

Contents

Building Resilience in Eastern Europe: Intersecting NATO Concept of Projecting Stability <i>Danu Marin, Volodymyr Solovian</i>	6
Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus Facing Russian Information War: What Has Been Done, What to Do Next <i>Tatiana Cojocari, Ievgen Afanasiev, Dzmitry Halubnichy</i>	11
Orthodox Radicalism in Eastern Ukraine: Lessons for Belarus <i>Heorhii Bushuiev, Ekaterina Maslakova</i>	17
Ukraine – Belarus: Prospects and Challenges of Trade Relations <i>Olexandr Zlatin</i>	22

Dear friends,

We would like to bring to your attention a collection of policy papers prepared by the graduates of the First Eastern European School for Foreign Policy Researchers, which was organized by the Foreign Policy Council «Ukrainian Prism» in partnership with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

Young analysts from Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine interested in enhancing their analytical skills and regional expertise have gathered in Odesa in August 2016. For the needs of further research, the participants created international working groups and prepared policy papers on the most acute cross-border regional problems of Eastern Europe.

We hope that this approach will strengthen the interest of young Belarusian, Moldovan and Ukrainian analysts and experts to the construction of regional identity and the search for answers to common challenges.

Hennadiy Maksak,
*Head of the Board,
Foreign Policy Council
“Ukrainian Prism”*

Dear friends and colleagues,

On the one hand, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus might be very similar countries: All of them declared their independence from the Soviet Union during just four days in August 1991 and since then for 25 years they have been existing as independent states on the map. All three struggled a very difficult economic and social transformation, whereas their transformation is still not everywhere finished. As direct neighbours of the European Union they became members of the Eastern Partnership, but at the same time they had different emphases and changing priorities between East and West in their foreign policy orientations during the years. Especially in the case of Moldova and Ukraine the strategic position between the EU and Russia led to unsolved territorial questions and even growing tensions in the previous years.

While each of the countries puts a lot of emphasis on the bilateral relations with the EU (keeping in mind the strong historical, economical and even personal ties with Russia of many Ukrainians, Moldavians and Belarussians) the bilateral relations and exchange between the three countries themselves remain only on a very low level. But the necessity for dialogue and even the need to re-think foreign policy is higher than ever before.

With this publication and the First Eastern European Summer School of Foreign Policy Researchers, we as newly established Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Regional Office “Dialogue Eastern Europe” are happy to contribute to such an important exchange of scientific knowledge and ideas, sharing of opinions and at the same time discussing different points of view. We hope in such a way to strengthen the connections of these countries and to support the qualifying of young foreign policy researchers as thinkers or even shapers of the future foreign policies of their countries.

Marcel Röthig

*Director of the Regional Office
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Editor’s Note

The magnitude of challenges that Eastern Europe encounters nowadays induces us to look besides usual instruments and explore undervalued foreign policy directions. Besides active cooperation with big external players, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova might as well consider turning to the impressive potential and the underlooked possibilities of the intraregional cooperation. Digging for opportunities in cooperation, sharing experiences, building networks and contributing finally to each other’s security and prosperity is a productive way to follow.

In this publication we present four policy papers, which were written in collaborative manner by the alumni of the First Eastern European Summer School for Foreign Policy Researchers. Young analysts from three Eastern European countries have met, participated in lectures and trainings, and discussed issues of regional interest in the framework of intense weekly program in Odesa. But as the school finished, the journey has just begun. The participants turned to a longterm team work – first defining areas of common interest and threats and then thinking together what can be done about it.

A quick glance at four resulting papers reveals that direct security threats regrettably unite the region most. Three out of four publications are related to security sphere – either discussing how to enhance resilience, tackling common answer to the ongoing information wars, or trying to learn from other’s experience to prevent the usage of hybrid war instruments on their own territory.

The publication opens by a paper of Volodymyr Solovian (Ukraine) and Danu Marin (Moldova), who explore the practical content of a new buzzword in contemporary discourse around Eastern Europe—“resilience”. They approach resilience through

perspective of capacity building and explore the possibilities Moldova and Ukraine can use for maximum enhancing on their respective resilience, including some collaborative effort in bilateral and multilateral frameworks.

The second paper in this publication is a result of a trilateral cooperation between Tatiana Cojocari (Moldova), Ievgen Afanasiev (Ukraine) and Dzmitri Halubnich (Belarus). It deals with a vast topic of information war of Russia in the region. Each of the participants assessed the extent of Russian media influence in their country and what has been done by each of the country in this area. They acquiesce that without wider cooperation, the entrenched Russian media influence cannot be combated.

The paper of Heorhii Bushuiev (Ukraine) and Ekaterina Maslakova (Belarus) also touches upon the issues of hybrid warfare. It explores a specific dimension – channeling ideological influence and military support through Orthodox Cossack organizations in Eastern Ukraine as an instrument of igniting and sustaining the conflict. The authors then assess the probability that the same instrument could be used to destabilize Belarus and propose some countermeasures.

The publication is closed by the only “peaceful” issue: that of Belarus-Ukraine trade relations, summarized by Oleksandr Zlatin (Ukraine). The author makes a detailed summary of the current state of these relations, identifies the most important institutional, organizational and political obstacles to enhancing bilateral trade, and considers the influence of external players to come up with a number of suggestions

We wish our readers interesting and instructive reading,

Nadiia Koval,

Foreign Policy Council «Ukrainian Prism»

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN EASTERN EUROPE: INTERSECTING NATO CONCEPT OF PROJECTING STABILITY

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Abstract

Resilience is a comprehensive concept developed within the Euro-Atlantic community to respond to a new array of hybrid threats by combining civilian, economic, commercial and military capabilities. The policy paper proposes to apply the principle of resilience to Moldova and Ukraine. The authors on one hand analyse how it reflects in bilateral and multilateral cooperation and on the other hand explore the opportunities offered by NATO's policy of projecting stability to increase resilience in Eastern Europe.

Resilience and NATO projecting stability

The concept of resilience was developed in the Euro-Atlantic community after two major crises, which changed the European security paradigm. During the NATO

Warsaw Summit, resilience was adopted as the guiding principle being defined as "society's ability to resist and recover easily and quickly from internal or external shocks, combining civilian, economic, commercial and military factors." There are five areas outlining NATO's contribution to resilience:

1. Cyber defence concerns the multitude of threats in the cyber domain ranging from protection of communication infrastructure to response to cyberattacks.
2. Hybrid threats involve developing capabilities to defend against a combination of conventional and unconventional threats.
3. Civil-military readiness involves reviving strategic planning to adjust territorial defence and stepping up civil response measures in case of emergency.
4. Cooperation with EU reflects on

improving the synergy between the two institutions to develop shared situation awareness and coordination of responses.

