

SECURITY ENVIRONMENT CHANGED: IMPLICATIONS FOR UKRAINE

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Résumé

The year 2014 became a watershed for changes in the security discourse in Ukraine, which resulted both in the adoption of new strategic documents and practical steps for enhancing national security and defence. The article presents the evolution of strategic documents in Ukraine since 2010, underlines the main differences between the National Security Strategies adopted in 2012 and in 2015, as well as analyses the newly adopted Military Doctrine of Ukraine, Cyber Security Strategy, Doctrine of the Information Security of Ukraine, and Strategic Defence Bulletin.

The study demonstrates that, despite some level of opposition towards the future NATO integration of Ukraine and existing discourse about the possible neutrality of the country as a way out of the current Russian-Ukrainian conflict, nevertheless adoption of NATO standards and close cooperation with the Alliance are among the top political and military priorities of the state. Other spheres that received the most attention of Ukrainian experts and politicians were the modernization of the security forces, first of all military, information and cyber security, and protection of critical infrastructure. The attitude towards Russia and nuclear status of Ukraine are those disputable issues, approached both as reasons and as consequences of the current crisis.

For the first time in Ukraine, the main tasks set out in the new National Security Strategy clearly correlated with the priorities of the security sector reforms. Moreover, active cooperation with NATO and individual member states was aimed on transformation of the Ukrainian Army according to NATO standards. Tactical and operational changes were accompanied with the establishment of the Military Cabinet within the NSDC and Main Situational Centre of Ukraine, Special Operation Forces and new formats of the Annual National Plan.

1. The revision of strategic documents after 2014

The change of the security paradigm in Ukraine due to the illegal Russian annexation of Crimea and military actions in Donbas led to the transformation of the political and public perception of the national security strategy's role for the state. For a long time, Ukrainian strategic documents had not represented actual policy. If in 2010, President Yanukovich took the decision to announce a so-called non-bloc status (Ukrainian analogue to neutrality, aimed just to satisfy Russia by not joining NATO), so the decision was adopted to change the Law on Basics of Internal and External Policy of Ukraine – de facto, at that time, the main document framing the foreign policy of Ukraine. However, the Military Doctrine of Ukraine, where NATO membership was still stated as a priority, stayed without change until 2012. The National Security Strategy of 2012 had even less impact on real politics.

2014 stood out through more operational documents adopted by the National Security and Defence Council, or even lower level decisions of the Ministries, which acted to address the immediate threats to national security due to the illegal annexation of Crimea and start of the armed actions in Donbas. It was already 2015-2016, when the main strategic documents were elaborated and presented to the public. Currently the following documents define the national security sphere in Ukraine: National Security Strategy (adopted May 2015); Military Doctrine (adopted September 2015), Cyber Security Strategy (adopted March 2016), Doctrine of the Information Security of Ukraine (adopted February 2017); Strategic Defence Bulletin (adopted June 2016).

There is no direct hierarchy among the legislation defining national security and military spheres in Ukraine. However, de facto, the National Security Strategy is perceived as a main directive, which should outline priorities, threats, and reforms necessary to reach the goals of both hard and soft security guarantees in Ukraine. However, as the situation with the “non-bloc status” described above showed, political decisions have been prevailing over strategic ones, when the National Security Strategy was seen as something general, necessary accessories of the modern state, rather than a reference point for decision-makers.

Despite the fact that the National Security Strategy 2012 had the title “Ukraine in the world that is changing”, its actual substance far from reflected the real challenges the country had been facing. The new Strategy adopted in May 2015 was made to identify and to focus on the finally

acknowledged threats that from being potential became real. The National Security Strategy 2012 mostly referred to global changes, challenges and geopolitical transformations, while predominantly concentrating on the threats to the internal security of the state.

