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# PROSPECTS OF UKRAINIAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

## (Conceptual approaches and practical steps)

The “hybrid” war of Russia against Ukraine has continued since February 2014. To date, the multiple efforts of international diplomacy, unfortunately, have not resulted either in settlement or even in a “freeze” of the situation in eastern Ukraine. The previous Minsk Agreements adopted in September 2014 (Minsk Protocol and Minsk Memorandum) were disrupted and Russian aggression in Donbas continued. On 12 February 2015, the presidents of Ukraine, France, Germany, and Russia agreed on a new document, “Package of Measures for Implementation of the Minsk Agreements”, which envisaged conflict settlement by the end of 2015. However, implementation of these measures was postponed to 2016 and, given the course of events, has actually become a process which is difficult to forecast and which is indefinite in time.<sup>1</sup>

It should be noted that on the one hand, the situation in eastern Ukraine has not undergone significant changes for the better – hostilities are ongoing. There are persistent fundamental differences in the positions of the two sides, Ukraine and Russia, on conflict resolution. (In particular, implementation of the Minsk Agreements in line with the Russian scenario threatens to destabilise the internal situation in Ukraine and destroy its statehood.) On the other hand, the international situation is rapidly changing; we see further escalation of international terrorism (the terrorist attacks in Paris), the “migration crisis” in the EU, Russia’s military intervention in Syria, and the gaining momentum of the acute conflict of Moscow and Ankara. This dulls the perception of events in Donbas on the part of the international community, renders these events a somewhat “background” nature in the West, and urges attempts to “freeze” the situation there at any cost, including at the expense of Ukraine’s own interests.

Meanwhile, Russia proceeds with military expansion in Donbas, aimed at the destruction of Ukrainian statehood, and now there is no reason to expect a change for the better in the Kremlin’s policy. Thus, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict (which has a regional and global dimension) acquires a long-term nature with recurrent escalation and unpredictable consequences.

Russian aggression – the annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine – has entailed profound changes in bilateral relations: (a) the legal framework of Kyiv and Moscow relations has been destroyed; (b) institutional mechanisms of state-to-state relations have been destroyed; (c) contacts at the highest level have become impossible, political and diplomatic relations have become confrontational; (d) Ukraine has suffered huge human, economic, and territorial losses; (e) an unprecedented curtailment of economic cooperation has taken place; (f) deep alienation between the peoples of Ukraine and Russia has emerged.

The previous official ideology of “strategic partnership”, “fraternal peoples”, and “neighbourliness”, embedded in many joint agreements, has lost its sense.<sup>2</sup> **A new political-ideological reality has emerged in the relations between Russia and Ukraine.**

Therefore, a new assessment and review of the nature, ideology, and general institutional system of relations with Russia in key areas (politics, security, economy, energy, humanitarian sphere, etc.) is required, given that the main threat to Ukrainian statehood is the current government in place in the Russian Federation.

There is a need to design a new conceptual model of coexistence with Putin’s Russia, which would reflect current realities and prospects of bilateral relations and would take into account the position of Western partner countries and international organisations.

However, it is important to keep in mind at least two things. First, one should clearly distinguish the current Putin’s regime and the country of Russia as it is and its society. Second, in rebuffing Russian aggression, a strategic goal should be seen – to restore confidence and interest of the societies of both countries in peaceful coexistence and respect the right of each state to determine the state system in the country and its civilisation development vector.

<sup>1</sup> The Minsk Protocol as of 5 September 2014 and the Minsk Memorandum as of 19 September 2014. Pursuant to these agreements, the Ukrainian side adopted the relevant legislative acts, while the other side has not fulfilled any provisions of these documents. In particular, the hostilities have not ceased and military equipment has not been withdrawn. For more information see: The Russian-Ukrainian Conflict: State, Consequences, and Prospects. Razumkov Centre analytical report. – National Security and Defence, 2014, No. 5–6, pp. 7–8.

<sup>2</sup> Russian aggression against Ukraine, in fact, has destroyed the basic Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation of 1997, which was the ideological foundation and support structure for the whole system of contractual and legal relations between Kyiv and Moscow. It should also be noted that Ukrainian-Russian relations have never really been strategic, equal, or mutually beneficial. The post-Yeltsin Kremlin leadership has considered and still considers Ukraine as an artificial “historic establishment”, as a state that has failed.

# Ukraine and the Russian Federation: scenarios of the course of events

The course of events in the relations between Kyiv and Moscow depends on many external and internal factors: the security situation in Europe and across the world; actions of the western countries (extension of sanctions against Russia, the effectiveness of multilateral negotiations, including within the framework of the Minsk Agreements), dynamics of internal processes in Ukraine and Russia, unpredictable plans of the Kremlin (Putin's personal ambitions) and others.

**It should be noted that the last year's preliminary forecasts of the Razumkov Centre came true – minimisation (settlement) of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is unlikely and has been put off indefinitely. Negative options are on the agenda.<sup>1</sup> They include either step-by-step conservation of the Donbas conflict (i.e. the establishment of an explosive pro-Russian enclave for a lengthy period of time) or the large-scale escalation of the conflict.**

## (1) Gradual minimisation (settlement) of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict

This option seems to be unlikely in the short term for the following reasons.

**There are no grounds to believe that the policy of Russia towards Ukraine will change for the better any time soon.** Russia will further provide military, economic, financial and informational support to separatist regimes of the DPR and LPR; organise large-scale provocation in the south-eastern regions of Ukraine to destabilise the situation in the country, destroy the country's statehood; apply financial, economic, and gas sanctions against Ukraine; continue the information war against Ukraine.<sup>2</sup>

Immutability of this policy can be attested by the latest Address of the President to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on 3 December 2015. In particular, Putin recognised the annexation of Crimea as an accomplished, historically conditioned fact that cannot be questioned: "reuniting Crimea and Sevastopol with Russia" is "a fundamental, crucial choice of route... Russia in full voice declared itself as a powerful independent state of a thousand years of history and great traditions..."<sup>3</sup>

In the global and Ukrainian political discourse, thoughts are being voiced about Russia's rapid economic decline and collapse. However, one can hardly expect the collapse or disintegration of the Russian Federation or a sudden change in the Kremlin leadership (and, accordingly, a radical change of course) through the voluntary resignation of Putin (non-participation in the next presidential elections), rebellion of his entourage, nationalistic (or liberal) revolution, and so on.

It is useless to predict a development of the situation in Russia, proceeding from these scenarios. At the very least, the next Putin presidency seems more than likely.<sup>4</sup>

It should also be noted that modern Russian society at large believes Vladimir Putin's regime to be legitimate and supports his policies and actions towards Ukraine (as evidenced by numerous sociological studies).

Therefore, until public attitudes in Russia change, Russian society should be seen as a source of legitimacy for the political regime that is hostile to Ukraine.

### Public and expert opinion

One half (51%) of experts predict the preservation and conservation of the current regime in Russia, i.e. Putin's next presidency, 21% of them believe in Kremlin leadership changes, while 15% predict the economic collapse and disintegration of the Russian Federation.

**The majority (73%) of citizens believe that in the near future (1–3 years) there will be no change for the better in Russia's policy towards Ukraine.** At the same time, 52% believe that these changes should not be expected within 3–5 years.<sup>5</sup>

**There is a number of issues where a compromise between Ukraine and the Russian Federation is impossible:** (a) no political, economic, international legal or other solutions to the problem of annexed Crimea have been found; (b) Russia considers the European integration of Ukraine as a challenge and threat to its geopolitical plans on the European continent (the Russian side vigorously opposes the introduction of a deep and comprehensive free trade zone between Ukraine and the EU from 1 January 2016); (c) Russia considers the Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine as a threat to its own security. In particular, it is stated in the new Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation (2014) that the "build-up of the power potential of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), ... the nearing of NATO's military infrastructure to the borders of the Russian Federation, including through further expansion of the alliance" constitutes the main external threat for Russia.<sup>6</sup>

**As a result of Russian aggression, Ukraine suffered huge human, territorial, economic losses.** Ukrainian society has endured a serious, traumatic experience.

- More than 8,000 citizens of Ukraine (of which about 6,000 are civilians) were killed in Donbas.<sup>7</sup> Over 17 thousand were wounded and 1.5 million residents had to move to other regions of Ukraine.

<sup>1</sup> See: The Russian-Ukrainian Conflict: State, Effects and Prospects. Razumkov Centre Analytical Report. – National Security and Defence, 2014, No.5–6, pp.27–30.

<sup>2</sup> In particular, on 18 November 2015, the Russian government adopted a decision to introduce, from 1 January 2016, an embargo on imports of food products from Ukraine; on 24 November, the Russian side halted coal deliveries to Ukraine; on 25 November, Chairman of the Board of *Gazprom PJSC* O. Miller announced a reduction of gas supplies to Ukraine.

<sup>3</sup> Address of the President of the Russian Federation to the Federal Assembly, 3 December 2015. Website of the President of the Russian Federation – <http://kremlin.ru>.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that in 2018, the people who were born and raised under the presidency of Vladimir Putin will come to the polls in Russia.

<sup>5</sup> See the materials "Ukrainian-Russian relations in the eyes of people" and "Russian-Ukrainian conflict: expert assessments", pp.53–77.

<sup>6</sup> Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation.. – Website of the President of Russia, <http://news.kremlin.ru>.

<sup>7</sup> See: Speech of the President of Ukraine at the General Debate of the 70th session of the UN General Assembly on 29 September 2015. – Website of the President of Ukraine, [president.gov.ua](http://president.gov.ua).

- As a result of the annexation of Crimea and hostilities in Donbas, an area of about 44 thousand sq. km was occupied.<sup>8</sup>
- The communal, social and industrial infrastructure in Donbas suffered enormous destruction. 70% of the enterprises on the occupied territory are not operating. According to the estimates of *Forbes*, at the beginning of 2015, the total number of Ukrainian losses in the war in Donbas amounted to UAH 132.7 billion.<sup>9</sup> According to preliminary estimates of the Ministry of Justice, the losses as a result of the annexation of Crimea were about UAH 1.18 trillion.<sup>10</sup> Ukraine has lost about 20% of its economic potential.<sup>11</sup>

This is one of the main reasons that prevents normalisation of relations with Russia – irreplaceable human losses, occupied territories and destroyed infrastructure. And the Russian side does not consider itself to be a party to the conflict.

**During the course of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, public sentiment and evaluations regarding Russia, its policy towards Ukraine, the nature and prospects of cooperation have radically changed.** The divide of distrust and alienation with the aggressor country has deepened. Therefore, it is reasonable to predict that such changes in public opinion will be deep and long-term and will determine the specific atmosphere and relations between Kyiv and Moscow for a long time to come.

#### Expert opinion

According to experts, in the coming years the attitude of Ukraine to Russia will be mostly determined by the fatalities of war in eastern Ukraine (4.6 points on a five-point scale), territorial losses (4.5), distrust in the current Russian leadership (4.3), financial and economic losses as a result of Russian aggression (4).

Experts believe that in the forthcoming years (1–10 years) the alienation between Ukraine and Russia is unlikely to be overcome, and 53% predict such a possibility in the long run.

## (2) Conservation, “freezing” of the conflict

Such a scenario is very likely given the following.

**The Minsk Agreements are not being implemented and their implementation has been indefinitely delayed.**

Currently, there is no doubt that the Minsk Agreements will be extended to 2016. In particular, Leonid Kuchma, the Ukrainian representative in the tripartite contact group for settlement in Donbas, stressed that he had “no grounds to suggest that the Minsk Agreements would be implemented this year”.<sup>12</sup>

The period of time after Minsk I and Minsk II forces the conclusion that the effectiveness of both the arrangements and the negotiation format is limited. This is due to dramatic differences in the positions of the parties on the means and stages of implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

Russia, denying the presence of its own armed forces in Donbas, urges Kyiv to recognise the terrorist entities of DPR and LPR and give them the status of a full partner in the negotiation process, to clear with the separatists the amendments in the Ukrainian Constitution, election procedures, and hold local elections in late 2015 in compliance with the agreements. This includes “implantation” of the occupied areas in their current form in Ukraine under the leadership of the pro-Kremlin puppet governments (a “Trojan” scenario). Being aware in advance that this settlement option is unacceptable for Kyiv, the Kremlin further preserves tensions in Donbas with a view to exhaust Ukraine and to ruin it from within.

The Ukrainian side has a radically different vision of the Minsk Agreements. The annual message of the President of Ukraine to the Verkhovna Rada states a clear position which is the “withdrawal of Russian troops, weapons, and equipment from the territory of Ukraine, establishing Ukrainian control over the border, and holding elections in accordance with OSCE and European standards, according to Ukrainian legislation so that we have to deal with the true representatives of Donbas rather than terrorist leaders”.<sup>13</sup>

At the same time, the peace initiatives of the Ukrainian party are being ignored by the leadership of the so-called DPR and LPR. In particular, the combat terrorist activity continues in response to a unilateral ceasefire on the part of ATO forces. As of December 2015 (after a brief truce), local militants resumed hostilities on the boundary line in the ATO zone. The address of DPR head A. Zakharchenko to the residents of the Donetsk People's Republic of 16 September 2015 quite eloquently reveals the true objectives and intentions of the leaders of the so-called “Republics”.

“Today ... some of our “friends”... plucked up the courage to accuse us of treason, surrender of the Republic's interests and cowardice. As if we have signed an agreement with the enemy, and it will probably lead to a return to Ukraine. I will speak plainly – this is a lie. Every citizen of the independent DPR should know unequivocally: in Minsk, we are negotiating with an insidious and treacherous enemy. They are neither “partners”, nor competitors. We have to conduct a diplomatic battle with a ruthless terrorist gang. Ukrainian fascism is the name of the enemy, who has nothing sacred, and for whom a lie is bravery and betrayal is a source of pride”.<sup>14</sup>

**Today there is no real alternative to the Minsk process.** Negotiations on the conflict settlement are held exclusively in the “Normandy” format. However, the lack of a realistic alternative to the Minsk Agreements today does not mean that there is no alternative to them in the long term.

At the same time, all the previous international efforts to “appease” Russia, such as condemnation of Russian aggression by international organisations

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Non-battle losses: how much ATO costs. *Forbes*, No.2, February 2015, [forbes.net.ua/ua](http://forbes.net.ua/ua).

<sup>10</sup> Losses as a result of the annexation of Crimea exceeded one trillion hryvnia. – *Korrespondent.net*, 2 July 2014, [korrespondent.net](http://korrespondent.net).

<sup>11</sup> See: Speech of the President of Ukraine at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit within the UN General Assembly on 27 September 2015. – Website of the President of Ukraine, [president.gov.ua](http://president.gov.ua).

<sup>12</sup> Kuchma states which clause of the Minsk Agreements could be implemented by the end of the year. – UNIAN, 26 November 2015, <http://www.unian.net>.

<sup>13</sup> Annual Address of the President of Ukraine to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine “On the internal and external situation of Ukraine in 2015”. – Website of the President of Ukraine, <http://www.president.gov.ua>.

<sup>14</sup> Address of DPR head A. Zakharchenko to the people of the Donetsk People's Republic of 16 September 2015. – DPR website, <http://old.dnr-online.ru/news/obrashhenie-glavy-dnr-aleksandra-zaxarchenko-k-zhitelyam-doneckoj-narodnoj-respubliki>.



and leading Western countries, political isolation, implementation of various sanctions, were not sufficiently effective to change Russian policy. The attempts of the West to avoid direct military confrontation with Russia, rejection of possible tools of military deterrence (including the provision of lethal weapons to Ukraine) and pressure on Kyiv to negotiate with the LPR and DPR only add confidence to the Russian leadership in their own power and impunity.

**A series of external and internal factors contribute to freezing the conflict:** (a) limited economic, military potential of Ukraine; (b) compromise and palliative nature of its policy on settlement of the situation in Donbas; (c) limited readiness of the West to support Kyiv, along with a noticeable rise in supporters' activity in Western political and diplomatic discourse aimed at relieving sanctions on Russia and resumption of dialogue with Putin's Russia; (d) step-by-step rise in political and financial "exhaustion" of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict against the backdrop of other crisis events in Europe (in particular, it refers to the extensive "migration crisis" within the EU, aggressive Russian military intervention in Syria, massive terrorist attacks in Paris and the acute Russian-Turkish conflict that has arisen recently).

Given these circumstances, the situation in eastern Ukraine forms the "background" for the West, and the Minsk negotiations are seen as the only possible way to avoid at least further escalation of the situation and preserve it in a more or less safe phase.

#### Public and expert opinion

Two-thirds (66%) of Ukrainian experts predict eventual conflict stabilisation in the long run, followed by a period of confrontation without weapons. 13% stress the possibility of further escalation of the conflict and its transition to the "hot phase".

A relative majority (36%) of citizens believe that during the next few years the relations between Ukraine and Russia will deteriorate, while 31% of them believe that the relations will remain unchanged. However, most citizens (62%) believe that either cooperation with Russia and its influence on Ukraine should be reduced (35%) or that cooperation with Russia should be terminated (27%).

### (3) Further escalation of the conflict – a large-scale armed aggression

This scenario remains on the agenda. The likelihood of Russia unleashing a large-scale war against Ukraine was stated in the President's Annual Address to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, in the National Security Strategy, Military Doctrine and elsewhere. The possibility of such a scenario is conditioned by the following.

**The main objectives of the Kremlin and of Vladimir Putin personally regarding Ukraine have been achieved only partially;** in particular, the "Novorossia" plan has failed. Currently, the official Kremlin pursues its aggressive policy and demonstrates absolute confidence in the legitimacy of its actions towards Ukraine. This follows from a series of financial and economic measures against Ukraine, official documents and statements by the Russian authorities (including assessment of the situation in Crimea in the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the



Russian Federation of 3 December 2015). Russia's use of military force, as well as the threats to use it in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict remain the most effective instruments of Russia's external policy towards Ukraine.

**The extremely dangerous concentration of Russian military troops near the Ukrainian-Russian border and the occupied territories persists.** At the same time, the process of militarisation of Crimea, deployment of modern military equipment and personnel on the peninsula is on-going. In the occupied areas of Donbas, the Russian side performs its own rotation of military units, further providing massive logistical, financial support to militias, including regular supply of goods in the so-called "humanitarian convoys" (as of November 2015, 45 "humanitarian convoys" arrived in the occupied territories of Donbas without approval of or control by the Ukrainian side). As of December 2015, according to President Poroshenko, "about 7–9 thousand Russian troops are still being deployed in eastern Ukraine".<sup>15</sup>

**The system of adopting key decisions in the Russian Federation is maximally personified.** In fact, Putin has freedom of action, including in foreign policy, as the consent of the Federation Council in the current environment is an "automatic formality" (as happened in the situation with the annexation of Crimea). Further proof of this is Russia's military intervention in the Syrian conflict. President Putin is now authorised to use armed forces outside Russia. And we can assume that such a decision is made in person or in a very narrow circle of people.

**It should be noted that a short-term scenario in Ukrainian-Russian relations does not involve changes for the better (conflict minimisation/resolution) and generally boils down to negative scenarios.** In view of the current realities, we can assume that the most likely scenario is the conservation of the situation in the east of Ukraine, creating a long-running, "frozen" conflict with unpredictable consequences. This very situation in Donbas along with the issue of annexed Crimea will determine the atmosphere, nature, and specificity of the relations between Kyiv and Moscow for the foreseeable future. Such a scenario was taken as the basis in the development of the following proposals.

**However, one cannot rule out further extensive escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.**

<sup>15</sup> In eastern Ukraine, from 7 to 9 thousand Russian military servicemen are deployed, – Poroshenko. – UNIAN, 4 December 2015, <http://www.unian.net>.

## NEW MODEL OF RELATIONS: CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES AND PRACTICAL STEPS

The issue of finding a new format of relations with Russia has a global dimension and is relevant not only for Ukraine. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict forced the leading Western countries, international organisations (the EU and NATO) to review their contacts with Russia, Russian aggression against Ukraine was denounced, contacts were restricted and sectoral and targeted sanctions were imposed. In particular, the US National Security Strategy (February 2015) recorded new approaches in the policy towards Russia. Russian aggression was seen as a “threat to international standards”, and collective support of Ukraine and containment of Russia’s aggressive policy were underscored.<sup>16</sup> On 10 June 2015, the European Parliament adopted the Resolution “On relations between the EU and Russia” which emphasizes the impossibility to see Russia as a strategic partner and suggests a review of the system of relations with the Russian Federation.<sup>17</sup> NATO has suspended practical, civilian and military cooperation with Russia.<sup>18</sup>

It should be noted that at the beginning of Russian aggression, Ukraine, finding itself in a critical political, financial, and economic situation, having no good governance, for a long time provided delayed, unproductive and inadequate responses to the annexation of Crimea and occupation of certain areas of Donbas. The Ukrainian leadership lacked strategic and tactical approaches in the Russian direction.

