign advisers, and representatives of civil society. The Committee will be open to the media, which is a significant achievement towards securing transparency and accountability of the military sphere.

5 *"Стратегічний вибір: основні моделі національної безпеки та зовнішньої політики України"* [Strategic Choice of Ukraine: Main models of the national security and foreign policy of Ukraine], Kapitonensko, M., Shelest, H., et al, Black Sea Trust, 2014

6 "International Support to Security Sector Reform in Ukraine", Hanssen, M., *A Mapping of SSR Projects*, The Folke Bernadotte Academy, 2016 https://fba.se/contentassets/9f9daa3815ac4adaa88fd578469fc053/international-support-to-security-sector-reform-in-ukraine---a-mapping-o....pdf, p.13
7 ibid, p. 10
8 *По какой карте будут осуществляться реформы сил обороны?* [What will be the roadmap for reform of the armed forces?] Kovalenko, A., Censor.net, 19 March 2016, http://censor.net.ua/resonance/379887/po_kakoyi_karte_budut_osuschestvlyatsya_reformy_sil_oborony

Transparency International (TI) announced in April 2016 the creation of the Defence Corruption Monitoring Committee of Ukraine, which will monitor anti-corruption reform progress, analyse corruption risks, develop policy recommendations for the Ministry of Defence, and advocate for increased transparency in security assistance to the country. It will comprise a joint international and national monitoring group that will monitor the MoD's progress on reform, provide a channel for raising corruption cases, and communicate with the broader public on defence reform progress.[9] Some other civic initiatives are also involved in the monitoring of security sector reforms, such as the establishment in 2015 of a working group on national security and defence under the umbrella of the experts' platform, "the Reanimation Package of Reforms".[10]

> " Although NATO member states' support for the transformation of Ukraine's security sector could be regarded as a substitute for direct military support, Ukraine would not be able to reform its armed forces without such assistance. "

However, comprehensive civil society involvement is witnessed only in the sphere of military and police reform; activities in the framework of the National Security and Defence Council are still closed to the

9 "Call for Nominations: Members of the Defence Corruption Monitoring Committee of Ukraine Transparency International Defence & Security", Transparency International Ukraine, 21 April 2016, http://ti-ukraine.org/en/news/oficial/5989.html
10 Reanimation Package of Reforms, 2016, http://rpr.org.ua/en/

public. This has contributed to the lack of transparency in the decision-making process on the strategic level and has minimised the possibilities for the involvement of independent experts.

Internal and External Security Challenges

The current threats to the national security of Ukraine comprise:

- threats to territorial integrity, including border revisions, hostile territorial claims, and inability to control its own borders, especially in the East;
- threats and risks from the sea, including:
  - attacks from the sea
  - blockade of seaports
  - undermining of safety navigation and jeopardising of security of the trade fleet;
- risks of social and political destabilisation, including destabilisation of the political system;
- cyber and information warfare;
- threats to critical infrastructure;
- terrorism and transborder organised crime;
- energy dependency.

Russia's direct policies and covert operations against Ukraine, as well as military support to the separatists in Eastern Ukraine, continue to pose the main challenge and threat to the national security of Ukraine. Due to the nature of its activities and objectives, it can be considered both an internal and external challenge. The armed conflict in Donbas was triggered by Russian security service officers in spring 2014.[11] Since then, throughout the conflict, there have been steady inflows of fighters and weapons from the territory of the Russian Federation, in a situation where Ukrainian state authorities have been unable to control the country's Eastern border since the start of the conflict.

As of June 2016, one-third of the Donbas region (part of Luhansk and Donetsk regions), or close to 3% of Ukrainian territory, is

11 Interview with I.Girkin (Strelkov), commander of the group that started the hostilities in and around the town of Slov'yansk: http://svpressa.ru/war21/article/103643/

by Dr Hanna Shelest and Hennadiy Maksak

controlled by the combatants of the so-called "Donetsk People's Republic" (DPR) and "Luhansk People's Republic" (LPR), not by the Ukrainian government.