In 2015, the main threat was clearly defined, and the necessity to create a new system of guaranteeing national security of Ukraine was explained by the Russian aggression “that would have a long-term character” (Administration of the President 2015, Art.1). Moreover, for the first time, the Goals of the National Security Strategy were set: minimization of threats to the state sovereignty and the creation of conditions for the restoration of Ukraine’s territorial integrity within the internationally recognized state borders of Ukraine, guaranteeing the peaceful future of Ukraine as a sovereign and independent, democratic, social and legal state; endorsement of the human rights and freedoms of the citizen, ensuring a new quality of economic, social and humanitarian development, confirming Ukraine’s integration into the European Union and creating conditions for joining NATO (Administration of the President. 2015, Art.2).

At the same time, in the 2012 Strategy, among the strategic goals and priority tasks to guarantee national security of Ukraine (Parliament of Ukraine. 2012, Section 4) in both internal and external spheres, there was not a single mention about military or security reform. It appears only in Section 5 dedicated to the system of guaranteeing national security, where the described activities did not correlate with the tasks set in the previous section. De facto, attention was paid to the legal and organizational changes, social guarantees of the military, civilian protection, democratic civilian control, criminal justice reform, and state programmes to fight terrorism, etc. An eye-catching feature is that, while stating the necessity to improve functional capabilities of the security sector, the primary focus is on law enforcement and intelligence, rather than military (Parliament of Ukraine. 2012, Art.5.2.3.)

The biggest changes between the 2012 and 2015 Strategies are undoubtedly in the definitions of the security environment and threats to the national interests and security of Ukraine. In 2012, three main trends were named that potentially threaten the national security sphere of Ukraine from outside (Parliament of Ukraine. 2012, Art. 3.1.). First of all, there are factors that challenge the global international stability and have an impact on Ukraine, such as increased competition between the world centres of power, crisis of the international security system and diffusion of the system of international

treaties, the appearance of self-proclaimed quasi-states in the territories of other states, competition for natural resources, intensification of some states' militarization, spread of terrorism, piracy and trafficking, and global environmental challenges. Secondly, there is the deterioration in the regional security environment, including provocations of the conflicting situations and the use of the forces beyond their national borders, escalation of conflicting situations and militarization in the Black Sea – Caspian region and internal instability of states, incompleteness of the state borders delimitation, demarcation, and possible territorial claims. And the third dimension was named as direct challenges to the national security of Ukraine: the unresolved Transnistrian conflict, an unsettled state border issue with the Russian Federation in the Sea of Azov and the Strait of Kerch, lack of demarcation of the state border with the Russian Federation, Moldova and Belarus; existence of the troubled question of the temporary deployment of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea; and last but not least, imperfect migration policy.

However, as was shown in practice, what was stated in the Strategy and how the government of President Yanukovich acted were far from being the same. One of the biggest contradictions lay in terms of the resolution of the deployment of the Black Sea Fleet in Crimea, which had been prolonged until 2042, instead of resolving the existing legal and organizational issues, they made a foreign military base in the territory of Ukraine de facto uncontrolled and dangerous.

In 2015, for the first time since Ukrainian independence, the new National Security Strategy pulled back to describe general threats, global problems and common risks that can be mirrored by any other regional country. Nine main spheres emphasized in the new Strategy, analysing threats to the national security of Ukraine, are focused on Ukraine and its external and internal challenges (Administration of the President. 2015, Art. 3) and include: Russian aggressive actions, which are undertaken to exhaust the Ukrainian economy and to undermine social and political stability, aiming to destroy the Ukrainian state and to conquer its territory; ineffectiveness of the national security and defence system; corruption and ineffective system of governance; economic crisis exhausting state financial resources, decrease in the level of life; threats to energy security; threats to information security; threats to cyber security; threats to the security of critical infrastructure; environmental threats.

One of the main differences between the 2012 and 2015 Strategies is the concentration of the latter on hard security more than on soft security.