**Given the current state of affairs (the inadequacy of the ATO format to the events in Donbas and proclaiming “no alternative” to the Minsk negotiation process) the problem of providing effective tactics and a balanced action strategy towards Russia remains relevant.** This is particularly confirmed by assessments and positions of Ukrainian experts.

### Expert opinion

The experts are quite critical about the strategy and tactics of the Ukrainian side towards Russia. Slightly more than one half (52%) of experts believe that the Ukrainian government has no strategy of action towards Russia while almost a quarter (23%) of them emphasize the presence of such a strategy. Regarding the tactics, the position of representatives of the expert community is ambiguous: 44% of them believe there are no tactics, while 32% stress that the country’s leadership does employ such tactics.

At the same time, the majority (69%) of experts believe that Russia has an action plan regarding Ukraine and the appropriate tactics (79%).

During the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the elaboration and step-by-step implementation of a series of important changes to the regulatory and ideological paradigms of the Ukrainian policy towards Russia were commenced. The Ukrainian government has adopted a series of legal documents regarding

Ukrainian-Russian relations.<sup>19</sup> This refers to the laws of Ukraine, decrees and appeals of the Verkhovna Rada, presidential decrees, acts of Government, NSDC decrees and others. These documents, in particular, determine:

- **First, a set of specific measures:** (a) measures regarding annexed Crimea, determining its legal status as an occupied territory; (b) the status of specific regions of Donbas and the procedures of local governance; (c) a set of actions to strengthen the country’s defence, countering Russian aggression, and the plans of the authorities in the ATO zone; (d) a set of sanctions/restrictions of a legal, administrative, financial, economic and informational nature in respect of Russia; (e) cancellation of certain bilateral agreements (primarily in the sphere of military-technical cooperation); (f) claims for damages filed with international judicial institutions in respect of Russian aggression and others.

- **Second, a number of important conceptual positions:** (a) declaring the fight to liberate Crimea (Declaration of the Verkhovna Rada of 20 March 2014); (b) recognition of Russia as the aggressor (Appeal of the Verkhovna Rada of 27 January 2015); (c) determining the chronology and scale of Russian aggression, its consequences for Ukraine, listing the demands to the aggressor country (Appeal of the Verkhovna Rada of 21 April 2015); (d) definition of the objectives, nature, and level of threats of Russia’s aggressive actions (National Security Strategy of Ukraine); (e) the continued nature of threat from Russia (annual message of the President of Ukraine); (f) declaring Russia as the military adversary (Military Doctrine) (Table “*The Russia-Ukraine conflict...*”).

On the whole, these regulations define certain common approaches and practical actions in specific areas and segments of the Ukrainian-Russian relations and are the (core) components to form a coherent overall policy towards Russia.

**The need for urgent development and implementation at the national level of a comprehensive balanced system of conceptual approaches and practical steps in dealing with today’s Russia is determined by two factors. The first one is that the previous system of bilateral relations has been destroyed as a result of Russian aggression. The second is that a system of countermeasures towards Russia is needed, given that the current Russian leadership will further pursue its aggressive policy aimed at the destruction of Ukrainian statehood.**

**So, taking into account the current realities in relations with Russia, one should focus on the format of forced/restricted coexistence,** given the fact that Ukraine has a huge common border with Russia, numerous economic, cultural, human and historical ties. Obviously, with regard to the change of the political regime in Russia, the restoration of the territorial integrity of Ukraine and Russian compensation for losses caused by the aggression towards Ukraine, the regime of restricting to a minimum all necessary contacts and cooperation in all areas should be implemented.

<sup>16</sup> *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America 2015* – [http://inosmi.ru/op\\_ed/20150213/226255885.html](http://inosmi.ru/op_ed/20150213/226255885.html).

<sup>17</sup> The European Parliament calls not to consider Russia as a strategic partner. – Interfax, 10 June 2015, <http://interfax.com.ua>.

<sup>18</sup> NATO will not cooperate with Russia in practice. – Ukrayinska Pravda, 14 May 2015, <http://www.pravda.com.ua>.

<sup>19</sup> For more information see: National Security and Defence, 2014, No.5–6, p. 30; Regulatory Framework of Security and Defence of Ukraine. Changes and additions, 2012–2014 – Centre for the Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies, Kyiv, 2015.



### THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT: A NUMBER OF LEGISLATIVE ACTS OF UKRAINE\*

Declaration of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine <b>“On the struggle for the liberation of Ukraine”</b> (20 March 2014)	<p>“... the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine draws the attention of governments and parliaments, international organisations and the global community to the fact that the Ukrainian people will never recognise the annexation of integral parts of its territory – the Autonomous Republic of Crimea occupied by Russia with a gross violation of fundamental norms of international law and universally recognised principles of the coexistence of states...</p> <p>On behalf of Ukrainian people, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine claims that Crimea was, is and will be a part of Ukraine. Under no circumstances Ukraine will stop fighting for the liberation of Crimea, no matter how hard and long it might be...”</p>
The Law of Ukraine <b>“On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Citizens and On the Legal Regime in the Temporarily Occupied Territory of Ukraine”</b> (15 April 2014)	<p>“...This law defines the status of Ukrainian territories temporarily occupied as a result of military aggression of the Russian Federation, it establishes a special legal regime in this area, determines the specificity of the activities of public bodies, local authorities, enterprises, institutions, and organisations under the conditions of this regime, observance and protection of human rights and freedoms and civil rights, and the rights and legitimate interests of legal entities.</p> <p>1. For the purposes of this Law, the temporarily occupied territory shall mean:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) the land territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol and Ukraine's internal waters in these areas;</li> <li>2) internal sea waters and territorial sea of Ukraine around the Crimean peninsula, the area of the exclusive (maritime) economic zone of Ukraine along the coast of the Crimean peninsula and adjacent to the coast of the continental shelf of Ukraine, which are under the jurisdiction of the Government of Ukraine in accordance with international law, the Constitution and laws of Ukraine;</li> <li>3) airspace over the territories referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this part.”</li> </ol>
The Law of Ukraine <b>“On Special Procedure of Local Government in Some areas of Donetsk and Luhansk Regions”</b> (16 September 2014)	<p>“...According to this Law, a special procedure for local government in some parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions will be introduced on a temporary basis for three years from the date of entry of this law into force, including the districts, cities, towns and villages determined by the resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine...”</p>
<b>Address of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to the United Nations, the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of GUAM and national parliaments of other states seeking to recognise Russia as an aggressor state</b> (27 January 2015)	<p>“Ukraine remains the object of military aggression by the Russian Federation, which it carries out, among other things, by supporting and providing for large-scale terrorist attacks...</p> <p>From the onset of the aggression at the end of February 2014, the Russian Federation has systematically violated the universally recognised norms of international law, human rights, including the right to life of peaceful citizens of Ukraine who are held hostage to the terrorists in the occupied territory of Donbas...</p> <p>In this regard, taking into account the UN Charter and UN General Assembly Resolution 3314 “Definition of Aggression” of 14 December 1974, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine recognises the Russian Federation as an aggressor state...</p> <p>We call on the international community to recognise the aggression against Ukraine, the occupation of its territory and intensify the demands to return to the internationally recognised borders of Ukraine, preventing a dangerous precedent in the form of gross violation of international order and security that has emerged after the World War II.”</p>
Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada <b>“On recognition of a number of districts, cities, towns and villages of Donetsk and Luhansk regions as temporarily occupied territories”</b> (17 March 2015)	<p>“...To recognise a number of districts, cities, towns and villages of Donetsk and Luhansk regions as temporarily occupied territories, in which, according to the Law of Ukraine “On Special Procedure for Local Governments in Parts of Donetsk and Luhansk Regions,” a special procedure is introduced for local government until the withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine of all illegal armed groups, Russian occupation troops and their military equipment, as well as their militias and mercenaries, and regaining full control of Ukraine along the Ukrainian state border.”</p>
Statement of the Verkhovna Rada <b>“On repelling the armed aggression of the Russian Federation and overcoming its consequences”</b> (21 April 2015)	<p>“...The consequence of Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine has become the illegitimate military occupation and subsequent illegal annexation of the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol, an integral part of the state territory of Ukraine, and the military occupation of a large part of the state territory of Ukraine in Donetsk and Luhansk regions.</p> <p>The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine...requires the Russian Federation to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) immediately release all prisoners of war, hostages, and illegally detained citizens of Ukraine;</li> <li>2) immediately withdraw from the territory of Ukraine all military units of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and cease any support of the terrorist organisations in eastern Ukraine;</li> <li>3) clearly fulfil the Minsk Agreements on regaining full control over the state border by the Government of Ukraine, and on ensuring continuous monitoring on the Ukrainian-Russian state border...;</li> <li>4) immediately return the annexed territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol under Ukraine's control;</li> <li>...;</li> <li>6) immediately stop the illegal transfer (without the consent of Ukraine) from the territory of the Russian Federation across the state border of Ukraine of goods under the pretext of providing “humanitarian aid” to the population of individual districts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine;</li> </ol>

\* This document contains quotes from documents posted on the websites of the President of Ukraine – <http://www.president.gov.ua>; and the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine – <http://rada.gov.ua/>.

The table presents excerpts from a number of legal documents of 2014–2014 [sic]. For more information see: The Russian-Ukrainian Conflict: State, Consequences and Prospects. Razumkov Centre analytical report. – National Security and Defence, 2014, No.5-6, p.30; Regulatory Framework of Security and Defence of Ukraine. Changes and additions, 2012–2014 – Centre for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies, Kyiv, 2015.





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(Continued)

	<p>7) withdraw the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation from the Ukrainian-Russian border;</p> <p>8) bring to justice and punish those responsible for the planning, preparation and implementation of earlier aggression against Ukraine and war crimes and crimes against humanity.”</p>
<p><b>National Security Strategy of Ukraine.</b> Approved by Decree of the President of Ukraine dated 26 May 2015</p>	<p>“... In an effort to thwart the will of the Ukrainian people to a European future, Russia occupied a part of Ukraine – Autonomous Republic of Crimea and City of Sevastopol, unleashed military aggression in eastern Ukraine and is trying to destroy the unity of the democratic world, to revise the world order that was formed after the World War II, undermine the foundations of international security and international law and allow unpunished use of force in international affairs.</p> <p>The Russian threat ... is of a persistent nature...</p> <p>3.1. The aggressive Russian actions carried out to deplete the Ukrainian economy and undermine social and political stability aimed at the destruction of the state of Ukraine and the seizure of its territory include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• military aggression, participation of regular troops, advisors, instructors and mercenaries in combat operations in Ukraine;</li> <li>• reconnaissance, subversive activities and sabotage, activities aimed at fuelling inter-ethnic, inter-confessional, social discord and hatred, separatism and terrorism, creation and comprehensive support, including military support of puppet quasi-state formations on the temporarily occupied territory of Donetsk and Luhansk regions;</li> <li>• temporary occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol and further actions to destabilise the situation in the Baltic-Black Sea-Caspian Sea Region;</li> <li>• build-up of military contingent near the border of Ukraine and the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine, including the placement of tactical nuclear weapons on the Crimean peninsula;</li> <li>• blocking Ukraine's efforts to counter the monopolisation of strategic sectors of the national economy by the Russian capital, to get rid of the dependency on monopoly supply of critical raw materials, especially energy resources;</li> <li>• trade and economic war;</li> <li>• information and psychological war, denigrating Ukrainian language and culture, falsification of Ukrainian history, creation by the Russian mass media of a distorted picture of the world that is alternative to reality.”</li> </ul>
<p>Annual Address of the President of Ukraine to the Verkhovna Rada Ukraine “<b>On the internal and external situation of Ukraine in 2015</b>” (6 June 2015)</p>	<p>“This danger (Russian aggression – ed.) is like a sharp sword of Damocles hanging over one's head on a horse-hair. We have to admit that, unfortunately, more than one generation of Ukrainians will live in such circumstances.</p> <p>Being unable to win by outside attack, the enemy will try to undermine us from within ... De facto, other than real war and real aggression, a powerful economic war has been added. Russian aggression, while draining the Ukrainian economy, also affects the quality of life of Ukrainians. The enemy does not hide its plans to convert the dissatisfaction of tired and exhausted Ukrainians into destabilisation of the situation in our country...</p> <p>At the same time, there remains a huge threat of the resurrection of large-scale military actions by the Russian terrorist gangs. There are 14 Russian tactical battalion groups of more than 9 thousand soldiers within Ukraine. The concentration of Russian military near the state border is one and a half times greater than a year ago...</p> <p>Due to the permanent threat of deployment of full-scale war by Russia against Ukraine, ensuring the defence capability of the state will remain our top priority for a considerable time to come.”</p>
<p><b>Military Doctrine of Ukraine.</b> Approved by Decree of the President of Ukraine of 24 September 2015</p>	<p>“9. Urgent military threats to Ukraine include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• armed aggression and violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine (temporary occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation, and Russian military aggression in parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions), military build-up of the Russian Federation in the vicinity of the state border of Ukraine...</li> </ul> <p>10. Military-political challenges that can grow into a threat of military force against Ukraine are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interference in the internal affairs of Ukraine by the Russian Federation aimed at violation of the constitutional order, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, internal socio-political stability and the rule of law;</li> <li>• opposition to implementation of the European choice of the Ukrainian people, formation of collective security with the participation of Ukraine...;</li> <li>• attempts of the Russian Federation to destabilise the socio-political and economic situation in Ukraine, as well as provoking separatist sentiments in areas densely populated by national minorities in Ukraine;</li> <li>• targeted information (information-psychological) influence...;</li> <li>• actions of the Russian Federation aimed at complicating and slowing the economic development of Ukraine;</li> </ul> <p>16. The main objectives of the Ukrainian military policy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• countering armed Russian aggression against Ukraine...</li> </ul> <p>28. ... Today Ukraine considers the Russian Federation to be its military adversary.</p> <p>30. The highest degree of danger is a threat to the state sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. The main threat is the likelihood of large-scale armed Russian aggression against Ukraine.</p>





In general terms, this format provides in particular for the following:

- creating a system of effective measures to counter Russian aggression given the simultaneous effective domestic reforms and provision of external assistance;
- review (restriction/cancellation) of contacts in various fields and industries (especially in the defence industry);
- rigid defending of national interests involving international agencies and allied countries;
- doing away with excessive economic, energy dependence on Russia and effectively opposing the informational influence.

#### Expert opinion

Over two thirds (68%) of Ukrainian experts support the model of “limited coexistence”, which provides for a rigid defence of national interests in various spheres given the reasonable compromise and at the same time determining a package of issues where compromise is impossible. One fifth (20%) of experts stress the need for a more radical version – winding down cooperation and contacts with Russia as the aggressor country, introducing the regime of “hostile coexistence”. De facto this means being in a state of cold war.

**In general, the conceptual approaches to further relations with Russia should be based on these principles.**

**First.** Russia is the aggressor that annexed Crimea and continues military expansion in Donbas to destroy the independence and sovereignty of Ukraine. Normalisation of relations with the current Putin’s Russia has become impossible.

**Second.** Given the differences in military and economic potential of the countries, it seems possible to reduce, but not to fully neutralise the negative influence of Russia on Ukraine’s security. Under these conditions, Russian aggression may be encountered only by joint international efforts.

**Third.** A new format of relations with Russia is needed. Therefore, such formulas as “strategic partnership”, “neighbourliness” and “fraternal peoples” are unacceptable, as well as the Russian model of state-political development.

There are several issues on which a compromise with Russia is impossible. In particular, this concerns the choice of a foreign policy. Ukraine is a sovereign, independent state, whose people made their value-conscious civilizational choice by opting for a course of European integration. No country, including Russia, has a right to veto the choice of the Ukrainian people.

**Fourth.** Kyiv must not participate in any integration projects in the post-Soviet territory under the auspices of Moscow – there is no alternative to the European integration of Ukraine and this process is irreversible.

**Fifth.** Obvious terms of change for the better in relations between Kyiv and Moscow should be: termination of Russian aggression towards Ukraine and restitution of the occupied territories, compensation for losses caused by the annexation and military operations and Russia’s refusal to interfere in the domestic affairs of Ukraine.

These particular principles of Ukrainian policy towards Russia generally find the support of both Ukrainian citizens and Ukrainian experts. This is attested by the findings of sociological studies by the Razumkov Centre (Diagram “*Specific principles of the Ukrainian policy towards Russia*”, p.10).

Obviously, this is only a preliminary outline of certain conceptual principles, a tentative matrix of Ukraine’s relations with Russia, which, of course, is not final and lifelong; it is designed for a certain (possibly lengthy) period of coexistence with the regime which poses a threat to Ukrainian statehood.

The following are some generalised approaches and practical steps for maintaining contacts with Russia in foreign policy, security, economic, energy and humanitarian sectors.

## EXTERNAL POLICY

When formulating and implementing foreign policy, one should keep in mind that Ukraine is in a state of “hybrid”, undeclared war. Under such conditions, foreign policy should be formed and implemented most consistently with the security policies – both in its internal dimension, as well as regional and global dimensions. The actions of authorities in all other sectors – economic, energy, humanitarian, and informational – should be subordinate to ensuring security. Effective reforms and productive daily activities of the state in these areas are a prerequisite and guarantee both for strengthening the security (defence) potential of Ukraine and strengthening its international support.

### Conceptual approaches

In foreign policy, the political leadership of the state faces complicated tasks: (a) promotion on the world stage of initiatives and solutions that best match the national interests of Ukraine; maintaining and strengthening international solidarity and support in confronting Russia, including continuation of sanctions against Russia, expansion of the circle of partner countries; (b) the most extensive and professional provision of the world public with real information about the crimes and the consequences of Russian aggression so as to weaken the influence of the pro-Russian lobby in the Euro-Atlantic (primarily Western European) camp; (c) vigorous activity in the relevant international institutions to obtain compensation from Russia for damages caused to Ukraine through the annexation of Crimea and aggression in Donbas.