5. Cooperation with partner countries, which is a two-way benefit: on the one hand NATO draws from the partner's experience of hybrid warfare, on the other hand NATO deploys its policy of projecting stability to improve partner's resilience.

Building resilience is especially important for Eastern European countries which face mounting security threats and challenges that undermine regional stability. The Ukrainian conflict highlighted the deeply entrenched and systemic vulnerabilities which persist across all post-soviet countries. Moldova and Ukraine need to address these issues by focusing on five security baskets – boosting territorial defence, developing capabilities to counter hybrid threats, improving civil preparedness, enhancing cyber defence, and tackling energy security. One of the solutions is to benefit from NATO expertise and assistance in these areas, which is provided through the projecting stability policy.

In order to establish how NATO projecting stability concept interacts with resilience building in Eastern Europe it is important to understand three major trends in NATO's approach to partnerships. First trend shows the overall freezing of NATO enlargement process, especially in regions of high contention like Eastern Europe. Second trend is linked with NATO offering partners more cooperation on hard security issues, the engagement formula relying on developing defence capacity and interoperability. Third trend involves prioritizing bilateral over multilateral cooperation formats by offering more tailored cooperation to the partners.

Building resilience in Moldova

Taking into consideration that projecting stability is based on the demand-driven approach, Moldova-NATO partnership is shaped by the country's passive security culture and its principle of neutrality. As a result, cooperation with NATO prior to the Ukrainian conflict was more cosmetic rather than practical. Despite having a positive track, the partnership was slow to generate changes in Moldovan security especially in terms of capabilities. The Ukrainian crisis has served as a wakeup call for the Moldovan policy. Decision-makers started to pursue more comprehensive and active security engagement. The third Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP, 2014-2016) and Defence Capacity Building Initiative (DCBI, agreed in 2015) have a stronger reform-focused agenda, more practical cooperation through transformation of Moldova's armed forces, and deeper engagement in the areas of cyber security, defence education, building integrity, ammunition storage and safety. The current efforts are streamlined to complete security sector reform, the first phase of DCBI package, and move to the second phase of developing force structure and improving the defence capabilities.

Without presuming a major reshuffling of Moldova-NATO partnership – neither membership plan on one hand, nor scaling back the already achieved progress on the other, there is still room to improve Moldova's resilience through NATO's tools of projecting stability. The cooperation in building resilience therefore is reflected in five baskets.

- First basket of resilience includes territorial defence and border security. It concerns developing force structure and improving the defence capabilities to obtain efficient and affordable armed forces. This

capacity is outlined in the second phase of the DCBI package, which can start only after the first phase is complete. Another important element is to improve the cooperation with regional partners to enhance border surveillance, intelligence sharing and reconnaissance and improve the armed forces interoperability.

- Second basket concerns tackling hybrid warfare. The current efforts within Moldova-NATO cooperation are streamlined to comprehensive security sector reform, yet there are very few practical programmes to improve situational awareness and responsiveness to hybrid threats. Among the major priorities is devising comprehensive instruments to monitor, analyse and respond to hybrid threats, enhance the interinstitutional cooperation in strategic communication and develop government-civil society partnership to jointly counteract propaganda and disinformation. Ukraine is a very important partner in this regard especially taking into consideration its current experience of hybrid warfare.
- Third basket includes cyber defence and information security. Cooperation in this area is the most fruitful with NATO supporting the development of three cyber defence and cyber education projects through the Science for Peace programme (SPS). The collaboration can be further expanded to reflect information security and protection of communication networks and infrastructure.
- Fourth basket of resilience is civil preparedness. As a military-civilian organization, NATO is already providing its expertise in terms of education and training. In order to step up its resilience in this area, Moldova should have

more comprehensive approach to managing crises and emergencies through stronger partnership between military and civilian structures. It implies developing early warning and response mechanisms, and improving emergency planning.

- Fifth basket is energy security. While NATO is not explicitly an energy-based institution, Moldova can learn from NATO experience in developing resilient energy supplies, protection of critical energy infrastructure and enhancing the energy efficiency in the military. A project of particular interest is the trilateral initiative ENTSO-E between Moldova, Romania and Ukraine to develop synchronous interconnection of the power systems.

Building resilience in Ukraine

From the very beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, NATO and Ukraine reconsidered bilateral relations. Ukrainian parliament revoked country's non-bloc status and intensified dialogue with the alliance. In its turn, NATO took a strong position in support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. At the same time, the alliance strengthened conventional deterrence with regard to Russian military activity in Eastern Europe and Baltics. Meanwhile, NATO's practical support to Ukraine aims to strengthen its resilience.

Corresponding agenda includes strengthening and enlargement of existing programmes on security sector reform, cyber defence, security-related scientific cooperation, defence education and professional development. Since 2014, toolkit for strengthening Ukraine's resistance capabilities consists of six Trust Funds that cover critical areas of Ukrainian security sector reforms.

The main areas of strengthening resistance under this initiative are cyber defence, anti-corruption measures, energy security, humanitarian demining, strategic communications, advanced training of military personnel and joint development of advanced security technologies. However there are many challenges of resilience building in Ukraine that remain on the outskirts of interaction with NATO.

In this context, Ukraine can offer following measures to improve its resilience strategy:

- First basket is driven by the necessity to determine the scope of NATO's comprehensive assistance package in the field of strengthening Ukrainian territorial defence. The main goal of Ukrainian territorial defence development can be defined as implementation of common conceptual and methodological approaches with NATO member states. Therefore forms of NATO-Ukraine cooperation in this area may include introduction of modern training programs for various units of territorial defence, establishment of training centres and equipping them with educational tools, simulators etc. Moreover, it is worth noting that NATO instructional staff could conduct effective training of local instructors in the system of territorial defence.
- Second important basket of resilience for Ukraine is civil preparedness. Strengthening resilience in this area should be closely tied with programmes on territorial defence forces training. It is worth noting that interaction between civilian and military security sectors is crucial for effectively responding to crisis situations.
- Ukraine-NATO cooperation in the field of strategic communications also acquires special actuality. This is due to necessity of assured

continuity of government and critical government services in the context of resilience strengthening. Strategic communications security is directly dependent on reliability of self-government and interdepartmental logistics information systems, as well as training specialists and improving the efficiency of state media. Therefore Ukraine should improve its resilience in close cooperation with The Committee on Public Diplomacy (CPD). Standards and expertise of NATO countries in the area of strategic communications must be taken into account in Ukraine's National Strategy on Strategic Communications.