The Minsk Agreements – the common term for a package of documents adopted in September 2014 and February 2015 – provide the main framework for resolution of the conflict. For the time being, the main violations of, and non-conformity with, the Minsk Agreements, lie in the security domain, where compliance is a basic prerequisite for a political settlement. Without full implementation of the ceasefire, the withdrawal of weapons in line with the agreements, and the granting of full access to all territories for the monitors from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), it will be difficult to start negotiations or the practical implementation of the clauses regarding reconstruction of the destroyed territories and the organisation of local elections.

At the time of signing of the Minsk Agreements, a Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) of the OSCE was already operating in Ukraine, having been launched in March 2014. However, the SMM has frequently been unable to function smoothly, due to the security situation and the restrictions it encounters, as well as numerous cases of violent behaviour towards the observers.[12]

A strengthening of the mandate and capabilities of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) is supported by Ukraine, which also seeks the deployment of a wide international mission in the conflict area, perhaps under the auspices of the United Nations or the EU, working in concert with an armed OSCE mission. Meanwhile, DPR/LPR representatives continue to prevent the monitoring activities of the OSCE SMM in the separatist-controlled territory, a sign of their attitude towards the international obligations and their desire to hide their non-conformity with the agreements.

A serious internal challenge has come in the shape of the pressure of the international community on Ukraine to organise, as soon as possible, elections in the separatist-controlled territory – despite the absence of the ceasefire. An understanding of the appropriate conditions for organisation of local elections represents a fundamental difference between the parties to the conflict.

Ukraine insists that these elections should be held "in accordance with Ukrainian legislation" and "in compliance with the relevant OSCE standards", as stated in the Minsk-2 Agreement. This means: free access to the media and free access for international observers; free competition among Ukrainian political parties; full authority of the national Central Election Commission; proper security situation with disarmament of illegal military groups; and possibility for more than 1.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) to vote in the elections.

"
The intention of the DPR/LPR leaders and their backers in Moscow is not to hold free and fair elections in Donbas, but to limit political competition there and secure legitimisation for the rule of Russia's armed proxies.
"

The position of the DPR/LPR leaders is that the participation of Ukrainian political parties, Ukrainian media, and IDPs in the elections is unacceptable. At the same time, the separatists demand a total amnesty for all as a precondition for holding local elections. Overall, it is obvious that the intention of the DPR/LPR leaders and their backers in Moscow is not to hold free and fair elections in Donbas, but to limit political competition there and secure legitimisation for the rule of Russia's armed proxies.[13] A certain logic is

12 *Direct violence committed against OSCE monitors, one monitor hospitalized,* Hug, A., Ukrainian Crisis Media Center, 30 July 2015, http://uacrisis.org/30171-obsye-12

13 *State of Minsk agreements implementation: An unofficial Ukrainian experts' opinion*, Shelest, H., and Shulga, D., International Renaissance Foundation, 2015, http://www.irf.ua/en/knowledgebase/news/violations_nonconformity_and_manipulations_by_russia_of_the_minsk_agreements_implementation_expert_report/

essential for the implementation of the agreed actions. Free and democratic elections, as well as reconstruction of the destroyed towns, are not possible while the security situation remains fragile.

The guarantees to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in exchange for the dismantling of its nuclear arsenal, as set out in the Budapest memorandum (1994), signed by the United States, United Kingdom, and Russia, have proved feeble, not least as the US and UK have been unable to identify a legally binding mechanism for their implementation. At the same time, the search for new mechanisms and agreements beyond the Euro-Atlantic dimension is almost absent.

> " From the very beginning of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, the government of Ukraine wanted greater EU involvement in the resolution of the crisis, including a CSDP mission. "

The predominant focus on European integration and NATO co-operation (NATO received substantial attention in the updated Military Doctrine and National Security Concept, which set out the aim of future integration of Ukraine into NATO after an initial status of Distinguished Partnership) has resulted in the neglect of consideration of other possible security enhancements through bilateral or multilateral arrangements (e.g. possible Ukraine-Moldova-Romania security co-operation or a Visegrad 4 + 1 format). Thus, Ukraine is minimising the available alternatives for its security guarantees at a time when NATO membership is not an option in the near future.