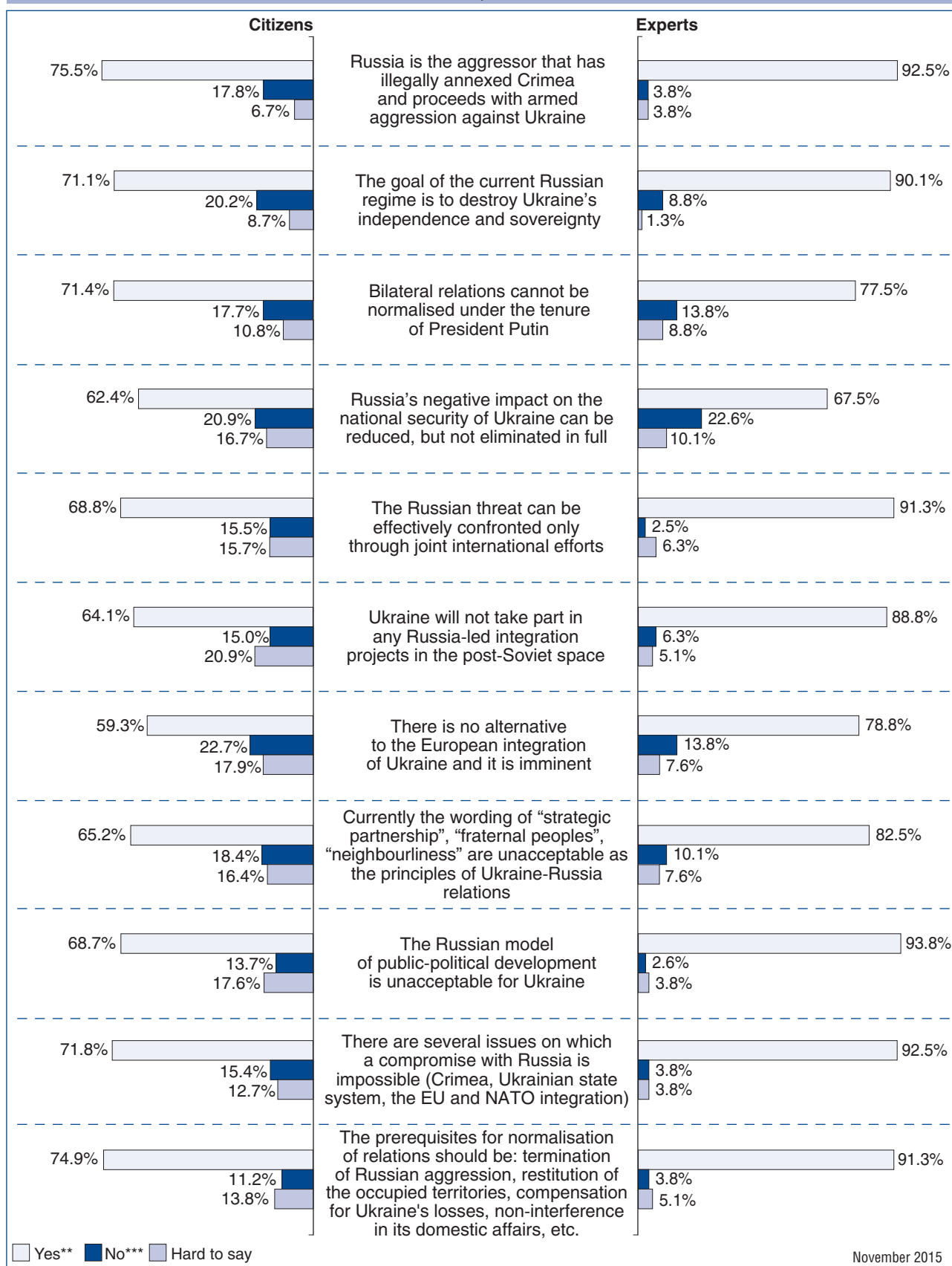
The difficulty lies, on the one hand, in certain divergent assessments by international actors both of the situation in Donbas and the ways of its settlement, and on the other hand, in the new crisis in Europe, reducing the attention to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and requiring additional outstanding international efforts and resources. Today, countering the terrorist group known as “Islamic State” comes at the forefront.

**Ukraine’s policy on the world stage, its diplomatic efforts, should focus primarily on creating the most favourable external conditions for:**

- ensuring the reliable protection of independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Ukraine, its constitutional order, security, rights and freedoms and development of civil society;



**Specific principles of the Ukrainian policy towards Russia\***  
% of respondents



November 2015

\* The citizens answered the question: "Do you agree with the following statements?", the experts – "Can the policy of Ukraine towards Russia be based on these principles?".

See materials of the national and expert surveys published in this magazine.

\*\* Total of answer choices "yes" and "rather yes".

\*\*\* Total answer choices "no" and "rather no".



- cardinal diversification of international trade and economic contacts to avoid dependence on Russian markets and Russian energy sources;
- implementation of comprehensive internal reforms to strengthen the country's defence, stabilise the socio-economic situation; overcoming the consequences of Russian aggression; carrying out important internal transformations as part of European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

Under the conditions of the “hybrid war”, Ukraine's foreign policy should be focused on: the effective “conversion” of international political and diplomatic solidarity with Ukraine into practical actions to stop Russian aggression and active participation of leading Western countries, Ukraine's partners, international institutions in the settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict; involving military, financial, economic, scientific, technical, expert and humanitarian assistance.

The policy of Ukraine towards Russia should be strictly pragmatic, aimed at protecting its interests and opposing Russian influence. Its content and nature should be determined by new conceptual approaches and principles laid down in the basic documents adopted by the Ukrainian authorities in the context of Russian aggression.

Given the unprecedented level of confrontation and distrust, contacts at the highest and high level with Russia should be carried out in a multilateral format with the participation of partner countries and international institutions. This concerns possible conclusion of agreements and arrangements with the Russian side. Political and diplomatic contacts should be maintained transparently and publicly in accordance with European norms, principles and standards, avoiding unofficial agreements.

**In relations with Russia one should be guided by the format of “restrained coexistence”**, which envisages a radical review of the specificity and nature of contacts in various fields and sectors in view of present realities, rigid defence of national interests with a reasonable compromise, and a clear definition of “red lines”, on which compromise is impossible *a priori*.

### Practical steps

Intensification of political and diplomatic efforts to create a new format of negotiations (in particular, the restoration of the Geneva format), which key criterion is the presence of the Russian Federation at the negotiating table as a party to the conflict, not the mediator. Given the lack of alternative to the Minsk Agreements at the present stage, Ukraine should fulfil its obligations. Until new agreements are reached, making the most of the Minsk Agreements as concerns humanitarian aspects (release of prisoners, humanitarian and social support to the population of the occupied territories, humanitarian demining, restoration of infrastructure etc.).

One should take as a premise that unprecedented human, territorial and economic losses as a result of Russian aggression release Ukraine, on the one hand, from advanced implementation of commitments regarding conflict settlement and require full symmetry of its actions with Russia and its militants. On the other hand, it is released from steps aimed at peaceful settlement

that are detrimental to Ukraine's national interests and are not supported by the majority of citizens.

A priority is to be made on the deepening and development of political-diplomatic, economic, scientific and technical relations with partner countries that actively support Ukraine and denounce the aggression of the Russian Federation (EU, USA, Canada, Australia, Japan, etc.) to strengthen international solidarity, and to form a sustainable international group of allies in the confrontation with Russia. In this context it is important to strengthen solidarity partnership with the countries that immediately apprehend the Russian threat and actively support Ukraine – the Baltic States, Scandinavian countries and Poland.

Active use of the situation (such as the Russian-Turkish conflict) to strengthen the relations of Kyiv and Ankara.

Intensification of contacts with the United States of America. Ensuring the implementation of the Ukraine Freedom Support Act which expands the channels of cooperation in various sectors (politics, economy, energy, security).

Intensification of cooperation with European and Euro-Atlantic security institutions. In particular, under the current Association Agreement with the EU (Section 2), expansion of cooperation with the European Defence Agency; efficient use of the available mechanisms (annual national Ukraine-NATO programmes) to deepen contacts with NATO and ensure the military and technical assistance from the Alliance, opposing Russian information expansion and cyber threats.

Acceleration of work on the collection of documents, legal registration, and submission of new (and amendments of existing) claims of Ukraine concerning Russian aggression to the international courts (European Court of Human Rights, International Criminal Court and others) to compensate the damages caused to Ukraine due to the occupation of Crimea and a part of Donbas.

Based on the documents collected by ministries and departments (Security Service of Ukraine, Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice) regarding the crimes on the territory of Ukraine, NSDC of Ukraine should initiate publication of the “Black Book of Russian crimes” to be spread around Ukraine and across the world.

Setting up a temporary interdepartmental commission for a comprehensive inventory of all the contractual and legal environment surrounding Ukrainian-Russian relations (as of February 2014 – 358 documents) in accordance with the new regulations of the Ukrainian authorities regarding Russian aggression. Submission of proposals to the Verkhovna Rada to denunciate documents that are actually invalid and incompatible with current Ukrainian legislation. Making a similar inventory of agreements concluded by Ukraine within the CIS.

Developing and submitting to the Verkhovna Rada of a draft new version of the law “On the principles of domestic and foreign policy”, including assessment of relations with Russia, the consequences of Russian aggression, threats from Russia outlined in the relevant laws of Ukraine, declarations and appeals by the Verkhovna Rada, annual addresses of the President of Ukraine, the new National Security Strategy and the Military Doctrine and so on.



## ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Throughout 2015, the economic relations between Ukraine and Russia suffered substantial losses under the influence of an extremely unfavourable political climate between the two countries and the high risks arising out of the continued hostilities in eastern Ukraine. The new wave of trade and economic restrictions in the relations is due to the introduction by Ukraine of sanctions against individuals and companies of the Russian Federation on 17 September 2015. There is a real threat of the implementation of measures by the Russian Federation in response to the entry into force of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU on 1 January 2016. In fact, we can already say that in a relatively short historical period, Ukraine and Russia **have stopped being partners in the development and deepening of integration relations.**

In its relations with the Russian Federation, Ukraine now solves the problems of **essential reduction of the degree of dependence of the Ukrainian economy on the Russian markets and sources of supply of energy and raw materials of critical importance**, accessory items and the relevant reorientation to emerging markets and new trade and economic partners. This policy is based on the reasons for doing away with increased dependence on Russia in the sectors where it poses a threat to national economic security. There is an equally important task of curtailing those elements of mutual trade and economic ties that do not meet the objectives of technological modernisation of Ukraine's economy.

Simultaneously, Ukraine's policy should take into account the need to preserve those elements of mutual trade and economic ties, which are difficult or impossible to replace in the coming years, since a full breakdown of economic relations can inflict substantial damage on the Ukrainian economy, which is undergoing a difficult time of systemic and structural transformations. At the same time, one should proceed from an important principle that such communications should be kept to an extent and in those areas that would **minimise the possibilities of the Russian Federation using them as an instrument of political pressure.**

The priorities in the policy of maintaining economic relations between Ukraine and Russia for the foreseeable future (up to the time of drastic changes to return the country to the path of observance of international law) must be as follows:

- **active policy of restraining and countering the unrestricted and illegal actions of the Russian Federation in the commercial and economic sphere**, providing for the maximum use to this end of the statutory provisions of key international organisations, and lodging claims to the international courts for compensation of Ukraine's losses caused by the illegal actions of the Russian Federation. Filing complaints with the WTO on Russia violating its commitments made at the time of accession to that organisation both through the dispute settlement procedures established

within the WTO and through the mechanisms of periodic review of the trade policy applying to Russia as a WTO member;

- **holding a strategically oriented policy of restructuring Ukraine's industry** for the purpose of decommissioning the units of production which are obsolete in the technological aspects, too energy-intensive (Ukraine's dependency on Russian energy supplies) and their replacement with new energy-efficient production able to compete in the markets of the developed countries;
- **implementation of a set of measures to facilitate diversification of markets, sources of raw materials, and logistical support for Ukrainian businesses**, taking into account the undesirability of exceeding a 30% share of export or import by one country (as a rule);
- **pursuing a targeted policy of reorientation in the development of scientific, technological, and industrial cooperation** to ensure the priority of joining the programmes of cooperation and development of innovation, cooperation systems and industrial clusters of the European Union;
- **holding activities to preserve individual elements of the system of commercial-economic relations with Russia** that are appropriate based on *pragmatic* considerations and possible prospects of renewing more active cooperation in the post-acute phase of overcoming the crisis in Ukrainian-Russian relations. However, the priority should be given to tripartite or multilateral cooperation, involving the participation of third countries or international organisations in implementing large-scale projects with the participation of Russian companies and organisations, particularly in the field of transport and energy infrastructure, communications, scientific cooperation, ensuring the environmental safety of economic development.

## Practical steps

- Initiation at the WTO of the need for urgent implementation of the official Russian Trade Policy Review in accordance with the provisions governing the WTO Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM). Being a WTO member, Ukraine may insist on speeding up the review of the Russian trade policy in view of the systematic violation of Russia's obligations assumed upon accession to this organisation, particularly evident in repeated discriminatory trade actions in respect of Ukraine, violating WTO rules and causing significant damage to international trade.<sup>20</sup>
- Extension of the practice of initiating at the WTO of the dispute settlement procedures regarding trade restrictions imposed by Russia on Ukraine, including in the format of accession as a third party to disputes initiated by other members.<sup>21</sup>
- Appealing to appropriate institutions of the European Union for technical assistance on the promotion of individual representatives of Ukrainian

<sup>20</sup> The following prerequisites are stipulated in paragraph C (ii) of Schedule 3 to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade of 1994.

<sup>21</sup> At the end of October 2015, Ukraine initiated only one procedure in respect of Russia: consultation was launched on measures affecting the importation to Russia of railway equipment and parts thereto ([https://www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/news15\\_e/ds499rfc\\_21oct15\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news15_e/ds499rfc_21oct15_e.htm); WTO document WT/DS499/1) as of 26 October 2015. In addition, Ukraine joined the review of trade disputes where Russia acts as a defendant concerning the utilisation fee on cars (case DS462, initiated by the EU on 9 July 2013), in respect of import of light commercial vehicles originating from Germany and Italy (Case DS479, initiated by the EU on 21 May 2014) as well as on the application of tariffs for certain Italian agricultural and industrial products (Case DS485, initiated by the EU on 31 October 2014).





business in initiating and maintaining procedures for dispute settlement, including training of national specialists in international trade law and methods of protection from discrimination and unfair trade practices and provision of advice in the review of individual trade disputes.

- During the review of EU Member States and other WTO member countries granting technical financial assistance to Ukraine, priority shall be given to the provision of aid in the development and implementation of measures to promote Ukrainian companies on new foreign markets, diversification of the export structure, with a view, in particular, to facilitate the reorientation of the export of Ukrainian enterprises from the Russian to alternative markets.
- Giving priority to the targeted provision of technical and financial assistance to Ukrainian companies that really show their desire to adapt to the European systems of conformity assessment of the agricultural food and industrial products.
- Ensuring concentration of the programmes of financial aid to Ukraine on accelerating and facilitating the implementation of structural reforms (under strict international control over the targeted use of funds), in particular by:
  - implementation of the Aid for Trade Initiative;
  - improving conditions for the development of entrepreneurship and competition, business development in general, SME (loans of the World Bank and IFC);
  - improving public administration, public financial management, implementation of modern information technology in public administration (loans of the World Bank, UN and EU);
  - partnership programmes aimed at improving the national programme of competition in Ukraine (UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD);
  - improvement of investment policies, mechanisms for financing small and medium enterprises, implementation of the OECD Eurasia Competitiveness Programme (UN and OECD).
- Development and implementation of a long-term strategy to consolidate the Ukrainian banking sector (with the assistance of the EBRD) aimed at:

*... institutional strengthening of the banking sector in Ukraine based on Basel standards;*

*... advanced adaptation of the business environment of Ukrainian banks to EU rules;*

*... ensuring the legal capacity of the Ukrainian judiciary in the protection of creditors;*

*... significant decrease of market risks in the banking sector (which would reduce lending rates in Ukraine to average levels in the new EU Member States);*

*... development of modern banking products to support domestic exporters, which would provide, in particular, short-term loans with a low interest rate to cover the shortage of working capital, longer delay payments and special factoring conditions.*

- A considerable increase of efforts to attract investment for the development and restructuring of Ukraine's industrial sector, which would improve its readiness level for full-fledged international competition. Granting Ukraine assistance from the EU and other international financial institutions in this area under tight control over the targeted use of funds. This work should take into account the results of the third phase of the OECD project "Sector Competitiveness Strategy of Ukraine" (implemented in Ukraine since 2009).
- Giving a priority in relations with the European Union and its Member States to the progressive involvement of Ukrainian companies and organisations ***in the projects of interstate cooperation*** that are implemented in the EU and its member states, with the aim of finding real alternatives to being tied in with cooperation with Russian partners.
- Promotion of the formation in Ukraine of modern transport and communication networks, transportation, logistics and communication centres aimed at strengthening positions as a transit country in the "East-West" and "North-South" directions. Possible initiation of a ***targeted state programme for ensuring security of strategic transport and energy routes*** with the involvement of interested partners at regional and sub-regional levels, including within the Black Sea Region.

**Overall, efforts should be focused on implementing measures for internal institutional development and improvement of the structure of the Ukrainian economy, ensuring market competitiveness of Ukrainian goods and services and facilitating the entry of Ukrainian exporters to new markets.**

## ENERGY SECTOR

### Conceptual approaches

**The key conceptual approach in energy relations with the Russian Federation is further minimisation of energy dependency.** The main goal is the further transformation of relations with Russia in the energy sector to a safe level with a step-by-step propelling of the country on the level of energy self-sufficiency in the long term by 2030 (subject to further extension of traditional production and development of unconventional natural gas) and energy independence in the run up to 2025 (through energy saving and maximum diversification of primary energy resources).

- Given Ukraine's membership in the Treaty Establishing the Energy Community, as well as the relevant provisions of the Association Agreement with the EU, from a legal point of view, **further transformation of the regulatory framework** (implementation of the legislation and EU directives) **and the regulatory environment of Ukraine** is the most important aspect that is key to ensuring energy security.
- Due to the loss of energy assets through the annexation of Crimea and energy infrastructure damage due to war events in eastern Ukraine, **reliable operation of the energy infrastructure is essential** (by preventing parties that ignore the energy legislation of Ukraine and the EU from gaining

control over it), **including protection of critical facilities**. There is an important requirement of Ukraine (in the event of an unfavourable foreign situation) to return the unlawfully alienated oil and gas assets in Crimea and offshore of the Black and Azov seas.

- The key assignment is the **accumulation of strategic reserves** (oil, natural gas, coal, nuclear fuel), as well as **diversification of their sources of supply** to improve the resilience to Russia's energy blockade of Ukraine.
- Taking into account the signing in June 2015 of the Memorandum between *Gazprom* PJSC and several Western oil companies regarding the joint construction of two strands of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which has the potential to entail significant financial losses as a result of a decline in the amount of transit through Ukraine, as well as the loss of volumes critical for the functioning of the national gas transportation system, **it is essential to apply diplomatic efforts to preserve the value of transit of the Ukrainian GTS**, as the Ukrainian transit route for Russian gas to Europe is the most economically attractive and technologically reliable one.
- Because energy resources (especially natural gas) are used by Russia as a tool for waging a "hybrid war" on Ukraine, with the assistance of the European Commission **the schemes of acceptance and transfer of transit gas volumes from the western to the eastern border of Ukraine must be changed** (installation of gas metering stations on the border with Russia).
- Given the unfavourable factors, including the fact of external aggression, the state institutions must pay constant attention to **further development and operation of competitive markets and transparent electricity, heat, gas, coal, oil and oil products**.
- Given the decline in the investment attractiveness of Ukraine's economy and especially of the energy sector as a result of military aggression on the part of the Russian Federation, it is important **to take urgent measures to prevent capital outflow, to return the siphoned off money, and attract new investment** through the development of competition rules on the basis of transparent regulations in line with the European rules, observance of the rule of law, and implementing the public-private partnership mechanism.

## Practical steps

### (1) Energy conservation, energy efficiency and gas substitution

- Ensuring energy saving through the implementation of the energy efficiency programmes, consistent with the EU Directives for efficiency and modernisation of housing to finalise and adopt the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2020 at the legislative level.

- Implementation of projects for reducing natural gas consumption by providing regulatory support, replacing natural gas with alternative energy sources, including biological resources in the centralised and autonomous heating systems where it is economically justified and technically possible.
- Assistance in raising energy efficiency awareness of citizens by keeping them updated on the benefits of energy saving, the presence of mechanisms to encourage their interest in energy saving and common energy saving benefits of their household and business behaviour.
- Continuing work to reduce energy consumption in households by increasing the thermal resistance of enclosing structures of buildings, replacement and/or installation of energy efficient equipment, replacement of light sources, substitution and/or installation of energy efficient appliances.<sup>22</sup> Ensuring 100% accounting of all energy measuring equipment.
- Continuing work to reduce energy consumption in the industry (including chemical and steel industries) by forming conditions for fair competition of economic entities, which will encourage them to introduce technical and technological innovations in order to optimise operational and capital expenditures, including for energy resources.
- Further implementation of measures to reduce energy consumption in centralised heating systems through modernisation of heat-generation equipment and heat stations, replacement of pipes with pre-insulated versions etc.

### (2) Integrated diversification of energy supplies

- Continuing of reverse gas supplies from the EU, ensuring maximum use of the capacity of the transit corridors through Poland, Slovakia and Hungary; active participation in the creation of the East European Gas Hub.
- Organisation of commercial operations for the import of coal supplies to meet needs and energy sources that offer the most attractive commercial terms. It is deemed advisable to minimise the supply of coal from Russia and its "puppet" governments (DPR and LPR) by means of step-by-step replacement of coal anthracite with gaseous coal, increasing production of domestic coal in the Dnieper, Lviv-Volyn and Donetsk basin (provided that the situation in the east of the country improves).
- Further diversification of fuel supply by building a nuclear fuel plant in Ukraine; continuing work on the establishment of a centralised storage facility for spent nuclear fuel, thereby avoiding monopoly dependence on the services of Russian enterprises for temporary storage of spent nuclear fuel of the Ukrainian NPP and its further processing.