- Fourth basket concerns cyber defence and information security. The core components within this subject include: public awareness at regional and local level on a Distinctive Partnership between Ukraine and NATO; media coverage of events related to the cooperation of Ukraine with NATO; developing a joint strategy to counteract Russian misinformation and propaganda. Also Ukrainian Centre for the Hybrid Warfare Studies that was announced at the Warsaw NATO Summit should be supplemented with representative offices in Belarus and Moldova.
- Energy supply also remains the Achilles' heel of Ukraine's national security system. Therefore, the agenda of strengthening resilient energy supplies through the territory of Ukraine has to include: providing passports of vulnerability of Ukrainian fuel and energy complex infrastructure; staff training on the protection of critical infrastructure; improvement of energy supply in military units; strengthening organizational and resource resilience to respond to the crises in energy security.

Conclusions and recommendations for cooperation

Undoubtedly Moldova and Ukraine have different security vectors. Yet their national resilience hinges on a similar set of threats and vulnerabilities. Taking into consideration European aspirations of Chisinau and Kyiv on the one hand and security challenges they face on the other, the cooperation between the two countries should come as a natural response.

Both countries should aspire to boost their security resilience by expanding their cooperation on bilateral and multilateral level, both in and out of NATO partnerships framework. To set the priorities for resilience building the partnerships should focus on five security baskets: territorial defence, countering hybrid threats, civil preparedness, cyber defence, and energy security.

For Republic of Moldova bilateral cooperation requires deepening the partnership with NATO. First step is to focus on accomplishing the DCBI package by keeping a constant pace of reforming the security sector and moving to the development of defence capabilities. Second step is to put emphasis on the five security baskets when negotiating the next IPAP and to develop a more practical action plan in these areas. Third step is to seek funding opportunities through NATO trust funds particularly in the projects concerning ammunition storage and safety, logistics and standardization. On a bilateral level cooperation with Ukraine on the issue of territorial defence and border management, exchange of experience in countering hybrid threats and cooperation on energy security and cyber defence are also crucial.

Ukrainian resilience strategy is vastly reflected in a Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine that was agreed at the NATO Summit in Warsaw. Meanwhile, roadmap for resilience should be based on Annual National Programme (ANP) of the NATO – Ukraine Cooperation as well as existing programs and initiatives provided by NATO member states. However, the successful implementation of the necessary criteria of resilience depends on the capacity building of government and military institutions and the potential of democratic control. In turn, Ukraine considers the prospects for deepening cooperation with Moldova in the security sector through the prism of cooperation with the NATO thus achieving common standards, especially among military forces.

On a multilateral level Science for Peace and Security programme (SPS) fits perfectly for cross-regional initiatives. Potential projects may include: counter-terrorism, cyber defence, energy and environmental security, provision of civilian support, border security and cross border communication systems. For Moldova and Ukraine it is worth exploring the opportunities offered by the NATO interoperability platform, a potential future forum for meetings and consultations with 25 non-NATO partners on the issues that affect interoperability, such as command and control systems or logistics.

Pursuing multilateral cooperation Moldova and Ukraine can seek to create non-NATO platforms. One example is NORDEFECO (Nordic Defence Cooperation) which is an informal security organization on a voluntary basis where participant states can choose which areas they want to collaborate and to what extent. Such platforms even though are not designed to solve short-term problems are an excellent tool to build long-term security relationships which contributes to regional stability.

UKRAINE, MOLDOVA AND BELARUS FACING RUSSIAN INFORMATION WAR: WHAT HAS BEEN DONE, WHAT TO DO NEXT

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Abstract

The years 2014-2015 created an unprecedented situation in Eastern Europe. The Ukrainian example showed that there could be another kind of war – „hybrid warfare”. One of the major battlegrounds for this warfare is the information space, skillfully transformed by the Russian Federation into the space of misinformation, manipulation and propaganda. The states of Eastern Europe, caught in the trap of Russian mass-media for years, awoke amidst full information war waged by the Russian Federation through all available media: television, internet, radio and written press, exploiting their vulnerabilities and creating the premise for internal destabilization. Are the Eastern European States prepared to face this new kind of national security threat on their own?

Introduction

Information war via all its elements (disinformation, propaganda and manipulation) has a destructive potential towards the integrity and stability of a state, negatively influencing local public opinion, affecting strategic vectors of foreign policy, influencing internal politics by damaging governmental institutions and diminishing societal trust in the national defense system as well as its capability to protect the population and borders. Otherwise said, information war has all the necessary elements to be perceived as one of the gravest threats to the national security of states, especially of ones with young democracy, shaky institutions eroded by corruption, and aspiring to a European future. This is the case of Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus where Russian mass media feel at home.

The fact that all three states are members of the Eastern Partnership increases the risk of hybrid warfare on their territory, in particular in the moment when they take strong commitments to the European perspective. Ukraine and Moldova already expressed this intention, having negotiated and ratified AA and DCFTA with EU. Belarus can follow. In this context it is necessary to analyze the degree of vulnerability and exposure of these states to the threat of information warfare, and most importantly, their individual capacity to counteract, so that, learning the Ukrainian lesson, the possibility of a similar scenario taking place on other territories would be diminished.

Ukraine: "younger sister" fighting "elder brother's" media

Information attacks on the Ukrainian society have started way before the Euromaidan protests, annexation of Crimea and conflict in Donbas. Indeed, following the victory of Orange revolution in 2004, main Russian media channels have been trying to discredit Ukrainian authorities and their aspirations towards European integration of Ukraine. Notably, Russian media used to broadcast without restraint in the information space of the Ukrainian state, which made it easy for Russia to spread the messages of any content across the population. In 2013, when Euromaidan protests started, the number of the messages with explicit anti-Ukraine sentiments increased dramatically. According to the recent study by Internews, 71% of the population of Donetsk oblast watched Russian TV-channels at the beginning of the conflict. Being one of the most popular sources of information, Russian media outlets started to use propaganda and fake news as the main instrument of influence on the population and government.

Trying to demonize European Union and popularize so called "Russian World" through the messages generated by federal channels, Russia managed to gain great support of population in Crimea and Donbas, which caused the loss of the control over these territories by Ukrainian government.

To protect the information space of Ukraine and to stop the spread of separatist sentiments, Ukrainian authorities took several steps towards the prohibition of Russian media on the territory of Ukraine. Such laws as 159-19 and 3359 prohibit public demonstration of the films and TV-series, created by private persons and legal bodies of Russian Federation, where the authorities of Russia are propagandized. The law 2766, which was recently signed by president Poroshenko, provides excluding of Russia-originated content from the quota of the content made in Europe, the US, and Canada. This results in the further decrease of Russian media product in the Ukrainian media landscape. At the same time, National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine, the state broadcast regulator reconstituted by the parliament in 2014, has adopted a number of decrees, which prohibit broadcasting of Russian channels on the territory of Ukraine. Finally, while some non-governmental organizations, such as "Detektor Media", monitor the Ukrainian media landscape for the presence of Russia-originated propaganda content, other ones, such as "Stop-Fake", are focused on the debunking of the fake messages, originated by Russian media outlets.