The new Security Strategy's references to reform of the security sector are detailed and particular, with great concentration on military structures and cooperation. It is not only reaction to the actual threat due to the illegal annexation of Crimea and military actions in the East, but it is clear acknowledgement that the country's reform of the security sector had been underfinanced, badly structured and lacked reforms during all the years of Ukraine's independence. Article 3.2 (Administration of the President 2015) clearly states the following threats to national security in the domain of the inefficiency of the system of ensuring national security and defence of Ukraine: the failure of the security and defence sector of Ukraine as a holistic functional association, to be managed from a single centre; institutional weakness, lack of professionalism, structural imbalance of the security and defence sector; lack of resources and ineffective use of resources in the security and defence sector; lack of effective external security guarantees to Ukraine; and activities of illegal armed groups, growth of crime, illegal use of weapons.

As a result, the text (Administration of the President 2015) presents thorough suggestions for creating an effective security sector (Art. 4.2) and increasing the state's defence capability (Art.4.3.). These suggestions include not only improvement in legislation, but also improvement in the state strategic planning system; improvement in budgetary policy in the sphere of national security and defence; professionalization of the security sector; preparing the state (both military and civil bodies) to withstand armed aggression; reforming the mobilization system and formation of a powerful, numerous, military-trained reserve; elimination of duplication of functions between the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff; modernization and improvement of rocket forces, aviation, and counterintelligence.

Among completely new features are the development of the Special Operations Forces, improvement and development of a control system, protected telecommunications, intelligence, and radioelectronic warfare; special attention is paid to the Navy and its modernization, and ensuring maximum interoperability of the Armed Forces of Ukraine with the armed forces of NATO member states through the introduction of NATO standards.

Importantly, in 2012 no attention was paid to the development of the Ukrainian navy. Among the problems singled out were unsettled questions over the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea (Art. 3.1.3.) and militarization of the Black Sea-Caspian region (Art. 4.2.5.). However, the impression is that the Black Sea was seen just as a sphere of the foreign policy, with Ukraine being

a littoral state not a marine power, thus the absence of significant attention to the development of the Navy. On the other hand, in 2015 the aim was set “to form adequate to the threats the naval capabilities of Ukraine, to defend the state’s sea coast, to develop necessary infrastructure for the deployment of the Navy of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, as well as its deployment in Crimea after the return of the temporarily occupied territory under the control of Ukraine (Administration of the President 2015, Art 4.3).

The ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the methods used made the government and experts elaborate other strategic documents reflecting the challenges, which shifted from soft security to hard security priorities. Both information and cyber security turned to be a domain and a weapon of contemporary warfare. Information security appeared for the first time as a top priority of national security, resulting in the adoption of the Doctrine of the Information Security of Ukraine in February 2017 (Administration of the President 2017b). After long disputes, it was separated from the Cyber Security Strategy, which also was adopted in Ukraine for the first time. While originally drafted as one document, the final decision was made to separate the two spheres, and concentrate in more detail on each of them.

Starting from 2016 and the adoption of the Cyber Security Strategy, it became clear that the state no longer refers to cyber security as a sphere of business responsibility, something purely connected with IT development. Firstly, the cyber security sphere has been named as a part of the national security of Ukraine (NSDC 2016). What is noteworthy is that the Russian Federation’s actions against Ukraine were named as one of the main reasons for the elaboration of this strategy. Moreover, it was stated that ‘cyberspace is gradually turning into a separate area, along with the traditional “Earth”, “Air”, “Sea” and “Space”, a sphere of combat operations, in which relevant units of the armed forces of the leading countries of the world are increasingly active’ (Art.2). In addition, creation of special units within Army structures for active cyber protection and cyber security was proposed, in addition to the Security Services and Intelligence Units, all of which should be interoperable with respective units of NATO member states (NSDC 2016).