<sup>22</sup> To implement these measures, the national monetary programme should be continued (CMU Decree No. 231 "On Amendments to Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers Decree No.243 of 1 March 2010 and No.1056 of 17 October 2011" of 8 April 2015) aimed at provision of financing (loans, compensation of bank interest on loans, shared financing, repayment of costs, etc.) and provision of fiscal exemptions to individuals.



- Due to the restriction of oil supplies from Russia to Ukraine, which could lead to resource shortages and increased fuel prices, it is reasonable to increase the quantity and geographically expand the supply of petroleum products from Europe, including Poland and Lithuania.

### (3) European integration priorities

- Development and revision of a number of legislative acts aimed at implementation in Ukraine of EU directives and regulations in accordance with Ukraine's membership in the Treaty Establishing the Energy Community, including:
  - adoption of the Law "On Electricity Market";
  - adoption of the Law "On the National Commission for State Regulation of Energy and Public Utilities";
  - implementation of the Network Code Project (gas) and Electricity Networks Code in line with the relevant EU Network Eurocodes;
  - switch to a system of "input-output" tariff formation for transportation of natural gas;
  - demonopolisation of the coal sector and increasing its liberalisation by amending the Commercial Code, the laws "On Public Procurement" and "On Commodity Exchange".
- Integration of the Ukrainian energy system with the European network ENTSO-E by completing the relevant preliminary technological preparation of the generation and dispatching services.<sup>23</sup>

### (4) Reforms and administrative measures

- Continuing measures to minimise import of natural gas by further development of its resource base by means of:
  - liberalisation of the regulatory framework in the field of natural gas;
  - increasing the volume of exploration drilling (primarily deep drilling in the Dnieper-Donetsk basin);
  - reducing the tax burden on gas extracting enterprises by optimising the rent payment rates that must be determined in an objective manner based on the methods developed using international experience;
  - conducting an independent audit with the participation of international auditors of the hydrocarbon production sector, which will help put a stop to illegal mining and unaccounted production of energy resources;
  - establishing mechanisms for transparency at all stages of activities of the gas industry, from production of natural gas to its supply to customers via the gas distribution networks (according to the "from wellhead to burner" principle).
- Improving the quality of corporate governance of Naftogaz of Ukraine NJSC and removing its

monopoly role on the market through its transformation from a company which combines commercial activity with the functions of the government into a holding structure with the restriction of functions to the organisational powers of the shareholders meeting and preparation of annual reports; transfer of performance of all commercial and industrial assignments to the level of subsidiaries.

- Implementation of the provisions of the Third Energy Package of the EU through the reorganisation of Naftogaz of Ukraine NJSC with the separation of an independent company GTS along with UGS and subsequent establishment of two separate companies Trunk Pipelines of Ukraine and Underground Gas Storage of Ukraine under the Law "On Introducing Amendments to Some Laws of Ukraine with Respect to Reforming the System of Management of the Unified Gas Transportation System of Ukraine" of 14 August 2014.
- Continuing to eliminate cross-subsidisation on the market of electric energy and natural gas, making a step-by-step transition to market prices on gas for all consumers, based on the provisions of the Social Memorandum of the Energy Community on protection of vulnerable consumers; separation of the functions of sales and distribution of electricity.
- Integration of the Ukrainian GTS in the European energy security system. Attraction (according to the Law "On Introducing Amendments to Some Laws of Ukraine with Respect to Reforming the System of Management of the Unified Gas Transportation System of Ukraine" of 14 August 2014) of European and American system investors to management of the Ukrainian GTS, including underground storage facilities;
- Integration of the Ukrainian energy infrastructure into the European energy space by continuing to pursue the joint regulatory policy with the EU by means of implementation of the principles of *acquis communautaire*. Through the regional energy platform Visegrad, expansion of the format of cooperation with neighbouring countries using the V4+ formula.
- Bringing the Law "On Principles of Functioning of the Ukrainian Electricity Market" and the regulatory framework in line with the Third Energy Package of the EU to facilitate integration of the Ukrainian electricity market with the European market and elimination of the monopoly in the coal sector.
- Provision of benefits in the supply of gas, electricity, and heat to the population compared with industrial enterprises, creation of a differentiated list (depending on the importance to national security) of industrial enterprises, for which the supply of energy will be limited or terminated in the event of a critical situation in energy supply.

<sup>23</sup> 4th quarter 2016, according to the Decree of the Ministry of Energy and Coal Industry No.409 "On Ensuring Implementation of the Integration Project for Integration of the Unified Energy System of Ukraine into EU Energy Systems" of 4 June 2014.



### RESULTS ACHIEVED BY UKRAINE IN REFORMING THE ENERGY SECTOR

During 2014–2015 Ukraine began making radical changes in the vector of energy sector development, thus reducing its dependence on the Russian Federation.

#### Gas sector

- On 19 January 2015, an agreement was signed between Naftogaz of Ukraine PJSC and the Polish gas operator Gaz-System SA to build an interconnector<sup>24</sup> that will open access of Ukraine to the European gas market via the interconnector system (Poland – Germany, Poland – Slovakia, Poland – Czech Republic, Poland – Lithuania);
- On 9 April 2015, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law “On the Natural Gas Market” which fully complies with the provisions of the Third Energy Package of the EU. The law establishes the basis for further promotion of reforms towards competitive and transparent market integration of Ukraine’s GTS with the gas networks of the EU;
- On 29 May 2015, an agreement was signed between Ukrtransgaz PJSC and the Hungarian GTS operator FGSZ to unite the cross-border gas pipelines.

Due to the reverse supply from the EU, the share of Russian gas in total imports has decreased from 100% in 2012 to about 30% in 2015.

#### Nuclear power sector

- On 30 December 2014, a contract was signed with the Japanese-American company Westinghouse to supply nuclear fuel for Ukrainian reactors, which was a step towards diversification of nuclear fuel;
- In Brussels on 26 January 2015, Energoatom NNEGC and Holtec International (USA) signed an addendum to the contract for the construction of a centralised storage facility for spent nuclear fuel (Facility) in Ukraine;<sup>25</sup>
- On 17 March 2015, Energoatom and the Polish company Polenergia International signed a Memorandum on the project “Ukraine – European Union Energy Bridge”. The project provides for the commissioning of a 750-kV overhead line of Khmelnytsky Nuclear Power Plant (KNPP) – Zheshev (Poland) and investment in completion of the power units No.3 and 4 of KNPP.

#### Energy efficiency and energy saving

- The draft law “On the Energy Efficiency of Buildings” was developed;
- The CMU adopted Resolution No. 231 “On Amendments to the Resolutions of the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers No.243 of 1 March 2010 and No.1056 of 17 October 2011” of 8 April 2015 (the issue of reimbursement to individuals, condominiums, and cooperatives of the cost of energy efficiency measures).<sup>26</sup>

### SECURITY POLICY (MILITARY AND MILITARY-TECHNICAL COOPERATION)

#### Conceptual approaches

Military cooperation has undergone more radical changes than any other area of Ukrainian-Russian relations. Despite the lack of an appropriate formal state of war with Russia, the “peace format” relations between the two countries in the military and military-technical (defence-industrial) areas have been virtually halted or limited to the level of contact between the warring parties and are characterised by negative dynamics.<sup>27</sup>

Currently, the Joint Coordination Centre for monitoring the ceasefire is almost the only permanent body of bilateral military cooperation.<sup>28</sup>

Today, Ukraine officially considers the Russian Federation to be its military adversary and the main military threat to national security.<sup>29</sup> Given the actual state of bilateral relations, **renewal of traditional military cooperation formats (meetings at the level of the heads of defence establishments, joint training, defence-industrial cooperation;<sup>30</sup> joint operations etc.) in the short and medium term seems both impractical and unrealistic.**

At the same time, both parties have to support certain channels of communication – directly or through international intermediaries – to address the urgent issues of economic, energy needs, maintaining a minimum level of confidence, preventing dangerous incidents of a trans-boundary environmental, technological and humanitarian nature. Some of these issues can be dealt with by both parties as necessary, mutually beneficial and non-conflict issues.

Possible scenarios for the course of the conflict still do not directly depend on the progress of implementation of the Minsk Agreements.<sup>31</sup> The key contradictions that underlie the conflict are beyond the Minsk format and, therefore, a set of measures envisaged by the Minsk Agreements can ensure only temporary de-escalation (“freezing” of the conflict), solving certain humanitarian, technical and tactical issues.

<sup>24</sup> Agreements on interconnectors are the sole legal basis for operational cooperation of the interlinked GTS operators of the Energy Community member countries.

<sup>25</sup> The construction of own storage will lead to significant savings, create workplaces in the exclusion zone for the personnel of ChNPP, social development of the territory and will ultimately facilitate the recovery of economic activity of the area.

<sup>26</sup> The state is ready to compensate 30% (but no more than UAH 10 thousand) of a target loan for the population (for the purchase of equipment and materials exclusive of documentation and work), for condominiums, constituting 40% of the loan. The loan can be granted for full modernisation of an apartment building, covering a range of works – insulation of walls, attics and basements, installation of windows, individual heat stations, general household and apartment heat and water meters, replacement of wiring and so on.

<sup>27</sup> Negotiations on staff withdrawal from Crimea, return of seized weapons, military equipment and property of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were halted by Russia unilaterally. See: White Paper 2014. Armed Forces of Ukraine – Ministry of Defence of Ukraine 2015, Article 58; [http://www.mil.gov.ua/content/files/whitebook/WB\\_2014.pdf](http://www.mil.gov.ua/content/files/whitebook/WB_2014.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> The Joint Centre for supervising and coordinating issues of ceasefire and gradual stabilisation of the demarcation line between the parties was launched on 26 September. It consists of representatives of the Ukrainian side, OSCE monitoring group, and 76 members of the Armed Forces. – According to the press centre of ATO; [www.facebook.com/ato.news/posts/868028279874646](http://www.facebook.com/ato.news/posts/868028279874646).

<sup>29</sup> The New Military Doctrine of Ukraine was approved by Decree No.555 of the President of Ukraine of 24 September 2015. See: Website of the President of Ukraine – [president.gov.ua/documents/5552015-19443](http://president.gov.ua/documents/5552015-19443).

<sup>30</sup> Regarding military-technical cooperation (defence-industrial cooperation, selling of military and dual-use goods), it is important to take into account that the Russian government had taken a course to build a closed production cycle (including the acquisition of assets of Ukrainian companies) and import substitution in the defence sector long before the conflict and recent events only brought nearer and deepened the inevitable breach of defence industrial cooperation ties with Ukraine.

<sup>31</sup> An absurd situation has emerged in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, as in almost all the “frozen” conflicts in the former Soviet Union: Russia has – openly or covertly – the role of aggressor, mediator and guarantor of post-conflict security in them. Under these conditions, negotiations in any format with its participation are doomed to “freeze” the situation. An example of this is the negotiations not only in the Minsk or Normandy format, but also at the UN Security Council, where Russia hampers any constructive progress of the negotiations, as well as the search for a solution to the conflict.





Moreover, full implementation of certain provisions in the sequence provided in the Agreement is a direct threat to the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine, especially taking into account the differences in interpretation of the text by the stakeholders. At the same time, it is in the interests of Ukraine to do everything possible to demonstrate a responsible attitude to fulfilment of obligations. There should be a clearly defined borderline of compromise of the new arrangements to which the Ukrainian side is ready to go minding the long-term consequences for national security.

Adding to the negotiating agenda of such issues as constitutional reform, federalisation, the special status of certain regions of Ukraine, is an attempt at direct interference in Ukraine's domestic politics, an obstacle in the search for compromise solutions. Another reason for a slowdown in negotiations and fulfilment of the Minsk Agreements is the differences in interpretation of the text, in particular, of the sequence of events specified therein.

At the same time, the only "formal cause" of the conflict with the Russian Federation – "protecting the rights of compatriots/Russian speakers" – has been forgotten and left out of the negotiations. The key conflict which was a source and catalyst of conflict – the rivalry between the European and Eurasian integration projects – is rarely or never mentioned by the parties, as they try to delimit the global nature of the conflict by the margins of the Russian-Ukrainian relations.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, official Moscow insists on the exclusively internal Ukrainian nature of the conflict and, therefore, on its settlement by meeting the separatists' demands – the requirements set out by the Kremlin and aimed at achieving the objectives of the Kremlin.

**Under these conditions, no other model of settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, except for its "freezing", can be conceived.** At the same time, Ukraine must do everything possible to demonstrate a responsible attitude to fulfilment of obligations, vigorously defend its own national interests, initiate appropriate solutions to the conflict, taking into account not only Russian, but Ukrainian interests, Ukrainian independence and the European integration course it has selected.

In view of the flagrant violation of international law and bilateral treaties by the Russian Federation, **the official Kyiv should maintain maximum restraint and vigilance in accepting any initiatives of the Kremlin.** Recognising the urgent need for a cessation of hostilities (or at least a significant decrease in their intensity), Ukraine should not cross a certain edge in the search for consensus beyond which it could lose sovereignty and territorial integrity with a high degree of probability. This threshold is the legitimisation of DPR/LPR, including through the conduct of local elections outside the bounds of Ukrainian legislation without effective international control, as it threatens:

- massive infiltration of extremist elements and Russian agents in the rest of Ukraine, setting up centres of tension there, as a result of the post-election forced liquidation of control over the existing line of demarcation with the separatist formations;
- destabilisation of the situation in other regions of Ukraine due to placing requirements of a special procedure of local governance similar to that of DPR/LPR;<sup>33</sup>
- new, more dangerous escalation of the armed conflict because of the possible appeal of the "legally elected" power of DPR/LPR, endowed with special authority for military help to the President of the Russian Federation, for example, in case of "oppression and persecution of people due to the events that occurred in Donetsk and Luhansk regions".<sup>34</sup> Thus, the possibility of applying extended military capabilities (including aviation) towards Ukraine would be "legalised".

**Taking into account the possibility of the implementation of the above and "softer" scenarios<sup>35</sup> of the situation, Ukraine should take the following measures.**

- Using all possible means to restore control over the Russian-Ukrainian border with the involvement of international observers. The first step should be the expansion of the OSCE observation mission and other international organisations' missions in the border areas.
- Evaluation of the feasibility of changing the ATO to a format (mode) that complies with national and international legislation, especially normalisation of the status of prisoners of war (which remain both in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions and in the Russian Federation), the status of uncontrolled (occupied) territories and Crimea.
- **Raising the introduction of an international protectorate (peacekeeping missions) over the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions with international security institutions (UN Security Council, NATO, the EU), and implementation of the following programmes therein:**
  - disarmament, demobilisation (prosecution/amnesty/granting of pardon) and reintegration of former fighters to the society;
  - humanitarian de-mining;
  - provision of humanitarian assistance;
  - reconstruction of infrastructure and socio-economic activities;
  - enforcement of law;
  - preparation and conduct of elections and possibly of a regional referendum.

<sup>32</sup> However, it is no secret that the strategic goal of the Russian Federation is to weaken the role of the Euro-Atlantic community and the US in the emerging world order. This explains the links between conflicts involving Russia in Ukraine, Syria, increasing tension in the countries of the Balkans and Eastern Europe and efforts to strengthen its influence in Asia and the Middle East.

<sup>33</sup> The Law of Ukraine "On the Special Procedure of Local Governance in Some Areas of Donetsk and Luhansk Regions". See: website of the Verkhovna Rada – <http://zakon5.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1680-18>.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example: S.Shvetsov, Four scenarios of Ukraine's exit from the war in Donbas – Khvyliya, 6 February 2015 – <http://hvyliya.net/analytics/politics/chetyre-stsenariya-vyihoda-ukrainyi-iz-voyni-na-donbasse.html>; V.Horbulin. Five scenarios of the Ukrainian-Russian relations – Dzerkalo Tyzhnia, 19 June 2015, [http://gazeta.dt.ua/internal/p-yat-scenariyiv-dlya-ukrayino-rosiyskih-vidnosin-\\_html](http://gazeta.dt.ua/internal/p-yat-scenariyiv-dlya-ukrayino-rosiyskih-vidnosin-_html); Yu.Romanenko. Three scenarios for Ukraine to return Crimea and Donbas – Khvyliya, 27 August 2015, <http://hvyliya.net/analytics/politics/tri-stsenariya-kak-ukraina-mozhet-vernut-kryim-i-donbass.html>; the EU and the East in 2030. Four scenarios of development of relations between the EU, the Russian Federation, and the common neighbours – the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Berlin, 2014, <http://www.fes.de/cgi-bin/gbv.cgi?id=11146&ty=pdf>.

Similar programmes (with regard to specificity) should be implemented in the liberated territories.

- Taking precautions against new escalation of the armed conflict and its spread to other areas. Strengthening defence capabilities, increasing the effectiveness of intelligence and counter-intelligence, law enforcement, and anti-sabotage activities, providing help to patriotic movements to set up local self-defence forces (resistance movements) in all regions of Ukraine, especially in those sharing borders with the ATO zone.
- Considering the possible scenarios of restoration of territorial integrity, including the role of the force component, taking into account the inadmissibility of unilateral resumption of hostilities in the near future. At the same time, one should not exclude the option of a military operation to be performed in the shortest possible time and with minimum casualties. Favourable conditions (i.e. forced necessity in case of the threat of a humanitarian catastrophe) for its conduct may appear in the near future and Ukraine should have a detailed plan and relevant military and civilian capabilities to restore the constitutional order and normal life in the liberated territories.
- An extension of coordinated international efforts in economic, political, legal and military sectors should be sought, aimed at updating the issue of illegal annexation of Crimea, maintaining the position of Western countries regarding sanctions as a response to Russian aggression against Ukraine.
- Doing everything possible to preserve international support, consolidation of efforts of partner countries, strengthening external security guarantees for political, financial, and military support from the EU states and the North Atlantic Alliance.
- Active information of the Western partners about the need to give Ukraine lethal defence weapons as a precondition for the maintenance of the parity of military capabilities in the contact line (inability of the parties to the offensive actions, including in the event of additional “humanitarian convoys” from Russian *voentorg*), which, in turn, is a precondition for holding peaceful negotiations.
- Making every diplomatic effort in the framework of the UN Security Council and GA for Russia to be recognised as a party to the conflict.<sup>36</sup> This activity should be continued towards regimentation of the war status, recognition of the territories of the DPR/LPR as temporarily occupied territories with all the consequences arising out of international law.
- As the strengthening of the Euro-Atlantic integration for Ukraine is a strategic priority, and future NATO membership is seen as a guarantee of national security, Ukraine should focus on implementation of the NATO-Ukraine Annual National Programme, in particular, on the implementation of NATO standards (Standards Agreement, STANAG) on

the military-political, strategic, operational, and tactical levels of the security sector and the defence industry; on the intensification of *systemic* reforms in the security sector; on effective information support of the Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine. However, the excessive insistence of Ukraine on providing it with MAP is inappropriate – not in terms of provoking Russia (which is able to provoke itself), but because of the unwillingness of the Alliance member states to take this step (especially against the background of the low level of Ukraine’s implementation of the requirements of the Association Agreement with the EU).

- The activities of the national defence industry shall be focused on:
  - Taking precautions against new escalation of the armed conflict and its spread to meeting the needs and enhancing the operational capabilities of the Armed Forces and other legitimate military structures;
  - promotion of domestic products to foreign markets in order to obtain funds to increase the defence capability of the country and improve the image of Ukraine;
  - development of cooperation with foreign partners (in the format of bilateral cooperation, participation in joint programmes of NATO, EU, etc.) taking into account the need for recovery of the military-industrial technological base, as well as the risks of excessive military technical dependence on individual states.

**An essential condition for conflict resolution and successful disengagement of Ukraine thereof is ensuring the consolidation of Ukrainian society based on trust in the government, which is possible by increasing the effectiveness of the public policy in stabilisation of the situation and fulfilment of the announced reforms.**

## HUMANITARIAN AND INFORMATION SPHERE

Recent events in bilateral Ukrainian-Russian relations leave little doubt that Russia (at least while its current political regime exists) will continue humanitarian aggression against Ukraine both in its own and the Ukrainian information space as well as globally. It is also clear that even in the event of a ceasefire in eastern Ukraine, we should expect the main direction of Russia’s aggression to move in an information (psychological) war aimed at the destruction of Ukrainian society “from the inside” – through maximum deepening of its regionally localised mental differences. Russia will continue to actively promote the doctrine of the *Russian world* and legitimacy of “protecting compatriots” within Ukrainian territory in the Ukrainian cultural and information space.<sup>37</sup>

Therefore, when forming state policy towards Ukraine, Russia should realistically assess and take into account the situation in the information and socio-cultural space at this time.