One of the most controversial decisions of the Ukrainian government was to create the Ministry of Information, which was considered by European partners and some organizations in Ukraine (e.g. "Stop Censorship" movement, Institute of Mass Information) to be some kind of "ministry of truth" or "ministry of censorship". Nevertheless, some of the projects of

this institution contribute to the counter-propaganda. Ministry of Information of Ukraine founded "Information forces of Ukraine", the project that aims to involve the users of the social networks to deliver trustworthy information about Ukraine and fight Russian propaganda. Besides, Ministry creates virus videos on the eve of important national holidays, where Ukrainian view of history is illustrated and Ukrainian national identity is promoted.

However, greater part of the job is still to be done. Namely, the broadcasting of the Ukrainian channels on the occupied territories is still not renewed. Moreover, in the areas close to the frontline, "LDPR"-originated content is freely broadcasted. Russian channels, e. g. "Zvezda" or "Russia Today" and mass media of the self-proclaimed "LDPR" (e.g. "Novorossiya-TV", "First Republican Chanel") are present in the information space of the occupied territories, while Ukrainian channels are absent. Equally important is the fact that soldiers of Ukrainian army located close to frontline do not have any access to the Ukrainian TV-channels and have to watch the channels of the opposing side. This is the problem that can be only resolved by construction of additional television towers, which will cover the territories controlled by the self-proclaimed "LDPR".

To sum up, Ukrainian government together with the NGOs managed to stop the growing popularity of Russian media on the territory of the country and take some measures to protect information space of Ukraine. The process of legislative reform in the field of information policy has started. However, the broadcasting of Ukrainian TV-channels on the occupied territories is still problematic as the government has not realized any projects, which would aim to build additional television towers and jam broadcasters of "LDPR".

Moldova's information war: "to be or not to be"

Moldova's degree of exposure to information war can be assessed through the perception and trust of the population in mass media. Thereby, 67.9% of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova consider television as the most trustworthy source of information. For 19% of them, Russian language mass media represent the exclusive source of information, 29% prefer mass-media in both languages, and 76.6% follow mass media that are influenced in one way or another by the Russian media. The citizens of the Republic of Moldova do not trust local media thinking that it manipulates the public opinion in favor of certain political parties. This way, they put more trust in Russian media (46.3%) than in local or foreign media, the latter being inaccessible to the most of them¹. In other words, the citizens of Moldova are exposed one way or another to the elements of Russian information war manifested massively through television.

Being conscious about the risks for the national integrity and stability that the abovementioned facts could bring, the state institutions have had a hesitant start to take some measures as a response to this new kind of threat. Remarkable in this sense was the activity of the Audiovisual Coordinating Council of Moldova, which since 2014 has started a few thematic monitoring campaigns of informative-analytical shows. These campaigns have shown that by „broadcasting news shows and informative-analytical shows from the Russian Federation by the TV channels „Prime”, „TV 7”, „Ren Moldova”, „RTR Moldova” and „Rossiya 24”, the public

¹ "Measuring media consumer perception in Republic of Moldova on sociopolitical issues", Independent Journalism Center Chisinau, 2015

national mediatic environment is being poisoned” and “the manipulation of public opinion is done through propagandistic and manipulator messages, by way of commenting and framing of events, by broadcasting messages of hate and interethnic disunion”². As a result, the Council decided to fine the mentioned TV shows and revoked broadcasting rights of the “Rossiya 24” TV station. Obviously, this measure did not come without a response from certain local political groups close to Russia, as well as from the Russian Federation itself, being called an undemocratic measure, against the pluralism of opinion, meant to establish censorship. „Rossiya 24” has been penalized before in 2014. At that time the broadcasting rights of the “Rossiya 24” TV station also had been revoked, but only for 6 months.

Similar monitoring reports of the rebroadcasted Russian stations as well as local ones are also constantly made by a series of NGOs under the program name „Stop Fals” (stop false) aiming to promote press integrity and pluralism in the Republic of Moldova. Though they are accessible to broad audience, they have low visibility, and most likely they are not reaching the public directly targeted by the information war.

Currently, a series of priority legislative projects are on the agenda of Moldovan national institutions. These can impact the state’s capacity to counteract the effects of information war. Among them is the Draft Law on the New Audiovisual Code, asked for by the civil society; the initiative to modify and extend the law pertaining to access to information, on which also the NGOs contributed to; the legislative initiative pertaining the reform of the Information and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova, criticized by

² CNA monitoring report, Chisinau, 2015

the civil society; as well as the initiative of a new National defense strategy, which can be currently considered the only document which speaks about the new vulnerability— foreign propaganda— as part of information war.

Also, a series of heated public opinion reactions have recently been manifested towards two legislative initiatives proposed by the pro-European parties (the Liberal Party and the Democratic Liberal Party) aiming to change the Audiovisual Code (Law 125/02.04.2015 and Law 218/22.05.2015). These initiatives, according to the authors, appeared in the context of the necessity to protect the local informational space from the foreign (Russian) influence, being inspired by similar efforts of Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine. Their stipulations are especially focused on foreign programs rebroadcasted on national territory, the language of the broadcast, and encouraging local media production. The most controversial change is the one regarding banning of broadcasts originating from countries which have not ratified the 2002 European Convention on Transfrontier Television (e.g. Russia). The two draft laws were submitted for public debate, as well as consultations from representative experts of European institutions. 30 NGOs from the Republic of Moldova have asked that the adoption of these draft laws be postponed, because their stipulations could impact editorial freedom and even pose a threat to the freedom of expression. More than this, mass-media representatives consider the stipulations regarding propaganda prevention from Russian TV stations as an “important mask” and a trap which will lead to introducing restrictions towards journalists from publicizing the Government of the Republic of Moldova, especially in the context of the upcoming presidential elections. Foreign experts’ response (Council of Europe, OSCE,

Freedom House), was a reserved one, supporting the civil society and mentioning that some of the stipulations needed to be clarified as not to lead to censorship.³

After almost two years since the start of the information war in the region and close to the presidential elections in Republic of Moldova, most of the concrete measures adopted by the institutions responsible for national security are legislative proposals in an incipient phase, severely criticized by the civil society, invoking the state’s intention of transforming into a Big Brother. Tangible measures, already implemented, such as the Audiovisual Council’s decision to fine and suspend certain stations rebroadcasted by the Russian Federation are supplemented with the initiatives of some NGOs to act as “watch dogs” promoting quality journalism. Still, neither these activities, nor the fines by the Audiovisual Council have prevented broadcasters from breaking the law.