Among the flaws of the Ukrainian Information Security Doctrine is that, despite its timely and innovative approach, it has an extremely narrow goal. The goals are limited only to one - to clarify the principles of the state information policy and its implementation, primarily in counteracting the devastating informational influence of the Russian Federation, considering conditions of its unleashed hybrid war (Administration of the President

2017b). Not underestimating this threat as being a trigger for the development of the Information Security sphere in Ukraine in a new security domain, nevertheless, framing it only with reference to Russian actions decreases the level of its implementation, makes it not a long-term vision, and allows the ignoring of other possible channels of interference. At the same time, in addition to the soft security, social and political spheres covered among the national security threats in the information sphere, the Doctrine also mentions: implementation of special information operations aimed at undermining defence capabilities, demoralization of the personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations, provoking extremist manifestations, feeding panic moods, exacerbation and destabilization of the socio-political and socio-economic situation, interethnic and inter-confessional conflicts in Ukraine (Administration of the President 2017b, Art. 4).

NATO integration received significant attention in the strategic documents of Ukraine. It is separately mentioned in the National Security Strategy as one of the main directions of governmental policy on national security, where detailed description is given to the main directions of the special partnership between Ukraine and the North Atlantic Alliance, including the “long-term goal of joining the common European security system, the basis of which is NATO” (Administration of the President 2015). At the same time, in other strategic documents, especially in the Military Doctrine, most statements refer to the issues of the reform of the Armed Forces, bringing them in line with NATO standards, and the enhancement of military and political cooperation with its member states.

2. Changes in security discourses

In the political and expert discourse, three spheres received the most attention: modernization of the security forces, first of all the Army; future NATO membership and information security. While cyber security and the protection of critical infrastructure were named among the priorities as well, however, they were left predominantly for discussion in expert circles, accepted by all political parties as important and apolitical components of national security. Two other topics: the attitude towards Russia and the nuclear status of Ukraine, in some way, underlie those disputable issues and are treated both as reasons and as consequences of the current crisis.

In spite of the general agreement with the new National Security Strategy, some criticism appeared among both politicians and experts. One of the issues

of argument was the absence of long-term strategic visions in the Strategy; some experts even called it Tactics not a Strategy (Соломонюк 2015). What some experts saw as a strength - detailed and clear identification of necessary actions and reforms, others perceived as a reactionary approach towards security threats. However, if we go to the goals of the National Security Strategy where the minimization of the threats to state sovereignty and restoration of the territorial integrity are set as the ultimate goals, and reflect on them against the backdrop of the tools necessary to reach these goals and a condition of the Ukrainian security sector in 2014, then such priorities are perfectly framed within the long-term timeline, including how the future security sector of Ukraine should look. Serhiy Pashynsky, Head of the Parliamentary Committee on national security, while describing the new National Security Strategy, stated that most important was acknowledgement of the fact of Russian aggression, while Ukraine wanted peace, and a modern, well-equipped Army should be a guarantor of that peace (Chanel 5 2015).

Russia was never before named as a security threat to Ukraine. As early as 2008-2009, a few experts forecast a possible a Russian invasion stemming from the results of the Russian-Georgian war in 2008. However, most of them, as well as politicians, talked about potential Russian political and economic pressure, and destabilization of Crimea but not military intervention. The reason for disregarding this threat was the belief that compared to Georgia Ukraine had so-called security guarantees from the Budapest Memorandum (1994). Between 2015 and 2017, Ukraine referred less and less to this document, as a reality demonstrated that when the document is violated by one of its signatories, others are reluctant to fulfil their obligations. Moreover, American diplomats insisted that Ukraine received assurances rather than guarantees of its territorial integrity, so the US, the UK and in some way China and France were not obliged to protect Ukraine from open aggression. The de facto absence of the security guarantees, in three years resulted in a situation where fewer and fewer politicians referred to the Budapest Memorandum, but insisted on the necessity of quick modernization of the Army, for Ukraine to protect itself by itself.