<sup>36</sup> See: The Russian-Ukrainian Conflict: State, Consequences and Prospects. Analytical Report by the Razumkov Centre – National Security and Defence, 2014, No. 5–6, p. 32.

<sup>37</sup> One of the most recent confirmations of this is the article by Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, as of 1 November 2015. It states: “The provision of comprehensive support to the “Russian world” is an absolute foreign policy priority that is recorded in the Foreign Policy Concept”. Russia will continue to “vigorously defend the rights of compatriots using the whole arsenal of available means provided by international law”. See: S. Lavrov. Russian world on the path consolidation. – Rossiiskaya Gazeta, 1 November 2015, <http://www.rg.ru/2015/11/02/lavrov.html>.



**1. In Russia, a powerful propaganda machine was created** which encompasses TV and radio broadcasting, print and electronic media, film, theatre and publishing, concert, festival and exhibitions, youth subcultures and social Internet networks, various social and religious organisations. Currently, Russian propaganda has a foreign audience which has (according to various estimates) from 0.6 to 1 billion people; it is broadcast in more than 30 languages in 130 countries; the number of Russian foreign media outlets exceeds 3,000 publications. Russia spends about \$1.5 billion annually to maintain this machine.

The ideology that promotes its Russian propaganda can be briefly reduced to two theses: Russia is one of the world's great powers, because it is a civilisation that has, *first*, the right to its zone of privileged interests, including virtually all post-Soviet countries; *second*, it has a world-historical mission, to respond to the current humanitarian challenges by protecting and promoting "traditional values" as opposed to immoral "western tolerance". Russia is ready to assert these rights by force of arms.

**2. The aggressive information policy of Russia troubles Europe and the US.** Thus, in February 2015, the USA released an updated National Security Strategy, which, among other things, refers to the need to counteract "the misleading Russian propaganda". In March, the EU summit decided on the need to combat Russian disinformation campaigns; currently a group of experts from the EU Strategic Communications is working which deals with the development of methods and ways to improve the EU capabilities in responding to misinformation and promotion of policies within the EU Eastern Partnership.

In June 2015, the European Parliament adopted rather strict resolutions on Russia. In particular, the resolution "On the Relationship between the EU and Russia" recommends development of a new strategy for relations with Moscow and among specific measures: to increase the funding of projects "designed to counter Russian propaganda within and outside the EU".<sup>38</sup>

Currently, European countries, national and transnational media make practical steps in this direction, creating counter-propagandist channels and programmes and implementing the relevant joint projects.

**3. The Ukrainian government has long ignored the risks and threats created by their joint information (and to a large extent - cultural) space with Russia.**<sup>39</sup> It should be emphasized that the experts warned the Ukrainian authorities of these threats, in particular – the National Institute of Ukrainian-Russian relations at the National Security Council of Ukraine (abolished in April 2010).

Meanwhile, dozens of Russian and pro-Russian media freely worked in the national information space, the pro-Russian organisations of "compatriots" functioned in the Ukrainian territory, and the Russian diaspora was consolidated. From the early 2000s, since Putin came to power, the information and organisational penetration in Ukraine has become a well-managed process, and the

anti-Ukrainian campaign spread to the external space, where Ukraine, Ukrainian statehood, the processes in Ukrainian society were presented in the Kremlin's interpretation.

**4. Currently, Ukraine has taken certain measures to counter Russian information expansion both on its own territory and in the global information space.** Thus, in December 2014, the Ministry of Information Policy was set up (despite the criticism, establishment of the agency in wartime can be justified). This agency was entrusted, first of all, with two tasks: *first*, to ensure the restoration of Ukrainian broadcasting in Donbas and informing residents of the temporarily occupied Crimea.

*Second*, countering Russian propaganda in the information space of Ukraine and abroad. For this purpose, the Ministry was provided with a quite powerful media resource based on which it established the Ukrainian multimedia broadcasting platform. On 1 October 2015, UATV channel was *launched*, its programmes broadcast to over 30 countries in English, Tatar, Russian and Ukrainian languages.<sup>40</sup>

Without doubt the implementation of these measures should be welcomed, but they are somewhat situational, rather straightforward and they do not fully correspond to the scale of Russian expansion. Deploying broad and effective resistance on the overall humanitarian, socio-cultural field is impossible due to the lack of the **government humanitarian policy, and therefore, ideological, idea-driven support of information activities.**<sup>41</sup>

## Conceptual approaches

**1. When carrying out counter-propaganda activities, we should proceed from the fact that its addressee is the Russian community** which is currently massively infected by the Kremlin propaganda (including of an anti-Ukrainian kind), but is not entirely infected and not forever. However, the Russian people will forever remain neighbouring nations with Ukraine and the need to establish good relations with them should be kept in mind today.

**2. Modern information technologies make ineffective any prohibitions or distribution of information or any cultural products.** Therefore, the prohibitions, boycotts and sanctions during the war (even more so not just an information war) are necessary but not sufficient measures. The hostile mass information and socio-cultural expansion can be effectively confronted primarily through:

- formation of own historical, social memory and shared identity on the basis of consensus, development and promotion of their own view of the country's history and its place in the world, own pantheon of heroes, symbols and rituals – everything that actually represents the content of the humanitarian sector of the society;
- production and distribution of own true and compelling information products and own high quality and competitive cultural products.

<sup>38</sup> The European Parliament no longer considers Moscow as its strategic partner. – Kommersant, 11 June 2015, [www.kommersant.ru/doc/2745937](http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2745937).

<sup>39</sup> For more detail see, e.g. Ukraine – Russia: conceptual bases of humanitarian relations. – Kyiv: National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, National Institute of Ukrainian-Russian relations, 2001, pp.17–62. *Reference:* the Institute was abolished by Presidential Decree No. 471 as of 2 April 2010.

<sup>40</sup> For more detail on the implementation of the two tasks, see: Truth is the best counter-propaganda: analysis of MIP functioning for the first nine months of the activity, March–November 2015. – Ministry of Information Policy (MIP), Ukraine, 3 December 2015, [http://mip.gov.ua/files/Presentation/ninemonth\\_report\\_041%20\(11\).pdf](http://mip.gov.ua/files/Presentation/ninemonth_report_041%20(11).pdf).

<sup>41</sup> Despite the development of several projects of the relevant Concept, none received the status of state documents. In addition, all the projects were related to social rather than humanitarian policies.



However, having no clear Concept (strategy) of state humanitarian policy, the implementation of these ways (hence, an effective rebuff to Russian humanitarian and informational aggression) is impossible.

**3. The Ukrainian response to the Russian world should consist in establishing our own view of ourselves and the world, being truthful and convincing.** It is clear that the most compelling answer is genuinely to build a truly lawful, democratic, and social state in Ukraine. However, the socio-cultural and humanitarian component of the public policy – both domestic and foreign – is also effective.

Thus, the Ukrainian state social policy should also cover two areas:

- the domestic area, aimed, *first of all*, at comprehensive strengthening of the Ukrainian political nation, “unity and diversity” of the Ukrainian society; *second*, at the debunking of Russian myths, opposing the Russian propaganda and its neutralisation;
- and the foreign area, aimed, *first of all*, at the international audience to ensure Ukraine’s presence in the global information space, to create a positive image of the country, its history, culture and current social and political life; *second*, at the Russian audience, Ukrainian diaspora in Russia and Ukrainian residents in the temporarily occupied territories.

### Specific steps

**Acceleration of the drafting of the Concept of State Humanitarian Policy.** Conduct of the widest possible public debate and expertise, its further submission to the Parliament with a view of its adoption by Ukrainian Law. The project shall be prepared proceeding from the fact that the **humanitarian policy is not the same as the social policy**, but it concerns exclusively the production and promotion of ideas, meanings and values, of the national (civil, ethnic), cultural and religious identity, of the national system of rituals and symbols, historical memory and social mythology (in fact – the ideology of society).<sup>42</sup>

In preparing the draft, it is equally appropriate to take into account EU documents, relating, in particular, to intercultural dialogue in societies, international humanitarian relations, national and European identity.<sup>43</sup>

**Ensuring support – legal, diplomatic, tax, financial support – of the Ukrainian Cultural Industries** (cinema, publishing, translation, exhibition, touring activities, museum business, etc.) as a priority of the state policy. Simultaneously, the maximum diplomatic efforts shall be exerted for the participation of Ukraine (Ukrainian artists, performers, journalists) in international programmes and projects.

**Audit of higher educational establishments which train journalists, experts in history, cultural studies**

**and intercultural communication.**<sup>44</sup> Based on the need to develop a strong professional body of journalists in international relations, experts in history, culture and other experts, the introduction of the practice of state orders for quality training of specialists for government information agencies and TV companies (including foreign broadcasting), scientific and research institutions and institutions involved in the formation and implementation of humanitarian policy and humanitarian activities.

**For the professional development of journalists and humanities teachers, making the most of international academic exchange programmes.**<sup>45</sup> Development and implementation of the relevant state programme for teachers of the Ukrainian state institutions of higher education in reputable academic and/or research centres in Europe and other countries.

**Expanding the practice of cooperation, implementation of joint projects of the Ukrainian media with European media** (primarily Germany, Poland and the Baltic States). Taking practical steps to ensure participation of Ukrainian specialists in the EU expert group for strategic communications, other European and international structures that will deal with the countering of Russian propaganda.

**Intensification of contacts with the Ukrainian diaspora,**<sup>46</sup> especially in allied countries and strategic partners of Ukraine, as well as in Russia. Continuation and development of the practice initiated by the Forum of Ukrainian youth in the “Odesa-2015” diaspora, under which the issues of consolidation and coordination of the efforts of foreign Ukrainians are considered in order to counteract the information aggression of the Russian Federation, spreading the truth about Ukraine and maintaining its positive image in the global media space.

**Recommending the Ukrainian humanities, artists, writers and Ukrainian media, including foreign broadcasting, to make every effort to achieve the broadest coverage, promotion and documentation (including in art forms) of the present heroic experience of Ukrainian soldiers, volunteers and Ukrainian citizens who oppose Russian aggression.** In this opposition, the Ukrainian political nation improves its endurance. On the one hand, it debunks the myths about Ukraine spread by Russian propaganda, as “a failed state”, the Ukrainian language as “artificially created” and the Ukrainian citizens as “an integral part of the Russian people that got lost in the labyrinth of history”. On the other hand, new symbols, rituals, social myths, new meanings and meanings of individual and social life are being formed. This experience should form the basis of modern Ukraine’s state humanitarian policy.

<sup>42</sup> The ideological function of the media as promotion of values does not contradict EU documents. See in particular: the European Convention on Transfrontier Television – website of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/994\\_444](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/994_444).

<sup>43</sup> For example: White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue “Living together as equals in dignity”. All Different – All Equal. – Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Strasbourg, 7 May 2008 – Ukrainian version: [195.78.68.75/mcu/document/244962275/bila\\_knyga.doc](http://195.78.68.75/mcu/document/244962275/bila_knyga.doc).

<sup>44</sup> In particular, as of 2011, journalists were trained by 39 Ukrainian universities. At the same time, it was stated that educational institutions do not enroll even the licensed number of freshmen. See: So, how many schools of journalism are there in Ukraine? – 21 December 2012, <http://osvita.mediasapiens.ua>.

<sup>45</sup> For example, a joint scholarship programme of the German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst, DAAD) and Open Society Foundation (OSF) for graduates and young academics in the humanities, social and political sciences from the South Caucasus, Central Asia, Moldova and Ukraine.

<sup>46</sup> Ukraine has the fifth largest diaspora in the world – over 30 mln. people.



# UKRAINIAN AND RUSSIAN EXPERTS ON THE CURRENT STATE AND PROSPECTS OF KYIV-MOSCOW RELATIONS

This roundtable by correspondence, dedicated to problems and prospects of Russia-Ukraine relations, is essentially the continuation of experts' discussion, materials from which have been published in the National Security and Defence journal a year ago.<sup>1</sup> This time, the exchange of thoughts at a distance was between Ukrainian and Russian experts – representatives of government institutions, state and non-governmental research establishments.

Specialists in international issues were analysing the current state and the nature of Kyiv-Moscow relations, were determining the ways and prospects of resolution of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, defining the principles and approaches to shaping Russia-Ukraine relations. Interesting are also the predictions of round-table participants regarding the future of the bilateral relations.<sup>2</sup>

Clearly, positions of representatives of Russian and Ukrainian expert communities on a number of issues are different. This concerns the reasons and sources of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, "the Crimean issue", situation in the East of Ukraine, etc. For obvious reasons, Russian experts are more careful and reserved in their assessments and comments. At the same time, rather pessimistic predictions regarding Kyiv-Moscow relations noticeably dominate in statements of both sides.

Clearly, the Russia-Ukraine conflict will be of a long-term nature. First of all, due to huge human, material, territorial losses that Ukraine suffered. Deep alienation between citizens of both countries, which was caused by Russia's aggression, for a long time in the future will be the defining aspect in the atmosphere and character of relations between Kyiv and Moscow.

However, summarising discussion materials, it should be noted that despite the differences in assessments and approaches, there are certain points of contact. Experts stress the need for initiating a Russia-Ukraine dialogue in order to find common ground and address the key issues in the bilateral relations. Also highlighted is the importance of restoring contacts between the societies of both countries – experts, scientists, entrepreneurs, journalists.

This roundtable is only a small portion of the international discourse on the issues related to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. But its materials once again convince us that speaking about the prospects of Russia-Ukraine relations we need to see the goal – restoration of mutual trust between the societies of both countries, their interest in peaceful co-existence and respect to the path of civilizational development chosen by the neighbour.

## UKRAINIAN EXPERTS

### MINIMISE OR GET RID OF DEPENDENCE ON THE HOSTILE NEIGHBOURING STATE



**Valentyn BADRAK,**  
*Director of the Centre for Army,  
Conversion and Disarmament  
Studies*

#### – What are the ways and prospects for Russia-Ukraine conflict resolution?

Resolution of the military conflict, – to be more exact, resolution of the cynical and treacherous war against Ukraine started by Russia, – has to combine a number

of measures in defence, political, economic and informational planes. The general goal of these measures being to compel the Kremlin to abandon its intention of destroying Ukraine and consideration of Ukrainian territory a zone of its interests and influence. Unfortunately, **the current developments allow assuming that Kremlin intends to freeze the war in Eastern Ukraine** in order to have a possibility of permanent influence and prospects of using the military lever. I am convinced that in the nearest 1.5-2 years Ukraine will be living in conditions of permanent threat of war and subversion activities of Russia's special divisions or agents.

Although there is no military solution to the war yet, we should focus on army transformation (here and further – in the broad sense, i.e. Ukraine's military forces and other armed divisions of the country) into a real aggression deterring institute. In my opinion, this means developing the army based on professional staffing, training support (including the corresponding legal basis) mainly using the local budgets of territorial defence troops. Also, Ukraine's government and society need to agree with the idea of serious rearmament of the army.

<sup>1</sup> For more information, see: Ukrainian and foreign experts on Kyiv-Moscow relations. – National Security and Defence, 2014, No.5-6, p.40-57.

<sup>2</sup> Roundtable by correspondence of Ukrainian and Russian experts was held in September-October 2015.

**The army should be used to prepare the impregnable defence of the territory not occupied by Russia.**

Besides, taking into account that starting from 2015 Kremlin's strategy has shifted to the plane of international relations and informational-psychological operations with the purpose of undermining Ukraine from within, **there is a need to considerably strengthen intelligence, counterintelligence and organisations able to execute counteractions in the informational war and conduct informational-psychological operations.** Ukraine's counterintelligence regime should be strengthened and informational safety policy – considerably improved. The system of non-violent measures must ensure impossibility (minimisation of threat) of sabotage, terrorist acts, operation of anti-Ukrainian political movements, etc. **Particular attention should be paid to the work of Russian media editorial offices and Ukrainian media that featured anti-Ukrainian content.**

In the political plane, we should ensure presence of USA in negotiations on the settlement of war and its consequences. It is necessary to work on the political and diplomatic fronts with the purpose of getting the same status as Israel in the perception of the US administration (with the appropriate level of support). I think, it is necessary to raise the question of providing territory to house US military facilities (incl., US NMD elements) and relevant defence systems. This can be considered a safety lever against potential aggression of Russia's army or special mixed armed divisions prepared by the Kremlin.

It is important to note that the return of Ukrainian government to the occupied territories and participation in their economic life, as well as restoration of region's infrastructure, are possible for Ukraine only upon restoring total control over these territories and the border with the RF.

Although Western community generally showed consolidated support for Ukraine, stalling of domestic reforms becomes a threat to the dynamics of development of Ukraine's integration projects. **So the issue of reforms becomes one of the top priorities for the Ukrainian government, as here we are also talking about prolongation of sanctions introduced in regard to Russia.** Along with this, launching considerable in their scope and technological structure military and technical cooperation projects has to become another top priority. Their goals being the rearmament of Ukraine's army, involving Western countries in economic and technical cooperation and substitution of import of Russian components.

**– What are the principles, on which Ukraine has to build its relations with today's Russia?**

During the current war and in the absence of Russia's recognition of Ukraine as an independent state, **Ukraine's government has to do everything possible for Ukraine to get rid of (or minimise) its dependence on the hostile neighbouring state in strategic sectors.** This means, first of all, energy sector (including nuclear energy), military equipment and double-use equipment, highly-technological products and services. An important element is to introduce a special regime for Russia's media operation on the territory of Ukraine, taking into account that their major part supports Kremlin's efforts to undermine Ukraine's statehood.

I am convinced that it is also necessary to limit visits to Ukraine for politicians, civic activists, representatives of show business, academic or research organisations, and also media representatives, who allowed themselves anti-Ukrainian statements.

Overall, economic and cultural relations have to be limited till the end of the war (i.e., until Russia's troops are withdrawn from the occupied territories).

**– What will Kyiv-Moscow relations be like in the years ahead?**

In the coming years, given the mentality of Russians at present stage, relations will be strained. We are hardly to expect a speedy withdrawal of Russian troops from the occupied territories. So the Ukrainian authorities should accept the limited nature of contacts and relations as a fact. It is also important to support and develop in the society the idea of the impossibility of maintaining political, cultural, economic, informational relations with the aggressor country.

Russia has always been an important market for Ukraine. This is why Kremlin will first of all use investment and preferences to try to attract Ukrainian business – in order to create areas of influence. Analysis of post-2010 events shows the possibility of prospects of Moscow's attempts to improve or even harmonise relations with Kyiv. However, this approach would be extremely dangerous for the development of Ukrainian statehood. Thus, the government of Ukraine should take care to establish restrictions on economic relations between businesses. Moreover, the government itself should be the role model in this sense. It is very important that for the next decade Ukraine bans any projects meant to strengthen military or law enforcement potential of the RF.

In any case, every project proposed by Russia will have to come under close scrutiny through the prism of possible military aggression. ■

**IT IS IN UKRAINE'S INTEREST THAT RUSSIA EXISTS AS A STRONG DEMOCRATIC STATE**

**Andrii VESELOVSKYI,**  
Ambassador Extraordinary and  
Plenipotentiary of Ukraine

**– What are the ways and prospects for Russia-Ukraine conflict resolution?**

"Russia-Ukraine conflict" is not an adequate term. I would name this situation Russia's aggression. The change of name brings with it the change of question – when will Russia's aggression against Ukraine be over?

Unfortunately, the aggression will not be over, until the political structure of the Russian state is changed. Today, the Russian Federation is an old imperial



construction under new slogans. The country is governed by one person with a narrow circle of close people. Officially recognised churches – traditionally Moscow-ruled Orthodox Church, and now the tamed Muslim Muftiate – serve as an ideological cover. Citizens' peace is watched over by the non-transparent and repressive law enforcement system police-court-prosecution. For external use – the army that grows more aggressive with each day.

In order to keep balance, such state needs an external enemy. Ukraine is a perfect candidate from the point of view of a common Russian citizen: funny, chaotic, weak, delicious.

Ukraine is a perfect candidate from the point of view of the ruler: he gains 40 mln. people with a close language, religion, history. He gains colossal natural resources. Moves the European border further West by 1,000 (!) km in one leap and gains the Black Sea and the Trans-European Danube River.