Due to the focus on domestic developments, Ukraine has not, in fact, been present in the international discourse on security issues, thus missing an opportunity to present lessons learnt from the Ukrainian crisis.

Another internal challenge, on top of the poor state of the armed forces in 2014, and the corresponding inability to react properly to existing threats, appeared under the new realities of the Russian aggression – namely, the creation of voluntary battalions, which were not under the control of the state authorities from the outset. To respond to these issues and to regain state control over the military apparatus, the Ukrainian authorities had to bring these battalions into the fold of legitimate security sector institutions, which was successfully accomplished and contributed crucially to the pace of defence reform in 2014-2015.

The issue of human rights has also become a priority since the start of the conflict, reaching beyond the issues of IDPs and victims of the war. In February 2016, the Secretariat of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights introduced the special post of a representative of the Commissioner for the observance of the human rights of military personnel.[14] This issue remains one of the top priorities following the demobilisation of thousands of soldiers, in addition to the cases of wounded and killed military personnel. In this respect, rehabilitation of soldiers with post-traumatic syndrome will be a crucial challenge for Ukrainian society, so it will be important to support demobilised military personnel to prevent a national-scale societal problem.

Human Security and the Economic Costs of Conflict

Russia has occupied and controls close to 13% of Ukrainian territory (the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the territories of Donbas region controlled by illegal armed groups backed by Russia), or around 47,000 square kilometres.[15] The Ukrainian authorities estimate that the Ukrainian losses from the

14 "Валерія Лутковська представила громадськості нового Представника Уповноваженого з питань захисту прав військовослужбовців" [Valeria Lutkovska introduced to civil society a new Representative on Human Rights of Military Personnel], Ombudsman, 1 February 2016, http://www.ombudsman.gov.ua/ua/all-news/pr/10216-qk-valeriya-lutkovska-predstavila-gromadskosti-novogo-predstavnika-upovno/
15 *Ukraine's Territories, Occupied by Russia and Pro-Russian Militants*, Ukraine under Attack, 8 June 2015, http://ukraineunderattack.org/13510-okupovani-rosiyeyu-ta-prorosijskymy-bojovykamy-terytoriyi-ukrayiny.html

by Dr Hanna Shelest and Hennadiy Maksak

Russian aggression amount to about UAH 1 trillion (ca € 37 million) before taking into consideration the occupied territory itself and private property losses in the territory.[16]

Ukraine has been deprived of around 20% of its economic potential due to the industrial infrastructure losses in Donbas and the annexation of Crimea.[17] Overall economic activity decreased five-fold in the territories where the Ukrainian government has lost control.[18] As a result of the fighting in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, and the accompanying destruction of transport and energy infrastructure, many companies were forced to suspend or terminate production.

Large state and private enterprises in machinery, heavy, steel, and mining industries suffered substantial damage in the area of the anti-terrorist operations (ATO). In a relatively small occupied territory, almost half of all Ukrainian coal mining is located, including almost 100% of anthracite extraction sites. A significant share of the metallurgical industry of Ukraine is concentrated in Donbas. The Donetsk region accounted for about 35% of steel production in Ukraine in 2014. Under the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the level of production has dropped sharply, affecting in turn the level of Ukrainian exports and adding to the mounting economic crisis in Ukraine.

Russian aggression brought a humanitarian crisis to Ukraine, especially to the conflict-affected and occupied territories. As of 28 April 2016, official sources stated that there were 1.03 million Ukrainian citizens displaced from occupied or temporarily uncontrolled territories to other regions of Ukraine. Of this total, around 1.02 million represent Ukrainian citizens from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, while 22,000 are from the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.[19] Although the numbers vary depending

on the institutions providing the data and the method of calculation, in March 2016 President Petro Poroshenko stated the figure of 1.75 million IDPs in Ukraine.[20] The scale of this displacement places a heavy burden on the Ukrainian economy to secure minimum social assistance to these Ukrainian citizens.