Most times the fines and blocking of rebroadcasts have been repeated, because the Russian broadcasts continued to break the law. This is partly due to the fact that the fines charge insignificant costs to the TV stations, not affecting their budgets. Also, it is the result of the pressure of political parties close to Russia, which refer to the freedom of expression and the rights of minorities (although the Russian minority is just 5.9% of the population, according to the 2004 census).

Belarus’ dependency on Russian mass-media

Russia’s information influence in Belarus is streamlined through major state media.

³ See: <http://infoeuropa.md/mass-media/avizul-consiliului-europei-cu-privire-la-proiectul-de-lege-pentru-completarea-codului-audiovizualului-al-republicii-moldova/>, accessed on 5th September, 2016.

Russia’s major TV channels – the First Channel, RTR, NTV, Ren-TV – are part of Belarus’ mandatory generally accessible TV package – 9 channels whose dissemination is organized and sponsored by the Government. However, Russian content is broadcasted under original Russian brands only in case of NTV and RTR. The First Channel and Ren-TV content are broadcasted as parts of Belarusian channels’ feeds – respectively ONT (the most popular TV channel in Belarus) and STV. Due to economic issues the ratio of originally produced content in nominally Belarusian channels dropped dramatically in 2015-2016 (to about 30 per cent). This made them dependent on Russian counterparts. This dependence is further increased by lack of Belarusian TV-channels’ direct access to international advertisement market as they have to work with Russia’s Video International ads seller. This substantially limits the opportunities of Belarusian state-owned media.

The fifth out of 9 channels of mandatory generally accessible TV package is the channel “Mir” broadcasted by the CIS Interstate TV and Radio Company, which is also heavily influenced by Russia (the headquarters are in Moscow), although its content strives to be consensus-based for all CIS countries and thus politically neutral.

Other channels of Russia’s direct information influence in Belarus include Internet websites, including the “Russia Today” information agency, sputnik.by website and bureau recently opened in Minsk as well as Yandex Belarusian branch. Besides, wider Russian content is accessible to Belarusian users of cable TV and satellite TV.

Belarusian authorities have the technical ability to interrupt broadcasting of Russia’s channels disseminated in Belarus. This was done repeatedly in 2010 when Moscow was conducting aggressive anti-

Lukashenko propaganda in the wake of Belarus' presidential elections. However since then there were no examples of that. Generally, Belarusian state-owned TV channels are tasked with producing as much of their own content as possible, but this requirement is barely fulfilled due to the economic situation.

Generally, Russia's information influence in Belarus goes virtually unchecked. Belarusian audience was exposed to aggressive anti-Ukraine and anti-Western propaganda after the onset of the Ukraine crisis and still consumes heavily biased information on those matters today.

Lots of users of Belarus' cable networks (concentrated predominantly in bigger cities like Minsk, regional centers, Bobruisk, Baranovichi, Borisov, Molodechno and some others) have access to Euronews content that gives them some insight on the European view of current developments.

However, despite the fact that the government spends significant amounts on the ideological network, the state media do not even try to produce quality content for the domestic market. If necessary, the Belarusian media are able to provide Belarusian-made news content only, but they will be unable to compete with the Russian media.

Conclusions

Analysis of the measures adopted in all three states to counteract the effects of information war, showed that none of the three states is fully ready to face this new vulnerability towards national security on their own.

Measures taken to counteract information war by the three states are limited to legislative initiatives, harshly criticized by the civil society and European institutions,

whose efficiency cannot be fully assessed. Ukraine is one step ahead, creating The Ministry of Information, which despite all criticism seems to have produced some concrete anti-propaganda instruments.

Of major importance is the fact that the governments of Republic of Moldova and Belarus still do not have a clear narrative on the presence of information warfare within their borders. Also, in Belarus the official acknowledgment on the presence of information war is unwanted, as long as the presence of this phenomenon does not directly affect the presidency.

Telling is also the fact that in three states there is no real alternative to the massive presence of Russian channels. Western mass media are not widely present, inaccessible to the majority of the population which is also the most exposed to information war (rural population, age 40 and older, secondary education). Local TV stations remain the only solution for diminishing the impact of information war, albeit in the Republic of Moldova and Belarus, these do not have the capacity to broadcast more than they already do, not being able to face the competition brought by Russian mass media. Even if they found a way to fix this problem, national stations have one more important goal: regaining the viewers' trust.

The European institutions' recommendations in the field are vague, lack proper understanding of the realities of the three states, or not having viable solutions for the new threat— information war.

Recommendations

- Adopting a 3 + 2 (Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Belarus + NATO, EU) working format for elaborating a common regional strategy on implementing measures to counteract information war;

- Creating strategic partnerships on the regional level for the common securitization of the informational space;
- Reforming the institutions responsible for the national security and creating a department specialized in new hybrid warfare threats;
- Opening the local media environment to European partners by adopting a legislative framework based on European standards.
- Creating a special fund in the Eastern Partnership states aimed at:
 - encouraging independent journalism;
 - financially supporting local media products;
 - training experts in security studies and the new threats to national security;
 - supporting non-governmental organizations which can constantly monitor the media landscape for the presence of propaganda messages.

ORTHODOX RADICALISM IN EASTERN UKRAINE: LESSONS FOR BELARUS

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Abstract

During the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, Cossacks became a tool of the "Russian World" propaganda and the basis for the formation of radical Orthodox groups. Significant factors in escalation of the conflict were the financial support provided by "Rossotrudnichestvo" to pro-Russian,

in particular, Cossack organizations; ROC propaganda activities in Ukraine; lack of border control. Revitalization of the Cossacks and the movement "Russian National Unity", creation of Orthodox military-patriotic clubs and opening of "Rossotrudnichestvo" branches in Belarus suggest formation of prerequisites to repeat the Ukrainian scenario in the country.