Ukraine is an extremely successful project also in the geopolitical sense: all ex-republics grow silent, including the Baltic States, the neighbours start militarisation (which means, they grow economically weaker), the Balkans become nearer, Germany and France grow softer.

**Along with this, Russia also reaches the long-term strategic goal of its external policy: UKRAINE'S DE-UKRAINISATION. The absorbed population and territory will for some time have the right to have their own flag, anthem and wear embroidered shirts, with gradual cultural and ideological cleansing.**

So Russia will continue its aggression against Ukraine in all possible ways, from military to economic, ideological, foreign policy, language, religious, international-legal, financial, etc.

The prospect of suspension of aggression is real either in case of extreme weakening of the current Russian regime and its complete immersion in the internal affairs in order to save itself, or if the regime changes to such that has democratic features (Russia has yet a long way to go to genuine democracy).

**– What are the principles, on which Ukraine has to build its relations with today's Russia?**

Until the situation in the RF changes, Ukraine has to take care of its defence system and reforms in the most composed and organised manner. The earlier is done only partially, for example, the pace of military equipment modernisation is unacceptably slow, while the latter is practically not done at all.

The current state of relations with the RF allows to improve the first one and implement the second, so it obviously should be maintained and improved. **I mean a gradual decrease of trade and economic relations, stage by stage cancelling of contractual and legal relations (not only with Russia, but also with those countries that follow its lead), introduction of a visa regime, proper substitution of audio- and video-products produced in Russia. I mean transition to NATO standards in military equipment, EU standards and regulations in goods and services, MANDATORY exit from the Russian-language Internet plane and transition to Ukrainian-language products, a deep ideological reform of the content of education.**

However, such actions as restricting air travel and other forms of transport or communication are hardly productive. Academic and family contacts are not to be restricted.

These, essentially, are the proposed ways. The prospects are much worse. An outburst of criminal populism of a number of parliamentary factions and newly created pseudo-parties and associations is a threat not only to realisation of these tasks, but also to maintaining the existing delicate balance in the society. It can destroy the hopes for economic growth, this basis for Ukraine's positive scenario.

**– What will Kyiv-Moscow relations be like in the years ahead?**

There is no sense repeating this mantra about the need for the relationship of equality, non-interference in internal affairs, respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty. The modern RF does not recognise these principles in regard to Ukraine, the leaders of which it keeps calling a junta, the people – a subspecies of the “great Russian nation”, armed forces – gangs, and ideological principles – fascist *banderian*.

Ukrainian society should in all cases seek to eliminate these phrases from the vocabulary of RF representatives and local media, and in the future – to have an official apology to the leaders of Ukraine and its people. **Apologies, also being repentance, are the essential condition for changing the existing bilateral relations to normal interstate relations.** Through apologies came to democracy and international recognition former aggressors – Japan, Germany, Italy, USA, etc.

For the period until this happens, Ukraine should build its relations with Russia in the diplomatic and international context using the EU and USA examples, in the military/defence context – the NATO example.

**Along with this, it is important to realise that it is in Ukraine's interest that Russia exists as a strong democratic state – an important factor of power, cultural influence and economic player in Europe and Eurasia.** ■

#### STRENGTHEN TIES WITH THE PART OF RUSSIAN SOCIETY THAT UNDERSTANDS THAT UKRAINE IS NOT RUSSIA



**Kostiantyn KONONENKO,**  
Deputy Director of  
the National Institute  
for Strategic Studies, Ukraine

**– What are the ways and prospects for Russia-Ukraine conflict resolution?**

Speaking about the prospects of resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict, we must bear in mind the indivisibility of resolving the conflict in Donbas, where the involvement of Russian authorities in stirring it up is undeniable, and the return under Ukrainian control of Crimea illegally annexed by Russia.

Regarding the armed conflict in Donbas, Russia has to unconditionally fulfil its commitments undertaken in the framework of Minsk Agreements on reintegration of occupied territories into the Ukrainian territory. This





means ensuring lasting and stable ceasefire, immediate release of all hostages and prisoners, regaining control of the state border and withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine of all illegal armed groups, military equipment and mercenaries. Fulfilling these requirements could create conditions for the beginning of a constructive phase in the Russia-Ukraine confrontation settlement.

At the same time, these steps could be just the first prerequisite for restoring good neighbourly relations with Russia. The second condition is Russia's actions regarding the restoration of the status quo of Crimea's affiliation.

Even assuming that Moscow ensures the implementation of Minsk Agreements in full, and the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts are returned to Ukraine, today the likelihood of Russia agreeing to review the affiliation of Crimea for the benefit of Ukraine is practically zero. Therefore, today the talks about the existence of prospects for complete settlement of Russia-Ukraine issues are premature.

Moreover, we must take into consideration that the use of generally accepted in the civilised world, traditional diplomatic tools in the Russia-Ukraine relations is problematic due to Russia's impertinent position which, on the one hand, denies any involvement in supporting terrorist groups on the territory of Ukraine, and on the other – uses every opportunity and format (including OSCE) to exert pressure on Ukraine and constantly interfere with its internal affairs.

The primary task of Ukrainian foreign policy in regard to Russia should be to maintain and enhance cooperation with international organisations, governments, parliaments, NGOs, movements and parties of countries that have condemned Russia's actions and exert corresponding pressure on Moscow. The multilateral and bilateral international sanctions introduced against Russia have to increase. They have to be kept in place even besides Minsk Agreements – until complete territorial integrity of Ukraine is restored: **until Crimea is returned to Ukraine, sanctions cannot be lifted.**

In this situation we need an urgent review of all legal international and political mechanisms that regulate strategic partnership between Ukraine and Russia, with the exception of those, where Russia recognises the legitimacy of Ukraine's state borders, and also those that contain grounds for formulating legal assessments

*for future lawsuits against Russia in international courts with the purpose of reimbursing economic, financial and other losses incurred by Ukraine.*

Based on recent developments, we should expect further deterioration of relations between Ukraine and Russia, which will be increasingly affecting the economic sphere. The last remaining economic ties will be disappearing, even those that were purely pragmatic. Discontinued air travel between the two countries and cancellation of cooperation in nuclear energy sector are the latest important occurrences along this line. Moreover, in the societies of both countries there is a public demand for governments' actions in this direction, as the Russia-Ukraine conflict has almost destroyed the moral and psychological sentiments about preserving close ties between the two nations. Such mind-sets will be actively used by various political forces in their rhetoric, especially during election campaigns, which will be bringing the relations between Ukraine and Russia even to a deeper standstill.

**– What are the principles, on which Ukraine has to build its relations with today's Russia?**

The Russian Federation is directly responsible for the deaths of thousands of Ukrainian citizens: soldiers, volunteers, civilians, including children. Russia has committed war crimes with no statute of limitations. This fact is the most tragic aspect in modern Russia-Ukraine relations, which has driven away the concept of "brotherhood" from our relations for decades.

Ukraine has every reason to state that Russia violated all existing bilateral agreements, first of all, in the security segment, starting from the 1997 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Today Russia puts forward a number of demands for Ukraine to change its internal political system, preserve the non-alignment status with the refusal to join NATO, and also exerts pressure on Ukraine to prevent its economic integration in the European space.

In the legal political plane, remarkable is Russia's demonstrative ignoring of bilateral agreements and international law concerning Ukrainian pilot Nadiya Savchenko<sup>3</sup>, who has dual diplomatic immunity as a Member of the Verkhovna Rada and a member of Ukraine's Permanent Delegation to PACE.

**Normalisation of relations between Ukraine and the Russian Federation and bringing them to a qualitatively new level of development based on fundamentally different regulatory framework are possible only upon restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity, respect for the inviolability of its borders and Russia ceasing its sabotage and other subversive activities against Ukraine.**

The foundation for complete restoration of peace, mutual understanding and mutually beneficial cooperation between Ukraine and Russia has to be Russia's giving up of the seized territories in their entirety, full compensation of material and financial losses and lost

<sup>3</sup> Nadiya Savchenko (1981) – servicewoman of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Lieutenant. In 2014 actively participated in fighting in the volunteer battalion "Aydar" in the Eastern Ukraine. In June, 2014 was captured by militants of the so-called "LPR". In early July 2014 was forcibly moved to Russia, where she was imprisoned (still in prison) on the fictional charged with murder of Russian journalists, later in early 2015 against N.Savchenko prosecuted for illegal cross the border of Russia. During stay in the Russian prison N.Savchenko announced a hunger strike twice, but stopped it because of her critical state of health. N.Savchenko, while in prison, became people's deputy of Ukraine VIII convocation (All-Ukrainian Union "Batkivshchyna") and delegate to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. – Ed.



profit of the state of Ukraine, its citizens and legal entities, offering apologies for the actions committed against Ukraine and the international community. Unfortunately, given the authoritarian and aggressive nature of Russia's current leadership, its intention to continue its hostility against Ukraine's European choice and democratic development, there is no reason to hope for this in the nearest future.

At the same time, we must realise that it is impossible to resolve the crisis in Russia-Ukraine relations without the good will of the Russian Federation and against its consent. This can only happen with Russia's participation. Thus, the Ukrainian government, regardless of its foreign policy preferences, will have to work with the current Russian government and its leaders.

**In the present situation, the most realistic platform for further development of Russia-Ukraine relations appears to be the principle of peaceful co-existence based on pragmatic approach to each individual issue in bilateral relations.**

*– What will Kyiv-Moscow relations be like in the years ahead?*

The consequence of Russia's aggressive policy towards Ukraine is the destruction of the entire legal and contractual basis of Russia-Ukraine relations, which are currently limited to situational negotiations on the developments in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

Today's Russia-Ukraine relations are defined, in particular, by full-scale propagandist and psychological war waged by Russia against Ukraine, against the honour and dignity of the Ukrainian nation, its glorious history including the Revolution of Dignity. Massive anti-Ukrainian propaganda that does not shy away from cynical provocations, outright lies and concealed zombification, as sad as it is, has certain consequences in the form of anti-Ukrainian attitude in the overwhelming majority of Russians and a large part of residents in the occupied areas of Donbas.

Thus, we can conclude, that today's Russia-Ukraine relations have hit the lowest point in the entire history of relations between the two countries, and due to Russia's actions have been brought to a deadlock.

At the same time, in the system of economic interaction between Ukraine and Russia there are still "points of contact" important for the development of both countries. First of all, this concerns energy trade and transit, cooperation in infrastructure projects and transport schemes. These areas could become the basis for pragmatic search of a compromise in the peaceful future. However, even here, lately the cooperation is being actively reduced. Being aware that it remains a big market for Ukrainian mechanical engineering, metallurgy, chemical and agricultural products, Russia is trying to substitute the imports of Ukrainian products in order to inflict economic damage on our state.

On the other hand, under certain conditions and upon Russia ceasing its aggressive anti-Ukrainian policy, geographical, economic and humanitarian neighbourhood of Ukraine and Russia could contribute to continuation and resuming of bilateral relations between the two countries in many areas. In particular, this includes:

- organisation of cooperation on land and sea borders in areas outside ATO territory, with gradual spreading of cooperation to include the ATO area;

- restoring cooperation in economy, trade, customs, social, educational, scientific areas;
- review of bilateral and multilateral (CIS) agreements, their corresponding modification;
- strengthened cooperation on protection of human rights, children's rights, in humanitarian issues;
- restoring inter-parliamentary contacts with emphasis on trade-economic and humanitarian components.

**Restoring contacts between businesses, joint search for compromise in trade and economic relations between Ukraine and Russia will strengthen peace and help restore mutual trust. We need to use all humanitarian opportunities to strengthen ties with the part of Russian society that understands that Ukraine is not Russia. The fundamental support of Ukraine by the best representatives of Russia's intellectuals and ordinary citizens leaves hope for the future of Russia-Ukraine relations.** ■

#### RESOLUTION OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT WILL BE HAPPENING AS PART OF ESTABLISHING A NEW WORLD ORDER



**Oleksandr LYTVYVENKO,**  
Deputy Secretary of  
the National Security and  
Defence Council of Ukraine

*– What are the ways and prospects for Russia-Ukraine conflict resolution?*

Russia-Ukraine conflict is a manifestation of the crisis of the world order generally established after the Cold War, and formalised in Europe in 1975 Helsinki Final Act and the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe. Accordingly, this crisis should be viewed in the overall context, along with the events in the Middle East, the growing tensions in Central Asia and the Far East.

Russia, as a revanchist state, seeks to rewrite the international game rules, especially in Europe, in its favour, – and the conflict with Ukraine is only one, albeit very important, element in the overall Russian strategy. **This is why the probability of final resolution of this conflict outside the general European and wider – the global context, should not be expected to be very real.**

Moreover, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has a pronounced value-based component. The ruling groups and, more importantly, wide social circles of the Russian Federation only declare recognition of state sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, while in fact, they consider the independence of our state a transient "unfortunate historical mistake", the result of "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century".

**Obviously, the issues of independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine are not a subject for negotiation.** Nor can there be a discussion on the freedom of choice with the openly authoritarian regime of Vladimir Putin.

This does not deny the necessity and usefulness of multilateral efforts, especially in Normandy format, to resolve the conflict. Especially important is the Minsk Process that has high positive potential. At the same time, we need to clearly understand that at this stage, the result of any negotiations can be only de-escalation and localisation of the conflict, and not its final resolution. It should be emphasised that achieving such results that allow to save human lives and gain time, which can be used to develop defence and security capabilities, is a key area of foreign policy.

Ukraine must accurately fulfil the obligations it has undertaken, including those in domestic policy. Doing this, we should fully consider the existing international context, including the fact that despite the generally strong support of the Western countries for Ukraine's struggle for freedom and independence, there are influential circles in Europe, whose priority is to reach an understanding with the Kremlin, including at the expense of Ukraine.

Along with diplomatic efforts, Ukraine must base its actions on the need for accelerated development of its defence and security capabilities. An absolute priority is to conduct a profound defence reform, strengthen the capacity of intelligence and counterintelligence. According to the National Security Strategy and the Military Doctrine of Ukraine approved by the President of Ukraine in May and September 2015, respectively, we need to develop an effective security and defence sector in Ukraine.

**Achieving realisation of these ambitious plans is impossible without overall consolidation of society, ensuring domestic political stability based on improved efficiency of national economy and public administration. In this context, the top priority should be to restore trust in society.**

**– What are the principles, on which Ukraine has to build its relations with today's Russia?**

Relations between Ukraine and Russia, both now and in the future, should be based on strict adherence to the norms and principles of international law, existing bilateral agreements, as well as respect for state sovereignty and territorial integrity of both countries, and non-interference in internal affairs. Let us remind ourselves, that international agreements, under which Russia recognised and pledged to respect state sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and maintain good neighbourly relations, are still valid.

Reaching completely positive dynamics in relations with Russia will be possible after the end of military aggression in Eastern Ukraine, as well as when Russia puts a stop to providing military, political and economic support to separatist groups in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

**At the same time, full normalisation of bilateral relations and re-establishing them on the level of good neighbourly relations will become possible only after Russia's withdrawal from the Crimean peninsula and complete restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity.**

A prerequisite for this is true recognition by Russian Federation leaders and society of Ukraine's independence, abandoning the imperial myth that Ukrainians and Russians are the same nation. It is the awareness of

the otherness of our people that should become the basis for establishing truly good neighbourly relations between the two countries, a prerequisite and starting point for future mutually beneficial solutions. Interests can be up for discussion, not values.

**– What will Kyiv-Moscow relations be like in the years ahead?**

Ukraine's relations with Russia have entered into a long-term crisis, upon any result of which, there will be a profound reformatting of East-European space. Let me explain this statement. As we know, any state as a subject of international relations is characterised by state sovereignty, independence and autonomy.

Ukrainian Soviet Social Republic had fictitious sovereignty since the time of its creation, but this term got real value in 1991 after the declaration of Ukraine's independence. Thus, since December 1991, Ukraine had its state sovereignty and independence, but was not completely autonomous from Russia.

Today, Ukraine is gaining real autonomy from Russia. Only in the last two years, circulation of goods decreased almost four times, while the import of energy products from the RF dropped almost five times.

More importantly, the long-term process of separation of the two communities has drastically accelerated. This separation is dramatic and sometimes even tragic. Social ties are being destroyed. Some idea of the intensity of these processes is seen from statistics on border crossings between Ukraine and Russia. The dynamics is significant: in 2012, the border was crossed by 29,685 thousand people, in 2013 – 30,438 thousand people, and in 2014 – already 13,974 thousand people, in the eight months of 2015 – 7,617 thousand. Thus, compared to 2013, travel frequency from Ukraine to Russia decreased three-fold.

The consequences of this will be apparent only later.

Similar tendencies are also observed in cultural and information fields, although the processes in these areas are not completely apparent yet.

The mythology of brotherhood that for the past 80 years has been defining the official rhetoric on both sides is ruined. The new idea of the desirable bilateral relations is just developing. What this idea will be, it is rather hard to say now. However, already today it is possible to predict that in the coming years the relations will be unstable, more likely quite cool, if not confrontational.

And even though now the intensity of fighting has significantly decreased, we cannot rule out new outbreaks of violence and even substantial expansion of the conflict scale. We should realise that bilateral relations between Russia and Ukraine do not develop in a vacuum. Their dynamics is strongly influenced by general European and even global factors.

It should once again be noted that the Russia-Ukraine conflict is just one manifestation of the crisis of the world order. Thus, the full **settlement of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and therefore, complete normalisation of bilateral relations and the beginning of their upward development will very likely happen already in the framework of establishing a new world order.** ■





## WE NEED POLITICAL WILL AND COURAGE TO IMPLEMENT ACTIVE POLICIES IN REGARD TO RUSSIA



**Volodymyr OHRYZKO,**  
*Former Minister of Foreign  
Affairs of Ukraine*

### – What are the ways and prospects for Russia-Ukraine conflict resolution?

We need to clarify the terms. I believe that there is no conflict between Ukraine and Russia. What there is, is the obvious aggression of the latter against Ukraine. It resulted in annexation of Ukrainian Crimea (we have yet to figure out, who on the Ukrainian side is responsible for this) and occupation of a part of territory in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

These are, so to speak, the starting points. They have to be defined precisely, otherwise, we will be viewing the situation not as it is in reality, but as we imagine it. Clearly, under such circumstances, it is impossible to make adequate decisions.

So, Russia is an aggressor, which has been recognised by the international community that gave 100 votes in support of the well-known UN General Assembly resolution. On the other hand, there is the victim of aggression – Ukraine. There is a country – Russia, which has grossly violated all possible rules of international law and its own obligations, both international and bilateral, and there is a country – Ukraine, which calls for the international community to restore justice and, therefore, restore faith in the power of law, instead of the law of power.

This is why Ukraine insists on the political and diplomatic resolution of the problem created by Russia, being aware that at least at this stage, no purely military solution to the problem exists. While, by the way, there is also no purely political and diplomatic solution, either. Thus, we can only talk about a certain combination of efforts. I mean two components: first of all, increasing military capabilities of Ukraine's Armed Forces to such level, when any attempt to test their capacity will cost the Russian aggressor a lot. For this, we have all the necessary possibilities: both domestic and external. It is important to formulate a strategy to achieve this goal and develop a corresponding action plan.

Another component is external. In my opinion, we should make every effort to ensure that an anti-Putin coalition is formed in the world. **A coordinated policy of political pressure and strengthened economic sanctions against Russia should be a priority in relations with this country, until it resumes civilised behaviour.** Under no circumstances can we allow polarisation among European countries and a threat to trans-Atlantic solidarity. In this process, Ukraine can play a stimulating

and consolidating role. An important aspect of the external component is clear positioning of our country as such that has defined its worldview and foreign policy priorities: EU and NATO membership, instead of schizophrenic tearing between the West and Moscow.

By ensuring a combination of these two factors, I think we can achieve such level of pressure on Russia, that continuation of its aggressive policy will not only become disadvantageous, but threatening to the very existence of the regime. Only then will there be a possibility of overcoming the consequences of the Russian aggression: return of the annexed Crimea and occupied areas of Donbas. Russia understands only the language of force and coercion. Regrettably.

### – What are the principles, on which Ukraine has to build its relations with today's Russia?

I have always believed and still do that if a country engages in war and trade simultaneously, it sends signals to its own society and the outside world, which only postpone resolution of the problem. While continuing to maintain diplomatic relations with the aggressor, calling what is happening in the East the "ATO", we are just confirming that this is a "domestic conflict", or as the Moscow propaganda is happy to state – "a civil war in Ukraine". Continuing to provide the occupied territories with food, electricity, water, we do not only confirm the above mentioned, but also stimulate internal corruption related to smuggling, illegal movement of goods across the demarcation line, etc.