Serious discourse was undergoing as a necessity for Ukraine to restore its nuclear power capabilities. 2014 was a peak year, as many politicians from different political spectra assumed that had Ukraine still had a nuclear arsenal, Russia would have never attacked it. Several draft laws were submitted to reinstate the nuclear status of Ukraine. The first was the Draft

Law on denouncement of the Nuclear non-proliferation Treaty (1968) initiated jointly by Members of Parliament from the parties “Udar” and “Batkivshchyna” on March 20, 2014, and the second was the Draft Decree on Announcement by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on restoration of the nuclear status of Ukraine — introduced by the party “Svoboda” on July 23, 2014. Both draft legislations were recalled in November 2014. According to Polina Synovets (2016, 134), director of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Centre in Ukraine, the theoretical possibility to adopt such legislation existed. Of all political parties represented in Parliament in 2014, three (Oleh Liashko’s Radical party, “Svoboda”, and “Right Sector” – jointly around 15% of seats) officially supported restoration of Ukraine’s nuclear status. In addition, such moderate parties as “Udar” and “Batkivshchyna” also supported the idea of Ukraine denouncing the NPT. At the same time, the President and the Government of Ukraine officially supported the country’s membership in the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, and this to some extent stabilized the situation. Despite the low intensity of the “nuclear” discourse within the last year, this topic appears from time to time in political and media discussions, with a nostalgia and false perception that a nuclear potential would allow Ukraine to restore its sovereignty and prevent Russia from further aggression.

Since 2014, cooperation of Ukraine and NATO has become one of the key foreign policy issues for political parties and the governments’ agenda. The 2014 Coalition Agreement acknowledges «cancellation of the non-bloc status of Ukraine, restoration of its political course to integration into the Euro-Atlantic security space, and acquiring membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization» (Parliament of Ukraine 2014, Art.1) among the first priorities for guaranteeing national security and defence. The questions of cooperation with NATO and Ukraine’s future membership in the Alliance became one of a few separately defined foreign policy priorities in the Annual Address of the President of Ukraine in 2015. It has also become a leading idea of military reform and foreign policy strategy.

At the same time, there are alterations in how different political forces perceive this issue. In fact, the division goes along the line of for/against joining NATO, as well as about the desirable speed and procedure of Euro-Atlantic integration (whether a referendum should be held or not, and whether Ukraine should file an application for membership right away) (Shelest 2016, 92).

“Non-bloc status” became an invention of President Yanukovich’s team,

as a response to Russian demands. The wording “non-bloc” sounded bizarre from the point of view of international law, but reflected the Soviet / Russian perception of NATO as a purely “military bloc”, so this status envisaged not general abstention from joining military organizations, but refuting the Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine.

Due to its clear pro-Russian background, after 2014, this term could not be used anymore. Therefore, the discourse turned to integration with NATO as the only way to secure Ukraine in the future versus the suggestion to choose neutrality in order not to further provoke Russia. Neutrality is widely supported by the representatives of the Opposition Bloc Party (former Party of Regions) (Вилкул 2017), while NATO integration is a main goal of the Presidential party “Solidarnost” and other right and centric parties. NATO integration supporters argued that neutrality will not only leave Ukraine alone against future aggressions, but would also cost much more to the national budget, as Ukraine would not be able to share responsibilities, and referred to the Switzerland example. What is important to mention is that ideas of neutrality are heard not only from Ukrainian politicians (Pinchuk 2017), but also from its international partners. Moreover, Ukrainian non-bloc status did not prevent the illegal Russian occupation of Crimea in 2014.

The second issue around the NATO topic is about whether the decision should be taken by Parliament or whether a referendum needs to be organized. For many years, both NATO officials and Ukrainian anti-NATO forces insisted that Ukrainian public opinion was against further NATO integration, so with a dramatic change in the number of supporters (up to 69% in June 2017) (Ukrainian Crisis Media Center 2017), President Poroshenko started to express the opinion that a referendum should take place after Ukraine fulfils all reform obligations (Reuters 2017). However, as the level of knowledge about NATO is low, and the numbers of supporters can be manipulated by strong propaganda before the referendum, many experts insist that such strategic decisions should be taken by the government and parliament, not by referendum.

3. Transformation of security policies

It is worth mentioning that for the first time in Ukrainian history, the main tasks set in the National Security Strategy (2015) clearly correlated with the priorities of military reform and organization. Among others, several of them deserve special attention. Reaching NATO standards, as well as full

interoperability with the Alliance has been a basic line for all Strategic and Operational Documents of Ukraine since 2014.