Religious factor in the Donbas conflict

Russian-Ukrainian military conflict became the result of deliberate political and social destabilization of Ukraine. Russia's aggravation of social contradictions in Ukraine through information and psychological operations together with financial and technical support of pro-Russian forces in Ukraine contributed to the Russian occupation of Crimea as well as development of the armed conflict in Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

One of the elements of the hybrid war against Ukraine was the countrywide propagation of the idea of the so-called "Russian World" – a cultural and civilizational concept designed to unite Russia and the countries where the Russian language and culture are common. According to this concept, one of the pillars of the "Russian World", its consolidating core, is the Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (MP). At the same time, in the framework of the "Russian World", Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) of the MP and the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) are opposed to the UOC (KP) (KP – Kyiv Patriarchate) as well as other denominations: Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), Roman Catholic Church (RCC), Protestant churches, etc. The thesis of the need to protect Christianity in Ukraine from the central government and representatives of the Ukrainian nationalism was distributed with the help of Russian propaganda and led to the emergence of the Orthodox radical groups in eastern Ukraine.

Propaganda activities of the UOC (MP) played an important role in spreading the ideas of the "Russian World" across Donbas. In the course of their sermons, the clergy of the UOC (MP) told the

congregation about the threat to the Orthodox people from the Ukrainian authorities and urged them to defend the so-called "Russian World". In addition, the ROC media had long promoted in Ukraine the idea of autocracy as well as the cult of personality of Patriarch Kirill and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Cossack organizations in the Donbas conflict

The main representatives of the Orthodox radicalism in Ukraine are Cossack organizations. They became the main destabilizing force at the beginning of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict. These organizations include:

- Union of Cossack organizations of Ukraine;
- Khartsyzsk camp of Ukrainian Cossacks;
- New Azov stanitsa of Don Cossacks;
- NGO "Luhansk Precinct of the Don Cossacks";
- Luhansk Volunteer Brigade named after General Denikin;
- "Grand Don Army" (registered in the Russian Federation);
- "The Union of Cossacks of Russia and Abroad" (registered in the Russian Federation).

ROC Synodal Committee for interaction with Cossacks serves as the mediator in support of the Cossacks. In 2013, in cooperation with "Rossotrudnichestvo", they developed the project "Cossacks Are the Brace of the Russian World". In addition, at the beginning of the armed conflict in Donbas, the Synodal Committee organized collection of humanitarian aid for the supporters of the "LPR" and "DPR". Later help was transferred to the territories controlled by terrorists – representatives of the Don Cossacks.

Later, during the escalation of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict, these organizations merged into the Russian Orthodox Army (ROA). This formation was headed by Igor Strelkov (Girkin). In addition, together with ROA representatives, Cossack groups from Russia began operating in Ukraine as part of the "Great Don Army".

Representatives of the Don Cossacks of Ukraine together with the Cossacks from Russia as part of the ROA participated in the seizure of administrative buildings in Donbas, attacks on border checkpoints of Ukraine, as well as installation of illegal outposts in captured cities. In April 2014, Cossacks took part in capturing administrative buildings in Sloviansk, and later, in the summer of 2014, participated in the battles in Krasnoarmiisk, Karlivka, Pisky, Ilovaisk, Debaltsevo.

Russian support of Cossack paramilitary formations

One of the goals of "Rossotrudnichestvo" is to protect and disseminate Russian culture and language abroad. As part of this program, in 2013, the initiatives to support Cossack organizations of Ukraine were implemented. As part of 2016, "Rossotrudnichestvo" continues its activities: in August 2016, the organization together with the ROC representatives held in Sumy region "Camp of Young Compatriots", during which children were engaged in physical training as well as Bible study under the leadership of the ROC priests.

Lack of control over financial flows of religious organizations from the state became an important factor contributing to formation and strengthening of paramilitary Cossack groups in Ukraine. According to the Ukrainian law, religious organizations have ample fiscal freedom,

and, as a result, there is no state monitoring of their financial activities. Uncontrolled financial flows allowed the Russian Federation with the help of the Russian Orthodox Church to provide separatist paramilitary groups with the funds aimed at the military training of the Orthodox militants in Donbas, transfers made in the form of donations.

In addition, imperfect system of control over the state border of Ukraine allowed the saboteurs from the Russian Federation, including Cossacks, to penetrate freely into the territory of Ukraine to smuggle weapons and special equipment from the Russian Federation for reconnaissance and sabotage activities.

Possibility of the Ukrainian scenario deployment in Belarus

2014 was marked by the activation of pro-Russian organizations in Belarus. In particular, the Russian Orthodox movement "Holy Rus" initiated distribution of flyers promoting the unification of the "Russian World" in November 2014.

As with Ukraine, Cossacks in Belarus became an instrument for promotion of the ideas of Orthodoxy and unification of the "Russian World". In 2016, three republican Cossack organizations were registered in Belarus:

- NGO "Belarusian Cossacks";
- NGO "All-Belarusian Union of Cossacks";
- MPC "Cossack Saviour".

In addition to the registered organizations, there are a number of Cossack clubs and organizations whose activity was of sporadic character (branch of the Starodub Cossack Regiment, "Neman Cossacks" club, "Peacekeeping Cossack

guards”, etc.). NGO “Belarusian Cossacks” is a pro-state organization in contrast to the other two. NGO “All-Belarusian Union of Cossacks» cooperates with the NGO “Rus” (Public association of Russians in Belarus) and the NGO “Young Rus” – organizations sponsored by the pro-Russian forces. The head of the organization is Cossack Colonel E. Makarenko, who opposes nationalism and considers the conflict in Ukraine a fight of “anti-fascists” (“DPR” and “LPR”) against “fascists”.

MPC “Cossack Saviour” holds camps for young people, where they are taught to handle weapons and learn tactics of subversive groups. The MPC “Cossack Saviour” and the movement of “New Russia” of Igor Girkin-Strelkov in Rostov-on-Don entered into cooperation: the head of the “Cossack Saviour” personally carried out delivery of humanitarian aid.

As in the case of Ukraine, there arises the question of the role of “Rossotrudnichestvo” in financing pro-Russian, in particular, Cossack clubs. Belarusian representative offices of “Rossotrudnichestvo” were opened in Minsk (2010) and Brest (2014), but there is no reliable information on the relationship of “Rossotrudnichestvo” with the Cossack or other pro-Russian clubs in the country. Nevertheless, a number of independent media drew attention to the significant increase in the Cossack movement and Orthodox paramilitary organizations in Belarus with the opening of representative offices of “Rossotrudnichestvo”.

Since the beginning of 2014, the revitalization of Orthodox military-patriotic clubs (OMPC) in Belarus has been observed. Most OMPCs are located in Grodno region with a historical concentration of the Catholic population of Belarus, the region more than once

being the centre of armed resistance to the Russian occupation troops in the course of history. As of February 2016, in the Orthodox dioceses of Grodno region there were eight OMPCs under the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church, while in the whole country there are a little over than twenty of them¹. Such a large number of OMPCs in the territory of predominantly Catholic population is explained by the desire to create support from the local population for the Russian military in the event of the Ukrainian scenario deployment in Belarus. The first OMPC “Vityaz” was created back in 2003, enrolling under its charter young men of 12-18 years of age. Besides spiritual and educational activities, its members engage in physical and military training, three times a week learn the basics of martial arts.