So we have to make up our mind. In my opinion, after the important decisions of the Verkhovna Rada concerning qualifying Russia as the aggressor country, we must take a clear and unequivocal stand regarding political, economic and international consequences of this step. We cannot maintain diplomatic relations with the aggressor, we cannot continue to uphold our side of existing bilateral agreements with Russia, which define it as our strategic partner, we cannot pretend that our participation in CIS bodies has to remain unchanged, we cannot provide the occupied territories with materials vital for them, etc.

What is left then? We can tell our own society and the international community the truth and act accordingly. True, this will mean problems, first of all, economic ones. But the society will understand and support it, if it sees a clear strategy. We can only talk about energy independence from Russia, or make quick and specific steps to bring it closer. We can talk about dependence on the Russian market, or can help Ukrainian exporters enter the huge European market. We can ignore the activities of Russian entities in our country (including those with distinct criminal overtones), or we can show them the door.

Thus, **we need political will and courage to implement active policies in regard to Russia.** We need to impose our agenda on Russia, instead of always being the one who has to catch up with events led by the opponent. I do not see other modalities of relations with Russia, at least until the period, when it returns to the status quo, i.e. to the day before its aggression in Crimea. Only after complete withdrawal of Russian invaders from the Ukrainian territory, only after Russia recovers damages caused to Ukraine, only after those guilty of horrific crimes against Ukrainian citizens are brought to justice, – can

we talk about starting a long and difficult process of restoring at least some relations with this country. I am afraid, this process will take decades.

– *What will Kyiv-Moscow relations be like in the years ahead?*

Essentially, I have already answered this question. But I would like to add something. It is Ukraine that can become Russia's life ring, or, excuse my undiplomatic candour, the gravedigger for Russia's statehood in its current form. What do I mean? Today's Ukraine is probably Russia's last chance to turn its face towards civilization, towards Europe. This is the last carriage of the train going towards those values that lie in the foundation of the democratic, social, governed by law, and generally speaking, – successful world. Yes, it has many flaws, but through the internal mechanisms of self-preservation and self-development, it successfully changes for the better and finds the right answers to the challenges it faces. Ukrainians, as no one else in Europe, are a convincing example for Russians. Because according to their political mythology, we are "one nation". We shall forgive them their educational and cultural ignorance. But having in front of them the example of successful and friendly Ukraine, Russians will at least see an example of transformation from the post-Soviet criminal and corrupt system to a democratic one, and will retain the direction of their development towards it.

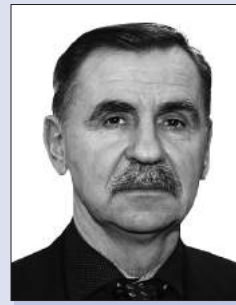
On the other hand, having permanently burnt the bridges of normal relations with Ukraine, they will find themselves in another civilizational space, which due to many factors, primarily economic and demographic, will ultimately devour them. This is Russia's medium-term perspective, if it chooses the Asian vector of development.

Ukraine, being a member of the EU and NATO, and hostile to Russia, will become an insurmountable barrier even for its potential reconciliation with the West, which will give Russia its final push into the arms of a powerful Far East neighbour. Russia's weak economy and its isolation from Western know-hows and investments will leave it no chance. Nor can we forget the huge economic, national and mental heterogeneity and diversity of the Russian society. Increased influence of the Eastern factor on the course of Russia's domestic events will instantaneously alter the focus on the regional level, which will be a real threat to preservation of Russia's integrity in its current political and geographical form. Therefore, the return to positive relations with Ukraine is vitally important for Russia. Unfortunately, today, people in Moscow still dream the theories of the century before last. This is a path of self-destruction. Moreover, a rather quick one. But it seems that the people in Kremlin simply do not understand it.

**The sooner Ukraine becomes a part of Western political, military, economic space, i.e. becomes a member of the EU and NATO, the faster will Russian society have to make its fundamental decision.** In this way Ukraine can throw Russia its last life ring, which Russia can use, instead of disappearing from political reality. This would be in everyone's best interest. Foremost this is of Russians.

The only question is whether they will want to use this chance. ■

## CHANGE THE STRATEGY OF COUNTERMEASURES IN REACTION TO RUSSIA'S POLICY



**Hryhorii PEREPELYTSIA,**  
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of International Relations  
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National University of Kyiv,  
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Policy Institute

– *What are the ways and prospects for Russia-Ukraine conflict resolution?*

The main scenario, according to the international community of the EU, the USA and NATO, is a reaching a compromise with Russia and freezing the conflict in Donbas. However, neither Ukraine, nor the EU are able to "freeze" such a conflict. *Firstly*, such scenario does not satisfy either Russia or Ukraine, as neither party is able to gain what it wants. In this scenario, Ukraine loses its territorial integrity, sovereignty over Crimea and Donbas, a significant share of its industrial and economic potential (about 20%), 12% of the territory and 7 mln. people. It loses over 400 km of state border on land (without the sea border), and instead gains internal instability and a permanent external threat. This situation will keep Ukraine in the "grey area" and in the sphere of Russia's domination, as well as permanent military threat on the part of Russia. Further, such situation could lead to the destruction of Ukraine's statehood.

For Russia, the scenario of a frozen conflict in Donbas allows to realise its local interests, but does not allow to reach the objectives of the hybrid war on the regional (East-European) and global levels. And this means Russia's defeat in the global standoff with the West and the replay of disintegration processes of the 1990s and degradation of Russia's political regime.

For the EU and the USA, freezing the conflict seems to be the only possible way of avoiding confrontation with Russia and returning to the old formula of strategic partnership with it. However, the frozen conflict in Donbas does not remove the global inter-civilizational geopolitical controversy between Russia and the West. **Even if the conflict in Donbas is frozen for a while, it will occur in another place on the line of confrontation between Russia and the West.** Such place can be Moldova, the Baltic States or even Greece. Confrontation will inevitably occur in other strategic areas.

*Secondly*, a hybrid war as a special form of asymmetric conflict, has slightly different nature than typical conventional conflicts characteristic of late 20th – early 21st century. A hybrid war has no clear boundaries of its beginning and end, as it is a combination of both external (international) and internal conflicts. In this situation, a hybrid war can turn to a hybrid peace and vice versa, but the peace is fragile, and the war – ever-changing. The only stable thing in this combination of war and peace is the situation of chaos. A hybrid



war takes place in many spheres. This means that peace-making or reaching a consensus in one sphere will bring the confrontation to another one, which also makes the total resolution of the conflict impossible.

The main object of Russia's hybrid war are values, regarding which it is virtually impossible to reach a compromise, and therefore such conflicts cannot be settled. Traditional peacekeeping strategies, to which the UN, NATO, EU and OSCE resort, are ineffective in the situation of hybrid war.

**The way out of this situation is for Ukraine and the international community to change their strategy of countermeasures in reaction to Russia's policy.** The current strategy employed by the EU, USA and Ukraine cannot be effective, as it aims to return Russia to conditions of post-bipolar world, and preserve the place designated for it in the structure of the post-bipolar international relations system.

**– What are the principles, on which Ukraine has to build its relations with today's Russia?**

The principles of peaceful co-existence in the situation of a hybrid war.

**– What will Kyiv-Moscow relations be like in the years ahead?**

**The Russia-Ukraine conflict will continue in the stage of low escalation, which will combine integration and disintegration processes.** Based on this, it is safe to say that this conflict will be the basis of a rather long process of disintegration of bilateral relations between Ukraine and Russia in all fields. The deepest disintegration will occur in defence industry and military-technical cooperation, despite the common industrial base with the Russian defence industry complex, and therefore – common types of armaments. Equally profound disintegration should be also expected in the sphere of military-political and foreign policy relations.

Such disintegration in Russia-Ukraine relations will cause disintegration processes in Russia's integration associations, such as the Customs Union, CSTO, and CIS. Although the new government had no definite stand on Ukraine's membership in the CIS, this objective disintegration trend has led to Ukraine's withdrawal from the organisation, which will subsequently lose its viability. The result of the war between Russia and Ukraine will be the second wave of disintegration.

However, it is much more important to find out how these integration and disintegration influences of the Russia-Ukraine war will affect the geopolitical positioning of Ukraine, its military-political and foreign policy course. Intensity and character of these changes will be determined by the results of the war itself. And yet, already now, under the influence of the conflict, significant geopolitical shifts are observed in Ukraine's choice of these geopolitical vectors. Thus, under the influence of Russia's military aggression Ukraine renounced its non-aligned status, however, it did not go further than the status. Ukraine signed and ratified the Association Agreement with the EU, although it is not in a hurry to implement it. Nevertheless, such decisions already lay the foundation for Ukraine's movement towards European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

However, this movement can be stopped in case of freezing the conflict in Donbas according to implementation of Minsk Agreements in line with

Putin's scenario. According to it, as a compromise, Ukraine will be permanently denied future membership in NATO and the EU. Russia and the West can impose on Ukraine the so-called non-aligned status again, with the presence of the Russian military on the Ukrainian territory. Implementation of this scenario of conflict settlement in Donbas will block any prospect of European integration for Ukraine and will turn it into **Russia's satellite** with further loss of state sovereignty.

**Equitable relations** with Russia can only be established in the situation of its disintegration. Disintegration of Russia brings Ukraine closer to peace. To what extent can the Russia-Ukraine war detonate this process in Russia? In the current format, i.e. in the situation of a hybrid war, a military conflict of low intensity, this influence is rather weak. And thus, cannot cause strong disintegration processes in Russia. But this influence can be significantly intensified, if Russia is defeated in this war, and if it suffers great human and economic losses as a result of this defeat. Russia can suffer such losses if the war turns into a long-term conflict similar to Afghanistan, when the Russian society is overpowered by the weariness from the war. Yet, realisation of Minsk Agreements makes this prospect impossible. ■

#### SO FAR, THERE ARE NO PREREQUISITES FOR FUNDAMENTAL RESOLUTION OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT



**Oleksandr SUSHKO,**  
Director of the Institute  
for Euro-Atlantic Cooperation

**– What are the ways and prospects for Russia-Ukraine conflict resolution?**

On its surface, the Russia-Ukraine conflict consists of two components: Crimea and Donbas. Crimea was occupied and annexed, Donbas is currently only occupied, with uncertain prospects of negotiations in the framework of Minsk Agreements. However, the causes of the conflict are not territorial and are not exclusively tied to conflict areas. They lie much deeper and are related to mental unpreparedness of today's Russia (or at least the Russian ruling elite) to recognise Ukraine's right to its own historical path, an independent subjectivity.

The conflict noticeably intensified between 2013 and 2014, when Vladimir Putin rejected the previous mandatory political correctness and declared Ukrainians and Russians to be "one nation", based on the long-forgotten imperialistic ideological legacy of the 19th century. Since then, he has been repeating this thesis as a mantra almost in each of his statements concerning Ukraine. **The "one nation" concept, which is a potential justification for complete annexation of Ukraine, has turned the Russia-Ukraine conflict into an existentialistic one for the Ukrainian side – such that concerns Ukrainians' survival as a community, which**



**has the right to its own existence, to non-dissolution in the “one nation”.** Ukraine is struggling to survive as an independent entity, Russia wants to dissolve it in itself as a “historical mistake”, and does not exclude the possibility of using force in order to coerce Ukraine to “fraternal unity”.

So far, there are no prerequisites for fundamental resolution of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, due to above mentioned conceptual circumstances. The depth of the existing antagonism does not allow to predict the parameters of stable and lasting resolution. At this point, we can only speak of temporary solutions, which will make it possible to establish a stable truce in Donbas, and to try to solve the humanitarian issues of people in the conflict area. But this applies only to Donbas, while regarding Crimea, so far, there is not even a prospect of possible negotiations to settle the issue.

In the issue of Donbas, parties have to move in the framework of the tripartite contact group towards creating preconditions, which in the future could lead to the next stage of settlement. Such preconditions include demilitarisation, disarmament of illegal units, restoring political and civil rights and freedoms on the entire territory that Ukraine considers occupied. Obviously, this path will mean gradual dismantling of the DPR-LPR regimes, therefore, the Russian side will do everything possible to avoid this, trying to “sell” Ukraine its rightful territory under the terms of integration into Ukraine’s political body of separatist leaders appointed by Russia, which will eventually lead to the destruction of the Ukrainian state.

But the issue of Crimea cannot be removed from the agenda. **Without resolving the issue of Crimea within international law, the Russia-Ukraine crisis will not be resolved.** If this issue remains “frozen”, it will be a stumbling block in the Russia-Ukraine relations for decades, for generations ahead, solidifying the historical break between Moscow and Kyiv, which first manifested itself through the intervention of “green men” in Crimea on the night of 27 February 2014.

**– What are the principles, on which Ukraine has to build its relations with today’s Russia?**

Today there is no mutually acceptable system of principles shared by both Russia and Ukraine. There is the least common denominator, which makes the parties avoid large-scale military escalation and maintain the peace process. So, avoiding violence and searching for consensus through negotiations – is the minimal set of principles, on which we can rely today. Over time, circumstances will develop, under which we will be able to raise in a new way the issue of formulating long-term cohabitation principles. In case of relatively positive development of events, these principles will not be very different from those generally accepted in the global community: respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, respect for historical choices of nations. **In the long-term perspective, there is no alternative to good neighbourly relations, but before this, the processes of historical reconciliation and reaching an understanding should take place.**

**– What will Kyiv-Moscow relations be like in the years ahead?**

Parties will be waiting for each other’s downfall. Russia will believe that Ukraine will soon exhaust its

potential of internal stability and that, whether due to the depth of socio-economic problems, or due to accumulation of political destructive influences and aggression, sooner or later there will be an explosion that will bury the post-Maidan Ukraine together with its “European illusions”.

Instead, in Ukraine, consciously or subconsciously people will expect Putin’s regime to collapse or evolve, seeking analogies with either 1917 or 1991, or, at least, with “defrosting” of 1950s and 1980s.

Russia will introduce even more stringent restrictions, almost embargo for Ukrainian exports, using as a pretext entry into force of the trade part of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. Consequently, Russia’s share in Ukraine’s foreign trade will drop to 8-10%.

As previously noted, Russia will try to embed the controlled by it Donbas area into Ukraine’s political body in order to create a reliable leverage of influence on Kyiv, which will prevent Ukraine from moving in the western direction.

The informal “fairway” of the bilateral relations will be the competition for endurance and vitality of governmental, economic and social systems. ■

#### UKRAINE NEEDS TO BUY TIME TO CONDUCT INTERNAL REFORMS



**Vadym TRIUKHAN,**  
Chairman of the Board,  
NGO “European Movement  
Ukraine”

**– What are the ways and prospects for Russia-Ukraine conflict resolution?**

Any war, be it officially announced or a so-called hybrid war, sooner or later ends in peace. The patriotic war for independence that Ukraine is forced to fight for the second year in response to Russia’s aggression not provoked by anything, will also sooner or later end in peace. However, at this point, conditions have not yet been created for a full-fledged peace conference, which usually takes place after a war and which defines conditions for establishing sustainable peace.

As experience of settlement of many armed conflicts shows, there are three types of circumstances necessary for reaching peace:

- 1) military defeat (surrender) of one party’s army. World War I and II are vivid examples of such cases;
- 2) resource exhaustion of both hostile parties as a result of a long-lasting armed conflict. Ten-year Iran-Iraq War is the best example of this type of circumstances;
- 3) effective pressure on all conflict parties, but primarily on the aggressor, from the international community. The Balkan Wars were stopped through such harsh sanctions of the USA, EU and other civilized countries.



In the Donbas crisis initiated by Russia, none of these circumstances are present so far.

Moreover, Russia has not achieved at least three strategic goals of its current leadership.

*First*, no country or international organisation provided any guarantees of hypothetical recognition of the annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol or acceptance of the *de facto* situation created after signing of agreements on their inclusion in the Russian Federation.

*Second*, the USA did not agree to negotiations with Russia on a new division of the areas of influence in the world, which would recognise Moscow's neo-imperial ambitions. No matter how Vladimir Putin tried during his 10-hour (he probably feared the repetition of the Brisbane embarrassment) stay in New York at the 70th UN GA session to radiate optimism and carry himself as the owner of the house called "Planet Earth", he gained no real dividends, as seen by Russia's leadership.

*Third*, Ukraine has not been destroyed, quite the opposite, it remains a capable state, under certain conditions (reforms, consolidation of political elites, international community's support) able to become a democracy success story, which will pose a direct threat to the existence of Vladimir Putin's regime.

Taking this into account, it is currently sensible to talk about separating the problem in two.

At first, we must resolve the issue of restoring Ukrainian statehood on the temporarily occupied by Russia territories of Donbas. And after this – concentrate on returning Crimea and Sevastopol. For Ukraine, it is essential to avoid the scenario imposed by Russia and resembling the Balkan one. Its danger for Ukraine is that Donbas can become an anchor for further European development of the entire country.

Talking about solving the first issue, the current situation is rather favourable. By getting involved in the Syrian gamble, Kremlin's master raised the stakes of his geopolitical game. Consequently, much of the resources, which are also steadily decreasing under the pressure of sanctions and dropping oil prices, is now pulled to continue this dangerous game in the Middle East. As a result, Russia is interested in freezing the situation in Donbas, at the very least.<sup>4</sup> At the most, it would want to exit Donbas, while "saving the face" as much as possible.

As shown by the Normandy format negotiations in Paris on 2 October 2015, it is honourable "surrender" conditions of the so-called "DPR/LPR" that the conversation is about. Elections under Ukrainian law and under the supervision of the OSCE, followed by withdrawal of Russia's military and mercenaries, and Ukraine regaining control over the border – these are three key tasks realistically achievable in December 2015 - February 2016, on condition of Russia's corresponding political will. The only question, to which there is now no answer, is – what do we do with Minsk-2? On the one hand, all the terms specified therein, have fallen through, and on the other, no matter how much we would want it, at the moment, there is no proper replacement for these ambiguous agreements. Most likely, their implementation will be prolonged *de facto*,

possibly by making adjustments to certain points of the Set of Measures for their implementation.

At the same time, "the devil is in the detail". In case the above mentioned three key tasks are not fully fulfilled in the short-term perspective – 3-6 months, the following most likely scenario will be the resuming of sporadic armed clashes across the front line in Donbas (possible advance of Russian troops also from Crimea, Trans-Dniester and Belarus), which can very quickly escalate into a large-scale bloody war as a way for Kremlin to achieve its goal of destroying Ukraine as an independent democratic European country.

#### **– What are the principles, on which Ukraine has to build its relations with today's Russia?**

Clearly, at this moment Ukraine's capacities neither in the military nor in the economy sectors are enough to defeat Russia on its own. The main task now is to avoid a broad-scale war, which would involve large groups of Russia's armed forces. **Ukraine needs to buy time to conduct internal reforms (which are long overdue), necessary for successful and timely implementation of the Association Agreement with the EU and building the state on a qualitatively new level, such a state, in which a human is the greatest value, and the state itself serves people living in Ukraine, regardless of their nationality, financial standing, religion, etc.** Along with this, we need to bring the level of our Armed Forces, law enforcement and other special units up to NATO standards. In this context, given the extremely confusing and even explosive situation in politics, the government – especially the President, the Prime Minister, the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, – have to focus on the most important task of detailed and regular explanation of the logic of their actions to the society, and restraining the radical attitudes of certain projects and politicians discontented with their current situation.

It is this logic that we are to follow in building the line of conduct in relations with Russia. We believe that Ukraine should maintain the following approaches in its contacts with Russia and its official and other representatives.

**First. Minimum number of direct official contacts in the bilateral format.** At this point, there is no trust for Russia's leaders. Therefore, it is necessary to insist on multilateral negotiations, best of all – with participation of representatives from the US, the EU, and, possibly, China.

**Second.** It is unlikely that full-fledged trade and economic relations between Ukraine and Russia will be restored in the short- and, possibly, medium-term perspective. **Therefore, the Ukrainian state should resolve the issue of moving Ukrainian business to a new level and promptly replacing Russian energy suppliers.** This is a rather complicated task, especially in nuclear energy sector. And yet, this is feasible, provided there is political will of the Ukrainian leadership and readiness to move away from corruption schemes still employed everywhere, where super profits in the energy sector are concerned.