The tactical changes happened on several levels including the operation of the National Security and Defence Council, whose role has been upgraded compared to previous years. In January 2015, for the first time, a Main Situational Centre of Ukraine was established by the Decision of the National Security and Defence Council and Confirmation of the Presidential Decree (NSDC 2015a). Its main tasks are to provide information and analytical support to the activities of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, coordination and control over activities of the executive authorities, law enforcement bodies and military formations in the field of national security and defence in peacetime, during special periods, including in conditions of martial law, in a state of emergency and in the event of crises threatening the national security of Ukraine.

By another decision, a Military Cabinet within the NSDC, headed by the President of Ukraine, was created in February 2015 (NSDC 2015b). The Cabinet consists of the Prime Minister, Minister of Internal Affairs, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Defence, Head of the Security Service, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, Head of the State Border Guard Service, Commander of the National Guard, Head of the Presidential Administration, as well as approved by the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Such arrangements allowed coordinating top-level decisions quickly, combining responsible ministries (who usually meet at the Cabinet of Ministers meetings) with those institutions directly supervised by the President. The main topics for the Cabinet discussions are proposals concerning the use of forces, strategic development, preparation and application of the forces for strategic actions, operations, combat actions; organization of the interaction of forces between themselves and with executive bodies and local self-government bodies during the fulfilment of the tasks assigned to them in a special period; determination of the needs for ensuring state defence, use of reserves, as well as the needs for military assistance to Ukraine from foreign states and international organizations, etc.

In March 2016, the Concept of the Security and Defence Sector Development was elaborated and signed by the President and followed by the decision to adopt the State Program of the Development of Armed Forces of Ukraine until 2020 in March 2017 which, however, received a secret status (NSDC 2017a). The same situation is with the Decision of the

National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine dated January 27, 2017 “On the main indicators of the state defence order for 2017 and 2018, 2019” (NSDC 2017b). However, from the Presidential statements it is clear that for the year 2017 an amount of nine billion hryvnas (approximately EUR 300 million) was allocated in the state budget for military procurements (Administration of the President 2017a), in some cases it should envisage ‘military equipment in the amount that ensures the so-called “wholesale rearmament” of certain military units’. According to the President, a big discussion about state defence order has been around the choice of items to be purchased. “We have a choice: either one “Oplot” or ten modernized and fully repaired T-64s or T-80s. Moreover, construction of the “Oplot” takes at least 18 months, while modernization of the T-80 takes 2.5 months (Administration of the President 2017a).

In fact, decisions were taken not only to increase the state budget for procurement and modernization, but to facilitate development of the Ukrainian military industry, which in the last years was underfinanced or sabotaged. The Government of Ukraine approved the State Program for the Reform and Development of the Defence Industrial Complex of Ukraine 2021 in May 2017; however, it also received a secret status. Little information was available, which confirmed the three-year planning circle in military procurements, integration of science and industry, changes in monitoring and prices policies, as well as adaptation to NATO standards. The programme is based on the realization of the Strategic Defence Bulletin and National Action Plan for NATO membership of Ukraine. One of the main goals in this sphere is not only modernization of Ukrainian military-industry enterprises, but also substitution of the past close cooperation with Russia in military industry, so to start full circle production in Ukraine or attract additional investments. As for now, aviation and tank production are those spheres which have localized their production in Ukraine by 80% (Зеленюк 2017).

Approval of a number of internal documents, such as the Decree of the President of Ukraine on new annual national programs development procedure with NATO and the Strategic Defence Bulletin contributed to both Euro-Atlantic integration aspirations and the internal reform process.

Firstly, Special Operation Forces were established in January 2016 (according to Art. 4.3.) being under the direct command of the Minister of Defence. Their main tasks are military information-psychological operations, protecting the lives of citizens and objects of state property outside of Ukraine,

participation in combating illicit trafficking in weapons and drugs, fighting terrorism and piracy, and organization and support of resistance movements' actions (Special Operations Forces 2017).