In addition, Belarus saw the intensification of activities of the movement “Russian National Unity” (RNU), whose members came from the Russian Federation and Belarus to Donbas to take direct part in fighting on the side of the self-proclaimed “DPR” and “LPR”. According to information posted on the page of the movement in a social network, “under the word ‘Russia’ we do not mean the current RF. According to the thousand-year-old Orthodox tradition (before the unrest of 1917), Russia is Great and Little Russia and White Rus (Belarus). Russia is the same as Rus”. The movement was denied official registration in Belarus, but it does not prevent the RNU from operating in the country, in particular, to recruit fighters among the Belarusian population for getting to the south-eastern regions of Ukraine.

¹ As of 2016, in Brest region there is 1 OMPC, in Gomel region – 2 OMPCs, in Mogilev region – 3 OMPCs, in Vitebsk and Minsk regions – 4 OMPCs in each, and in Grodno region – 7 OMPCs.

Belarus could not stay away from the military conflict taking place between the neighboring countries. However, despite the fact that it took a position of neutrality, as well as despite the statement of the Minister of Defense of the country that “Belarus does not consider any state an enemy”, the government made certain conclusions as evidenced by the changes at the legislative level.

In January 2016, a new version of the military doctrine of the Republic of Belarus was approved calling the hybrid warfare a potential threat. There were a number of measures undertaken to enhance protection of the state border. In particular, the rules of admission at the Belarus-Russia border changed. Since 2014, Belarus has been pursuing a systematic policy to strengthen the border, as it was the inability to control the Russia-Ukraine border by the Ukrainian authorities that largely determined the course of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. In addition, in 2016, Belarus held military exercises on the state border protection.

Thus, given the events that developed in Ukraine before and at the early stages of the conflict, we can conclude that in Belarus there is a dangerous situation that threatens the national security. Despite the mentioned steps taken by Belarus, these measures are insufficient in the context of the fight against the Orthodox radicalism.

Recommendations for Belarus:

- to simplify the procedure for demarcation of the state border with Russia by analogy with the appropriate decision regarding Ukraine;
- to continue the formation of territorial defense units in the border areas with Russia;

- to amend the law “On Public Associations”, namely prohibit activities of associations and movements casting doubt or denying in their ideology or activities the Belarusian nationality or self-sufficiency as contradicting Art. 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus.

Recommendations for Ukraine and Belarus:

- to legislatively prohibit non-governmental organizations and religious communities from creating on their basis military-patriotic clubs that would presuppose training of small arms possession, as well as the skills of intelligence and subversive activities;
- the states should introduce a financial monitoring mechanism over the activities of religious organizations in order to implement a legislative ban on funding of extremist organizations;
- prohibit the activities of “Rossotrudnichestvo” as an agency that is directly sponsoring propaganda activities conducted by Cossack organizations that call for a forcible change of the constitutional system of Ukraine and Belarus under Article 110 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine “Infringement against Territorial Integrity and Inviolability of Ukraine” and under Article 361 of the Criminal Code “Calls for Action to the Detriment of Belarus’ External Security, Its Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity, National Security and Defense”.

UKRAINE – BELARUS: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF TRADE RELATIONS

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Introduction

Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus, which before 1991 were part of the USSR, are located in a complex and heterogeneous region of Eastern Europe, lying at the fault line between the European Union (EU) and the Russian Federation (RF).

To date, Belarus has very close political and economic ties with Russia, which cannot be said about most other countries that were formerly a part of the USSR. Moreover, in 1999, the two countries signed the treaty establishing the Union State, which in addition to the political dimension involves formation of a common economic space. Since the beginning of 2015, there came into force the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the participants of which are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia.

On the other hand, Ukraine declared its European integration path and in 2014 signed an Association Agreement with the EU, which, in addition to political cooperation, involves creation of a deep and comprehensive free trade area. In addition, Ukraine and Belarus are the member states to the Treaty on the free trade of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) area, signed in 2011.

It is through the prism of the RF and EU influence on Ukraine and Belarus that we will look at the prospects and challenges of their trade relations.

Overview of the bilateral trade relations

Belarus has been and remains one of the key trade and economic partners of Ukraine. According to the data of the State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, in the first half of 2016, Belarus ranked second among the CIS countries (after the Russian Federation) and sixth among all countries in the world (after Russia, China, Germany, Poland, and Turkey).

Over the last five years, Ukraine was among the three major trade partners of Belarus in terms of trade and export volumes (in 2015 it ranked third after Russia and the United Kingdom).

The first half of 2016 shows a positive trend of growth in turnover between the two countries. Total turnover amounted to more than \$1.7 billion and increased in comparison with the same period of 2015 by \$124.67 million, or by 7.9%.

The positive balance for Belarus is about \$881.4 million. At the same time, it is worth noting that compared to 2013,

before the illegal occupation of Crimea and the Russian military incursion into the eastern regions of Ukraine, the total turnover fell by almost 40%.

The structure of mutual trade supply of goods is very wide: Ukraine exports to Belarus about 700 items and imports more than 550.

Export of the Ukrainian goods and services amounted to \$413.1 million in the first half of 2016 and declined in comparison with the same period of 2015 by \$31.06 million, or by 7%.

Ukraine supplies products that belong to the critical import of Belarus, necessary for operation of enterprises and provision of population with food products in the required range.

The main items of the Ukrainian export are: residues and wastes from the food industry – 17.1% (\$63.94 million); ferrous metals – 11.1% (\$41.44 million); nuclear reactors, boilers and machinery – 5.5% (\$20.73 million); paper and cardboard – 4.5% (\$16.66 million); crops – 3.9% (\$14.55 million); seeds and fruits of oil plants – 3.7% (\$13.68 million); salt, sulfur, soils, and stone – 3.5% (\$13.19 million); furniture – 3.3% (\$12.26 million); fats and oils of animal and vegetable origin – 3.1% (\$11.7 million); vegetable processing products – 3.1% (\$11.41 million); vegetables – 2.7% (\$10.24 million); plastics, polymer materials – 2.6% (\$9.62 million).

Belarus' major imports to Ukraine in the first half of 2016 were: mineral fuels, oil and products of its distillation – 70.5% (\$890.71 million); fertilizers – 5.7% (\$71.99 million); vehicles other than railway – 4.8% (\$61.09 million); nuclear reactors, boilers and machinery – 2.8% (\$35.36 million).