> " Not all humanitarian organisations have been able to receive accreditation from the separatist 'republics' to deliver humanitarian aid, for instance the Red Cross's entry was blocked, and many of their representatives lost their accreditation. "

Moreover, there have been human rights violations from the side of the Russian authorities and Russia-backed militants in the occupied areas. There has been only limited progress in securing the release of over 100 Ukrainians from captivity in Donbas. Many international humanitarian organisations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), are banned from the territories not under the control of the Ukrainian authorities, so are unable to search for about 800 missing persons.

The situation is not stable for humanitarian aid to operate in the occupied territories. The main problem is that not all humanitarian organisations have been able to receive accreditation from the separatist "republics" to deliver humanitarian aid to the area, for instance the Red Cross reported that their entry was blocked while delivering aid, and that many of their representatives lost

16 *Внаслідок агресії РФ Україна зазнала збитків більш ніж 1 трлн грн – Матіос* [As a result of the Russian aggression, Ukraine lost more than 1 trillion hryvnia – Matios], Segodnya, 22 March 2016, http://ukr.segodnya.ua/economics/enews/vsledstvie-agressii-rf-ukraina-ponesla-ubytki-bolee-chem-1-trln-grn-matios-701286.html
17 *Kremlin's Black Book. Russian War Against Ukraine,* Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, June 2015, www.kmu.gov.ua/document/247961944/blackbook_en_light.pdf
18 *Donbas and Crimea: the Value of Return*, Gorbulin, V., Vlasyuk, O., Libanova, E., Lyashenko, O., National Institute for Strategic Studies, Ukraine, 2015, http://en.niss.gov.ua/public/File/englishpublic/Eng_Donbass_Poltor.pdf
19 Official information server of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, State Emergency Service of Ukraine, 5 May 2016, http://www.mns.gov.ua/news/34232.html
20 "Ukraine's Battle for Freedom Continues", Statement by the President of Ukraine, 31 March 2016, http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/vistup-prezidenta-ukrayini-na-forumi-bitva-ukrayini-za-svobo-36927

CIPDD

their accreditation.[21] The inability to deliver aid results in further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the region.

There are also serious human rights violations against the indigenous population of Crimean Tatars. These violations are reported by international organisations and third countries' monitoring missions,[22] which have some, but limited, access to the peninsula. Russian authorities have started more than 130 criminal cases prosecuting Crimean Tatars, in addition to which the Mejlis – a representative body of the Crimean Tatars - has been banned. It is worrisome that 21 Crimean Tatars have been kidnapped, of which three were found dead, and nine are still missing, since the annexation of Crimea.[23]

Freedom of Expression and the Propaganda Threat

Against the backdrop of military aggression, the propaganda threat has served as an indispensable part of the hybrid warfare aimed at undermining social trust, the standing of the government, and distorting facts. From the very beginning, activities to counter Russian propaganda took place in parallel at the level of civil society and the state authorities. Due to streamlined civil society efforts, new initiatives appeared in the media domain aimed at providing reliable information and debunking disinformation originating from Russia. These initiatives included *StopFake, Ukraine under Attack*, *InfoResist*, and *Ukrainian Crisis Media Center*. The efforts of the civil society were more timely and effective than those of the state.

At the official level, the Ministry of Information Policy (MIP) of Ukraine was formed in January 2015, with the intention to fill the gap in countering Russian propaganda and to reform the media sector in Ukraine. This governmental structure has identified

several challenges connected to external and internal information threats. First of all, there is the need for deoligarchisation of Ukrainian media, which is still significantly under the control of media tycoons. The second task is the need to establish strategic government communications. The third is the information reintegration of the territories of occupied Crimea and Donbas. The fourth challenge is the popularisation of Ukraine in the world.[24] However, after 18 months, the MIP has still not managed to adopt the Concept of Information Security, a draft of which was widely discussed and critiqued by experts in summer 2015.