Secondly, most of the military reform sections have a reference to NATO standards and interoperability of forces with NATO member states. For the next years, all documents connected with security sector reform, from the Military Doctrine to the operational documentation had same reference. It was also supported by the work of the military advisers sent by partners from NATO to assist with different aspects of military reform in Ukraine. Even more, the section on the necessity to improve and develop telecommunication, radioelectronics and control systems reflected in the NATO Trust Funds approved for Ukraine. Signing of the Trust Fund Agreement on the establishment of five NATO trust funds for the total amount of EUR 5.4 million, in particular NATO-Ukraine Command, Control, Communications and Computers (C4) Trust Fund (EUR 2 million), NATO-Ukraine Logistics and Standardization Trust Fund (EUR 1 million), NATO-Ukraine Medical Rehabilitation Trust Fund (EUR 845,000), NATO-Ukraine Cyber Defence Trust Fund (EUR 815,000), as well as the NATO-Ukraine Military Career Management Trust Fund (EUR 410,000) (NATO 2015) became an important cooperation framework outside of the political dialogue.

Despite the high priority given to adaptation and integration with NATO, for the first two years after the start of the conflict, it had been a slow process often characterized by the absence of joint work by the different branches of power. For example, the conflict, which unfolded between the members of the Parliament of Ukraine — members of the Permanent delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine became public in 2015, when MPs accused the Ministry of Defence in stalling adoption of decisions related to the start of the Trust funds. Delays with approval of separate provisions of the Trust Fund Agreement related to specific issues of taxation and customs clearance for technical assistance, also confirmed that non-core ministries lacked understanding of the peculiarities of the Ukraine-NATO cooperation (Shelest 2016, 92).

However, in 2016, the situation improved significantly, primarily due to the introduction of the post of the Vice-Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, establishment of the commission on coordination of Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic Integration and an announcement about establishing the coordinating mechanism of the implementation of the NATO Trust Funds, which operates within the Government office for

European and Euro-Atlantic integration. Activities of Ukrainian institutions concerning cooperation with NATO have accelerated at all levels — presidential, parliamentary, military, and governmental. Regular top-level visits of Ukrainian officials to Brussels, as well of the NATO Secretary General to Ukraine, joint military exercises, signing roadmaps and action plans, elaborating new manuals and procedures for the Ukrainian army, activities of NATO advisors in Ukraine — all this formed the agenda of cooperation. In addition, the Defence-Technical Co-operation Roadmap (December 2015) and the Strategic Communications Partnership Road Map (September 2015) widened the spheres of practical cooperation. Such activities are not limited to the issues of defence cooperation, but include emergency response, risks assessments and sharing experience. Therefore, after three years of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, NATO-Ukraine cooperation is becoming a two-way road, where Ukraine is not only a recipient of the assistance.

Conclusions

After three years of war, a clear understanding of the security priorities, threats and necessity of reforms has come in Ukraine. Both at the strategic and operational levels changes can be seen, although accompanied by a challenge to simultaneously reform the security and defence sector and to fight, protecting territorial integrity of the state. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has not only stressed the urgent necessity to reform the Army, but also crystalized vision according to which standards and with what ultimate goal to do it. NATO membership perspective is no longer a declarative statement of the authorities, without a real aim to reach it. It has become a cornerstone of all reforms and cooperation planning in Ukraine.

Even more importantly, a new strategic vision has embraced not only the military sphere, but also brought cyber and information spheres to the limelight, where cyber space has become equal to land, sea and air in terms of war terrain. The de facto state of war in which Ukraine operates, has stipulated creation of the new mechanisms and forces (e.g. Special Operations Forces) to be able to adequately react to current threats. Aiming to reform the military according to NATO standards by 2020, Ukraine is still far from the goal. Certain disproportions and misbalance of attention towards different reforms and military branches are visible. However, the experience gained in Eastern Ukraine and close cooperation with partner countries are facilitating transformation of the Ukrainian national security sphere.

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