Today, Belarus remains a major supplier of petroleum products to the Ukrainian

market. Nevertheless, the volumes of such transfers are subject to significant adjustment from year to year, their export directly depending on political relations with the Russian Federation.

International agreements and instruments relating to economic and trade cooperation constitute about half of the entire legal framework of the Ukrainian-Belarusian relations (205 international instruments).

The institutional framework is the Intergovernmental Ukrainian-Belarusian Commission on Trade-Economic Cooperation, which began its work in 1996. The last 23rd session of the commission was held in July 2015 in Chernihiv, Ukraine. The next is scheduled for late October – early November of 2016. However, the meeting of the Commission once a year is not enough to address effectively the pressing issues of trade between the two countries.

In order to resolve trade disputes, in October 2015 the Ukrainian-Belarusian High Level Working Group was created. It was co-chaired by the Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine – a Ukrainian Trade Representative and the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus. During the meetings in 2015 and 2016, the parties managed to resolve some of the problematic issues with the restrictions in bilateral trade as well as to confirm the intention of Belarus to remain in the free trade zone regime with Ukraine. For example, it was possible to resolve the thorny issue arising from the entry into force on August 27, 2015 of the Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 666 dated 08.06.2015 "On Making Addenda to the Decree of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus dated February 17, 2012, No. 156". This document was introduced by the administrative

procedure – a paid state sanitary-hygienic examination of each imported into the territory of the Republic of Belarus batch of foreign-made products. Earlier, hygienic registration was carried out once at the first importation of goods into the country and was granted for this product for a long period of time (e.g. for 3 years).

In February 2016, the Working Group held a meeting to discuss regional issues, cooperation in the framework of the EAEU, the use of the territory of Belarus for the transit of Ukrainian products to third countries. In September 2016, they discussed issues on mutual access to markets of agricultural products, the customs declaration of Belarusian oil products (jet fuel), transit of the Ukrainian goods through the territory of Belarus, transit of the Belarusian tobacco products through Ukraine to Moldova, recognizing the Russian certificates of conformity issued by the Belarus certification bodies for products in the field of railway transport in the territory of the EAEU, as well as creation of an electronic verification system of goods origin.

Interests and possible points of contact

In the short term, Ukraine and Belarus are guided by the possibility of increasing trade and export volumes of their own products. For Belarus, the decisive factor is the capacity of oil supplies to Ukraine in the context of oil and gas conflict with Russia.

Urgent question for Ukraine is resumption of electricity exports from Ukraine to Belarus, which was suspended in November 2014. In terms of mutual sanctions of Russia and Ukraine, Belarus successfully provides re-export of goods in both directions. In addition, Belarus

has the potential to take the Ukrainian market segments formerly occupied by the Russian suppliers.

From business point of view, it seems advisable to establish joint Ukrainian-Belarusian enterprises in the territory of Belarus for the production and export of goods to the Russian market and other countries of the EAEU and the Belarusian-Ukrainian joint ventures in the territory of Ukraine to export goods to the EU and Western markets to which Belarus has no access.

In the medium term, the contact points can be cooperation in the fuel and energy sector, agriculture and guaranteeing food security, engineering, aviation, and space industry.

Organization and holding of joint business forums could provide an opportunity for companies (especially small and medium-sized enterprises) to learn more about the possibilities of cooperation at the local level, to establish contacts, and to develop partnerships with local businesses and local authorities.

Challenges of bilateral trade relations

The commodity structure from year to year undergoes changes depending on the level of development of import-substituting products in the country and ousting its competitors, protectionist measures, temporary or permanent reorientation towards the markets of Russia, the EU, and other countries.

The next challenge for the Ukrainian-Belarusian relations is the ability to harmonize legislation governing trade cooperation. Ukraine and Belarus are participating in competing regional structures – the EU and the EAEU. Each of the entities develops its regulatory

framework aimed at regulating trade and introduction of tariff and non-tariff limiting measures for goods from third countries.

Being closely linked to Russia by means of integration projects, Belarus is forced to coordinate its economic and trade policies, including those with regard to Ukraine. It cannot but pose a risk to the Ukrainian-Belarusian trade relations.

The next challenge is the indirect influence of Russia on the trade between Belarus and Ukraine. For example, when Russia reduces supplies of raw materials to the Belarusian oil refineries or delays approval of its prices, it leads to reduction of fuel and oil products supply to Ukraine. Taking into account the volume and the share of this category of goods in the Ukrainian market, mutual dependence is a serious risk for both countries.

One of the threats most difficult to forecast is the probability of an escalation of the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which may involve Belarus as well.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Thus, the above analysis suggests the following conclusions:

- Ukraine and Belarus, despite different strategic ways of development in the framework of regional integration structures, are key and natural trading partners.
- The volume of trade and its structure is changing from year to year depending on the economic policies

of each country and the input/removal of protectionist measures, reorientation to other markets.

- Significant impact on bilateral trade relations is caused by external factors, such as Russia, the EAEU and the EU.

To overcome the existing challenges and to develop trade relations between Ukraine and Belarus, it seems appropriate to do as follows.

- Ukrainian-Belarusian trade cooperation should be the most inclusive and involve other countries in process, first of all – some of the post-Soviet states and EU countries in Eastern Europe.
- Ukraine and Belarus should keep their options open as for their capacity to participate in global trade. Combine efforts to protect common interests in relations with the EU and with the EAEU and Russia, as well as in new projects, such as the Silk Road, for example.
- Reject the hostile ways to solve disputes.
- Instead – strengthen work of the Intergovernmental Belarusian-Ukrainian Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation and the High Level Working Group.
- Widely involve business communities of both countries into strengthening work of these institutional structures.
- Organize a greater number of business forums with the involvement of interested local companies to provide closer contacts from high to working levels.



Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism” is a network-based non-governmental analytical center, the goal of which is to participate in providing democratic ground for developing and implementation of foreign and security policies by government authorities of Ukraine, implementation of international and nation-wide projects and programs, directed at improvement of foreign policy analysis and expertise, enhancement of expert community participation in a decision-making process in the spheres of foreign policy, international relations, public diplomacy.

Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism” is officially registered as a non-governmental organization in 2015, while analytical work and research had been carried out within the network of foreign policy experts “Ukrainian Prism” since 2012. At present, the organization united more than 15 experts in the sphere of foreign policy, international relations, international security from different analytical and academic institutions in Kyiv, Odesa, Kharkiv, Chernihiv and Chernivtsi.

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In September 2016 we opened the office of the Regional Project “Dialogue Eastern Europe” to promote mutual understanding and exchange between Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine as well as to support regional dialogue between these countries with Germany and the European Union.

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