Some of the tasks prescribed are very complex. They require a strategic approach and assistance from international partners. As the April 2016 referendum in the Netherlands on the EU-Ukraine Association agreement manifested, efforts to counter disinformation about Ukraine should be planned on a regular basis, taking into consideration the target audiences abroad.

Co-operation with NATO on strategic communications and countering multifaceted propaganda could be a promising sign in this regard, in particular in the framework of the Strategic Communications Partnership Road Map between Ukraine and NATO, signed in September 2015. As both NATO and the EU have established bodies to counter propaganda and disinformation, this opens up the possibility not only for intergovernmental co-operation, but also for better involvement of civil society and the expert community from Ukraine and NATO/EU member states in the elaboration of both daily priorities and strategies.

The development of civil society in Ukraine is undoubtedly one of the success stories of the Revolution of Dignity (the EuroMaidan Protests of 2013-2014). Contrary to some Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries where the activities of CSOs are restricted, and their rights and freedoms curtailed, Ukrainian civil society has strongly declared and secured its place in the decision-making process and the implementation of reforms. It is a stronghold trying to keep the Ukrainian authorities on the track of accountability and transparency, but also a vital resource providing consultations and expertise. Nevertheless, some representatives of the old bureaucracy

21 *Хто і чому не хоче міжнародну гуманітарну допомогу в "ЛНР"* [Who does not want international humanitarian assistance, and for what, in "LPR"], Deutsche Welle, 26 September 2015, http://dw.com/p/1Gdv2
22 *Human Rights Monitoring In Crimea: Mission Impossible?,* Spyrydonova, K., UA: Ukraine Analytica No. 2 (4), 2016
23 "Ukraine's Battle for Freedom Continues", Statement by the President of Ukraine, 31 March 2016, http://www. president.gov.ua/en/news/vistup-prezidenta-ukrayini-na-forumi-bitva-ukrayini-za-svobo-36927

24 Report of the MIP's activity in first quarter of 2016, Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine, May 2016, http://mip.gov.ua/files/documents/_MIP_2016_first_quartal_07.pdf

by Dr Hanna Shelest and Hennadiy Maksak

continue to resist the greater involvement of civil society and oppose reforms, protecting their long-held positions and influence.

EU Integration and Enhanced Co-operation with NATO

The prospects for the European integration of Ukraine depend on many variables. A lot will be determined by the resolve of the Ukrainian authorities to deliver on reform commitments under the Association Agreement and Association Agenda. The resistance of political forces delayed the implementation of reforms, for example in anti-corruption efforts, stalling the EU-Ukraine visa-liberalisation process.

Special focus is required on security co-operation between Ukraine and the EU. In the Association Agreement implementation plan for 2014-2017, nearly 40 tasks have been set vis-à-vis the relevant clause of the agreement. In 2015, the priorities for co-operation between Ukraine and the EU included: the extension of military-political dialogue; preparation for military exercises and multinational peacekeeping operations; the involvement of Ukraine in the activities of EU battle groups; trainings for Ukrainian militaries on Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) issues; and fostering co-operation between the Eastern Partnership countries under the CSDP umbrella.

Other bilateral and multilateral mechanisms for co-operation with EU and NATO member states have also contributed to Ukraine's integration with the two organisations. For example, the Ukrainian Parliament ratified the Agreement between Ukraine, Lithuania and Poland on the establishment of a joint military unit (JMU). The headquarters of the JMU were opened in in Lublin, Poland, in January 2016. Other examples include Ukraine's preparation to participate in the EU battle groups (BGs): BG "HELBROC" and Visegrad EU BG with active duty in the first half of 2016, and BG under the command of the United Kingdom in the second part of 2016.[25] The Visegrad Four recently signed a note on Ukraine's accession as part of the Memorandum of Understanding on the formation of the Visegrad Battle Group.

The EU is active in the security sector reform of Ukraine, initiating an EU Advisory Mission,[26] which formally began operations in Kyiv on 1 December 2014. However, this mission is responsible only for the civilian part of the security sector, not focusing on the military sphere. After 18 months in operation, it is difficult to claim this mission as one of the serious successes of the EU, as its activities overlap with many different projects sponsored by other international organisations, countries and donors.

> " In 2015, a decision to abandon Ukraine's 'non-bloc status' (in place since 2010) gave a significant push towards the invigoration of co-operation with NATO that was taking place at all levels. "

Moreover, from the very beginning of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, the government of Ukraine wanted greater EU involvement in the resolution of the crisis, including a CSDP mission. In winter 2015, the Ukrainian authorities stated a desire for an EU-led peacekeeping mission in Donbas.[27] However, this idea did not receive a positive response from Brussels due to a lack of unity among EU member-states on the Ukrainian question and the absence of political will on the part of the EU to be involved beyond diplomatic formats.

25 *Співробітництво Збройних сил України та ЄС у 2015 році* [Co-operation between the Armed Forces of Ukraine and EU in 2015], Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 5 May 2016, http://www.mil.gov.ua/eurointegration/spivrobitnicztvo-zbrojnih-sil-ukraini-ta-es-u-2015-roczi.html

26 About European Union Advisory Mission, EUAM, 2016, http://www.euam-ukraine.eu/
27 *Yelisieiev: The EU should send a CSDP mission to Ukraine*, Yelisieiev, V., EURACTIV, 10 March 2015, http://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/interview/yelisieiev-the-eu-should-send-a-csdp-mission-to-ukraine/

Ukraine's co-operation with NATO is one of the key issues of its foreign policy agenda. In 2015, a decision to abandon its "non-bloc status" (in place since 2010) gave a significant push towards the invigoration of co-operation that was taking place at all levels. NATO integration was mentioned distinctly in the National Security Strategy as one of the main directions of government policy on national security: the strategy describes in detail the main directions of the special partnership between Ukraine and NATO, including the "long-term goal of joining the common European security system, the basis of which is NATO".[28]

At the same time, in other strategic documents, most statements refer to the reform of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), and the need to bring them in line with NATO standards, and to enhance military and political co-operation with NATO member states. The Military Doctrine is focused completely on the adaptation of the AFU to NATO standards, with the final goal of the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country. It is expected that, by 2018, 90% of Ukrainian units will be operating according to NATO standards.[29]

Since 2015, the Parliament of Ukraine has become an active player in the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country. Representatives of the Verkhovna Rada became rather proactive – regularly visiting sessions of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, actively participating in debates and lobbying for intensified co-operation, including the creation of trust funds for Ukraine. This has provided an additional "entry point" for civil society to be involved in the formulation of state policy.

The key achievements of 2015 have included the signing of the Trust Fund Agreement – on the establishment of five NATO trust funds for the total amount of € 5.4 million, namely the NATO-Ukraine Command, Control, Communications and Computers (C4) Trust Fund, the NATO-Ukraine Logistics and Standardisation Trust Fund, the NATO-Ukraine Medical Rehabilitation Trust Fund, the NATO-Ukraine Cyber Defence Trust Fund, and the NATO-Ukraine Military Career Management Trust Fund – in addition to the signing of the Defence-Technical Co-operation Road Map and the Strategic Communications Partnership Road Map.

Despite the significant increase in public support for NATO integration since 2014,[30] there is a clear understanding in society that neither Ukraine nor the country's partners in NATO are ready for an official membership request. Beyond the current crisis and the necessity of comprehensive internal reform, a proper awareness and education campaign is essential to provide the Ukrainian public with an adequate understanding of Euro-Atlantic integration.

Priorities and Recommendations

Priorities for Action by the National Government

• Maritime security and navy development is an issue where Ukraine has lost time and came to understand its importance very late. Considering the existence of the threat from the sea and the current state of the Ukrainian Navy, co-operation with NATO and the Black Sea countries in this sphere should become a priority. Ukraine should participate in joint patrol and exercises activities, and initiate a new format of navy co-operation instead of the currently dysfunctional BLACKSEAFOR (due to Russia's participation in this format). Discussions of the Montreux Convention limitations, and Turkish protection of its implementation, leave enough space (within the 21-day limit on the presence of ships from non-Black Sea countries) to organise a rotating operation for non-Black Sea member states' navies, and for their participation in enhancing the navy potential and skills of Ukraine and other Black Sea states that can provide additional protection for Ukraine while renewing its own navy capabilities.

28 President of Ukraine, 'Указ Президента України Про рішення Ради національної безпеки і оборони України від 6 травня 2015 року "Про Стратегію національної безпеки України" [Decree of President of Ukraine on the decision of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine on 6 May 2015 "On Strategy of National Security of Ukraine"]', President of Ukraine, 2015, http://zakon5.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/287/2015

29 *По какой карте будут осуществляться реформы сил обороны?* [What will be the roadmap for reform of the armed forces?] Kovalenko, A., Censor.net, 19 March 2016, http://censor.net.ua/resonance/379887/po_kakoyi_karte_budut_osuschestvlyatsya_reformy_sil_oborony

30 *How would you vote if the referendum on Ukraine`s NATO accession was held the following Sunday? (recurrent, 2002-2015),* Razumkov Center, 2015, http://www.uceps.org/eng/poll.php?poll_id=46

by Dr Hanna Shelest and Hennadiy Maksak

• Ukraine has to demonstrate more leadership within the Eastern Partnership region, especially in shaping a joint agenda on security issues for the three Eastern Partnership countries that have signed Association Agreements with the EU (Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine).

• Despite the existing obligation agreed with NATO to post civilian leadership to the Ministry of Defence, Ukraine has neglected this norm under the strains of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Therefore, within the framework of current reforms, it is important to introduce the reforms in order to adhere to this norm and finally to separate the overlapping of the General Staff and the MoD.

• In the course of the process of constitutional reform, Ukraine should discuss the possibility of transferring the responsibility for the appointment of the Minister of Defence from the President to the Prime Minister – with the requirement of further approval by the Parliament of Ukraine.

• Ukraine should adopt a National Information Security Strategy that incorporates the latest strategies adopted by NATO and the EU to enhance co-operation in the security sphere.

Priorities for Civil Society

• Civil society in Ukraine should be involved at the level of both the MoD and Parliament. While mechanisms for co-operation with the MoD have been established already, and proved their effectiveness, both in security reforms and in anti-corruption controls, co-operation with the Parliament has still to be developed.

• The creation of an expert council under the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine would be a serious step that would allow both an increase in the level of expertise in the preparation of recommendations, and also serve as a mechanism for civilian control over the security sphere.

• Civil society and the expert community can assist in the evaluation of existing agreements between Ukraine and its partners – both organisations and states – in the sphere of security and military co-operation, supporting necessary revisions of existing agreements, elaborating recommendations for updates or adoption of new agreements, or mapping security arrangements, and Ukraine's corresponding obligations.

• The expert community in Ukraine can initiate joint projects with other Eastern Partnership states on analysis of the military balance both in the Eastern Partnership space and in the Black Sea region, as both areas are witnessing a change in military and security strategies, capabilities, and deployments. Such analysis can then provide input and stimulus for the respective governments and international organisations, such as NATO and the EU, in shaping their strategies and in their elaboration of tactics.

• Civil society in Ukraine, together with civil society in the other Eastern Partnership countries, Visegrad Four, and the Baltic states, should elaborate a system of periodical monitoring of Russian influence on different target groups inside their countries. The resulting database would contribute to a better understanding of the developing situation, and current risks and challenges, as well as enable the measurement of dynamics and trends, and thus facilitate the development of appropriate regional responses.