<sup>4</sup> The so-called "DPR/LPR" do not have an independent role in the conflict, being fully controlled by the Kremlin and carrying out the scenarios developed and approved in Russia.



**Third.** Ukraine has to use the full potential of the UN, Council of Europe and generally all available international legal tools in order to hold Russia as a state, as well as its private and legal entities, responsible for actions that bear signs of crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other illegal actions classified as such by the Criminal Code of Ukraine.

**Fourth.** Informational war waged by Russia against Ukraine causes irreparable damage to the image of our country, and infects the brain of Ukrainians, Russians and people in many other countries. In order to bring this negative for Ukraine effect to a minimum, we should **strengthen our relations with Russian NGOs, opposition politicians, public activists and unregistered associations.** Ukraine must learn to create its own platform of support in the Russian society and abroad, especially in those countries, which traditionally have strong pro-Russian support (Greece, Cyprus, Hungary, Slovakia, Italy, etc.).

**Fifth.** Considering that in the nearest future we are not to expect a full-fledged settlement of crisis caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine, **we should employ the following two tactics in regard to the Kremlin: (1) strategic patience; (2) small quiet victories.** Both of them have to aim to solve a number of tasks in relations with Russia, the key one being to restore Ukraine's territorial integrity. Among other things, we have to promptly develop, approve and implement the Strategy for Resolving the Crisis Caused by Russia's Aggression against Ukraine. This document could be based on the published back on 5 March 2015 Strategy of Crisis Resolution in the Eastern Ukraine, developed by the Coalition of Patriotic Forces of Donbas, which includes 17 NGOs of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts,<sup>5</sup> and Crimea's Return Strategy developed by the "Maidan of Foreign Affairs".<sup>6</sup> This document must be based on the idea of Ukraine's victory in the hybrid war with Russia through the use of hybrid methods against the aggressor.

**– What will Kyiv-Moscow relations be like in the years ahead?**

Prior to Putin's step-down from power in Kremlin, as well as the representatives of the so-called "Ozero" cooperative<sup>7</sup> and security officials from his closest circle, we are hardly to expect any thaw or at least normalisation in the Russia-Ukraine relations.

All contacts with representatives of Russia must be aimed solely to fulfil the following three tasks.

**First. Protect interests of Ukrainian citizens,** foremost captives and those illegally imprisoned in Russia, – Nadiya Savchenko, Oleg Sentsov, Alexander Kolchenko and many others.

**Second. Protect interests of Ukrainian legal entities,** who have lost their assets as a result of annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, and also as a result of the war waged by Russia against Ukraine in Donbas.

**Third. Protect national interests of Ukraine as a state.** The issues of restoring Ukraine's territorial integrity, return of refugees, reparations have to be on the agenda of all Russia-Ukraine high level and highest level talks.

At the same time, each Russia's action aimed to escalate the situation in Ukraine, has to be used as grounds for increasing pressure by the international community. Besides, Ukraine itself has to be at the forefront of these actions, be the first to implement step-by-step new economic and political sanctions against Russia, until trade and economic, as well as diplomatic relations are completely discontinued.

Only after Russia is weakened to such a state that its budget cannot afford to fund the war in Donbas, sustain Crimea and Donbas, and execute social and economic functions of the state inside the country (which will cause great dissatisfaction among population), Russia's leadership will finally agree to sit at the table, regardless whether it is round or square, where real classical negotiations will be taking place on comprehensive resolution of the crisis initiated by the Kremlin.

At this time, the agenda of these negotiations should include issues related not only to unconditional restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity, including the return of Crimea and Sevastopol, but also to creating an international legal mechanism (tribunal) for investigation of all war crimes and crimes against humanity, return of refugees and internally displaced persons, reintegration and reconciliation, restoration of destroyed infrastructure, determining the scope and schedule of reparation payments, and other issues that have to be resolved in order to reach comprehensive resolution of the crisis and establish a lasting peace.

Only after Ukraine's territorial integrity is restored, all persons guilty of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other severe crimes according to the Criminal Code of Ukraine are held responsible, regardless of their citizenship and social standing, conditions will be created for gradual restoration of full-fledged political, trade and economic, humanitarian and other relations with Russia. What we ultimately need is a model similar to modern relations between Poland and Germany, or rather Croatia and Serbia, – mutual benefits, pragmatism and equal rights. The format of strategic partnership and friendship, defined by the Great Agreement of 1997, as well as sisterhood, about which Kremlin's propagandists still like to talk, are now in the past, at least for the nearest 20-30 years. ■

<sup>5</sup> For more information, see: Strategy of Crisis Resolution in the Eastern Ukraine. – Internet resource "Ostrov", [www.ostro.org/general/politics/articles/465808](http://www.ostro.org/general/politics/articles/465808).

<sup>6</sup> For more information, see: Crimea's Return Strategy. – <http://crimea.mfa.ua.org/strategy>.

<sup>7</sup> A dacha housing cooperative founded by Vladimir Putin together with his seven closest friends back in 1996.





## RUSSIAN EXPERTS

## DEVELOP BROAD DIALOGUE, ESTABLISH THE PEOPLE'S DIPLOMACY



**Nadezhda AZHGIKHINA,**  
Secretary of the Russian Union  
of Journalists

**- What are the ways and prospects for settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?**

A terrible tragedy has just happened. A plane has crashed. People have died.<sup>8</sup> Ordinary Ukrainians are going to the Russian Embassy in Kyiv, laying flowers and lighting candles. Ordinary Russian citizens, of all ages, professions and interests also light candles and pray for the victims, for everyone. I think this is our main contemplation. Remember that we are all humans, that life is short and can end at any moment by accident, and nothing will help – not wealth, not fame, not power. The price of gas, geopolitical rivalries, and even the leaders' image are not important. Generally speaking, the interests or the sum of these interests are not important. I'd like to believe that possibly the tragedy will make all of us wiser.

**The prospects of relationships always depend not only on leaders, politicians and political decision-makers. The involvement of people, professionals, practitioners, academics, young and experienced people from all walks of life is important.** Relationships are a process that can not be built on orders. This interaction of the horizontal order (or the absence thereof) is no less important than the dialogue of the first persons and the ruling elites. Unfortunately, for many years there was almost no full horizontal cooperation between the two countries. Colleagues and peers have stopped communicating, old friends and relatives have forgotten how to understand each other – and in recent months they have been simply not ready to hear each other. Aggression and hostility have entered the language, the subconscious, and this is a great misfortune. For all of us. Words in our lives have material power, words of anger create evil and poison space and soul. There is no need to multiply this evil.

**The main way to success, in my opinion, is the development of broad dialogue and setting up conditions for the early establishment of creative and professional partnerships between professionals, researchers, entrepreneurs, students, simple inhabitants of our countries, the establishment of public diplomacy, which, it transpires, prompted solutions both to career diplomats and experienced politicians.** Look forward and believe that our families, our children need stable and friendly relations with their neighbours

based on mutual respect and interest in the experience of others.

I am not a political scientist; I am a journalist working in a public organisation, and I see how much politicians lose for failing to take into account the experience of community initiatives, and not being interested in them. Over the course of six months I have been taking part in the dialogue of professional journalism organisations of our countries; I am proud of our dialogue, I believe that it is a real bridge to the future. But we all still have a lot of work to do. Work on ourselves, first of all.

**- How (on what principles) should the relations between Ukraine and Russia be built today?**

All relations have promise when they are built on mutual respect and reasonable compromise. Again, the language of political dialogue as well as its interpretation are important. Reducing the intensity of emotions about everything connected with the relations between the two countries would only help. The Minsk process is a practical tool, the dialogue is process, not a show.

**- What kind of relations will Kyiv and Moscow have in the coming years?**

The optimistic forecast in any situation is more practical – if you are an optimist, you have a chance to see your expectations come true. All the more so if you put your best efforts into this. I am an optimist. I believe that the most difficult period in the relationship between our countries is behind us. But, I reiterate, the result depends not only on “Moscow and Kyiv”, but also on whether the community, professionals, intellectuals, students, family members separated by the unexpected hostility are involved in normalising relations between the two countries. **If there is enough political will to support the movement of people towards each other – the process will run much faster and in a more effective way.**

**THE MAIN PREREQUISITE FOR RESOLVING THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE IS A QUALITATIVE IMPROVEMENT OF RUSSIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE WEST**



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**- What are the ways and prospects for settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?**

**The most important condition for resolving the conflict in Ukraine is the qualitative improvement of Russia's relations with the West – the European Union**

<sup>8</sup> The interview was prepared on 2 November 2015. On 31 October 2015 a Russian Airbus Airlines A321 of the airline Kogalymavia crashed in Egypt, killing 224 passengers on board, including four Ukrainians. - Ed.



**and the United States.** Kyiv should not be afraid of this, although sometimes the Ukrainian leadership seems to be apprehensive about the following: “If the relations between Russia and the West are reloaded, Ukraine will be forgotten.” This is not true. No “exchange” of Ukraine for Syria will be made. However, if the positions of Russia and the West come closer in the course of cooperation to overcome ISIS, which so far is not going all that smoothly, it would be beneficial for the situation in Ukraine. In other words, the principle some Ukrainian politicians abide by, “the worse (Russia’s relations with the EU and the US) the better (for Ukraine),” is counterproductive by definition. Incidentally, in Russia there are political forces that abide by the same principle – “the worse (the relations are between Russia and the West) the better (it is or Russia).” However, as evidenced by the entire history of post-Cold War Europe, the European climate was always better and safer given Russia’s better relations with its Western partners, and vice versa. As for Russia, all its centuries-old experience attests that “worse” can only be “worse.”

One may object: the settlement of the Ukrainian conflict itself is a condition for improving relations between Russia and the West. In principle this is correct, but these processes are similar to communicating vessels. Contradictions concerning Ukraine have tightened in a knot so hard that cutting them straight from the shoulder is impossible without disastrous consequences. It can be only untangled patiently and sequentially. **Given the improved relations between Russia and the West and consistent implementation of the Minsk agreements one might be able to think about how to secure peace in Ukraine. And here the most appropriate and effective tool would be the deployment of UN peacekeeping troops, which would be formed given the interests of both the eastern regions and Kyiv.** As for Crimea, it would be better to put this issue in bilateral relations off until some time in the future. The annexation of Crimea has been finally legitimized in Russian public opinion, which the Kremlin can no longer ignore. However, this does not mean that a compromise on Crimea can not be achieved in the future.

If none of this happens, Syria will become a new source of contention between Russia and the West, the most likely (and still not the worst) scenario is the “stable instability” on the model of not even Transnistria but rather Nagorno-Karabakh.

### **- How (on what principles) should the relations between Ukraine and Russia be built today?**

It is obvious that relations between Ukraine and Russia should be based on the provisions and principles of international law by which sovereign independent states, respecting each other, shall be guided. This is an ideal. But what are these provisions of international law today? All the largest conflicts of the post-Cold War era – the war in Yugoslavia, the Caucasus crisis and the conflict in Ukraine – indicate that the Helsinki principles, which had been scrupulously adhered to by the parties during the Cold War, are now the subject of profound revision. In the modern world, international competition is not based on ideological confrontation, as it was previously, but on national interests, which are not dictated by high morals and provisions of international law, but by specific goals of international actors, very freely interpreting these provisions and principles.

One of the major issues of our time is whether the Helsinki principles remain relevant and whether their priorities have changed? If we are still living in a legal framework which is one and the same for all and if the principle of territorial integrity of states retains its previous value, then what about the precedent secession of Kosovo, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Crimea? Do they constitute an exception to the rules set by the Helsinki Final Act? Under what conditions do the national minorities have the right to self-determination? It is clear that acts of genocide of the titular nations in relation to national minorities and the massive human rights violations may be grounds for separation of oppressed peoples. However, a fundamental question is who will be the arbiter in these disputes to impartially establish the facts of genocide and human rights violations to render impossible the practice of double standards?

If today there are no common rules and only important national interests of the great powers exist – no matter how they are interpreted by their leadership – everything that happened with Kosovo, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Crimea was justified. Eight years after the end of the Kosovo conflict (after the demise of Slobodan Milosevic and Belgrade’s adoption of the European path), the United States explained the need for the independence of Kosovo by the fact that “the Albanians are simply unwilling to live together with the Serbs.” However, if the desire of a national minority is sufficient grounds for separation, apparently, it also applies to Abkhazians, who are “simply unwilling to live together with Georgians,” and to the residents of Crimea, who “are simply unwilling to live together with Ukrainians.” There is no need to explain what it would mean for multinational states and the stability of Europe.

“A game without rules” in a polycentric world, having, in fact, no limits in the policy of international actors, is dangerous as it has its own inertial dynamics, provoking the parties’ proclivity to a “preemptive strike” in conflict situations. It clearly manifested itself during the Ukrainian crisis and Russia’s annexation of Crimea.

Previously the big wars in Europe always ended with a peace conference – from the Peace of Westphalia to the Yalta Conference, which established a new



world order and the rules of conduct in international relations. The end of the Cold War did not result in the creation of a new European security system, which was supposed to replace the 40-year-old confrontation and the “balance of terror.” This problem is on the agenda of Helsinki II. **There is a need for an inventory of the Helsinki principles, adapting them to modern conditions, and for the commitment of all parties to this process to comply strictly with the agreed principles.** If this is done, there will be a sound legal basis for Russian-Ukrainian relations.

**– What kind of relations will Kyiv and Moscow have in the coming years?**

Even under the most favourable scenario, relations between Russia and Ukraine will remain very cool. And this is not only about the politicians who, as we know, come and go. The Ukrainian fracture affected both Russia and Ukraine, and transcended not just politics and economics, but also families and friendships. The unprecedented information war distorted the way these two closest of peoples regard one another, giving rise to the very basest instincts of nationalism.

Today, both Ukrainians and Russians have different, irreconcilable views on the origins and the course of this conflict that will long haunt the public opinion of the two countries. The wounds left by the war are unable to skin over fast. However, the example of many countries in Central and Eastern Europe, which had, putting it mildly, uneasy relations with the Soviet Union, suggests that this can be overcome with time. The main thing is that there are no new grounds for estrangement. ■

**THE PATH TO RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN  
CONFLICT SETTLEMENT LIES THROUGH  
DONBAS**



**Dmitriy DANILOV,**  
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Institute of Europe*

**– What are the ways and prospects for settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?**

First of all, an important point for me is the proposal by the Razumkov Centre to discuss the conflict in a constructive and positive manner; how to get out of this deep crater of conflict or at least reduce its “Russian-Ukrainian” component. This is not only an extremely delicate matter; this is a discussion about something that previously nobody could have imagined and now no one can imagine what can possibly be done. Although I have personal experience in understanding how we came to such a life and a desire to work professionally for a common Russian-Ukrainian future, I still cannot claim I have formulated the “ways and prospects.”

However, I will try to share some considerations, since the main thing is searching for and discovering these ways. The fact that the Razumkov Centre is offering a platform for this is an important signal in itself for development (or restoration), for expert dialogue and mutual trust at the level of civilian society between Ukraine and Russia.

The mere posing of the question of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict shows how difficult it is to talk about “paths and prospects.” After all, in order to talk about conflict settlement, you have to decide what the conflict is about. For Kyiv it is the “military aggression of the Kremlin”, but in fact the undeclared war and the threat to the very existence of the Ukrainian state. Moscow denies the fact of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, believing itself to be an external party in the conflict, which is basically a domestic Ukrainian issue, which escalated after the coup and led to civil war. The Euro-Atlantic region initially supported Kyiv, but refrained from direct recognition of Russia as a party to the conflict and prefers using the terms “Russian challenge” and “threat to European security.”

There is no general diagnosis to treat. Kyiv seeks to restore its sovereignty over the “temporarily occupied territories” and to ensure consistent support of the West in countering “Russian aggression and expansion.” Russia seeks to “appease” the Ukrainian domestic conflict, the escalation of which would increase strategic risks, while de-escalation, on the contrary, allows a reduction of the urgency of “Ukrainian” challenges for Russia. Western methods of treatment vary, but in one way or another they are entrusted to the Normandy treatment brigade – Germany and France. They operate within the framework of the Euro-Atlantic consensus (countering “illegitimate and aggressive Russian policy”), support Kyiv in the fundamental issue – restoration of sovereignty, but, like Russia, are seeking to avoid escalation of the conflict and reduce the associated geopolitical risks and damages.

**These clashing political interpretations of the causes and nature of the Ukrainian crisis seriously complicate the search for a common strategy of disengagement. Furthermore, differences in approach are themselves a major conflict-provoking factor in the circumstances of high (or even ultimately high) political stakes of the players.** The conflict in Ukraine became geopolitical, having undermined the existing system of international relations and security in “Europe from Vancouver to Vladivostok.” The dilemma is obvious: play an all-or-nothing game or try to reduce the stakes.

In my opinion, the period of raising the stakes is already completed. They greatly increased by the end of 2013 (“the Vilnius Party”), repeatedly increased in the first half of 2014 (the change of power in Kyiv – “Crimea” – ATO – Western answers to the Russian challenge, sanctions). Now, the main political trend is to resist further collapse. It is indicative that while a few months ago the subject of “a new cold war” between Russia and the West (because of Ukraine) was discussed in detail, now everyone is trying to underscore that (despite sanctions, the drift to mutual military-political containment, and so on), there is





no cold war. In other words, the general path – the conflict settlement has been decided on. Revival of the Minsk agreements after they had almost been buried due to the failure of the February agreement (on truce), shows that de-escalation is now an objective interest of all the major players. (And formally they are interested in the performance of the Minsk agreements.)

The question is – does the incipient de-escalation in Ukraine mean settlement “of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict”? (Non-recognition by Moscow of its direct involvement in the conflict with Ukraine, of course, does not mean that it does not exist). The conflict exists and “lives” as a conflict of interests, as part of a fundamental crisis of Russian-Western relations and European security and in the end, as a backbone of Ukrainian policy.)

**De-escalation, separation of the parties in Donbas and, ideally, a complete ceasefire are essential prerequisites.** Finally, the recurrent mantra “there is no military solution” is being embodied in actual politics. Certainly, the parties of war are still exerting pressure on the political process, but do not define it. Moscow has recently made substantial efforts to bring the conflict out of military phase, in the first place by making use of its channels and instruments of influence in Donbas. This clearly shows that the military scenarios, although they can not be ruled out completely, have been withdrawn beyond the practical political planning. The emphasis is made on de-escalation based on the Minsk process. And if this is the case, the Crimean option for DPR/LPR is ruled out. All this creates a new foothold for the settlement of the conflict and for finding acceptable compromises.

Therefore, the most important prerequisite for conflict settlement, including the Russian-Ukrainian one, is to exclude the return to armed conflict in Donbas, and thus, obviate the worst and the most dangerous development scenarios. The only way to achieve this is through implementation of the Minsk agreements. However, despite the common understanding and the “determination” at the Normandy negotiating table, there are very significant barriers to comprehensive implementation of the Minsk agreements, even in delayed form. The key provisions of the Minsk agreements, such as holding elections and decentralisation, control of borders and amnesty do not unite the parties to the conflict around a common road map for conflict settlement. Each party seeks priority implementation of “their” points and in their interpretation.

The situation with Minsk II is clearly reminiscent of “12 Chairs” by Ilf and Petrov (“Money in the morning, chairs in the evening...” “Can it be the other way round?” “Yes, but the money should be paid up front”). The working groups alone can not solve these complex collisions, because technical solutions are possible only when the parties focus on a mutually acceptable political outcome. Too short a period has been set for its achievement – 21 February 2016. Elections in the DPR and LPR have been postponed and will not be postponed again. This means they will either proceed according to the agreed scenario and under international supervision or will be carried out without it, beyond the never-fulfilled Minsk agreements. The first assumes progress of the settlement under the Minsk agreement scenario, while the second assumes an actual conflict freeze.

Unfortunately, Kyiv regards the postponement of elections in the DPR and LPR as a success and not as part of the settlement process and, therefore, still leaves open to question the key agreements on amendments to the Constitution, on the amnesty and, in the end, on holding the elections. If President Poroshenko as the guarantor of the Constitution speaks of “anti-Ukrainian” and “well-known” political forces that have not been able to achieve revenge at the local elections on 25 October 2015, it is not at all clear what and to whom he makes guarantees under the Constitution and, moreover, no new guarantees can be expected from the constitutional changes. And what did President Poroshenko have in mind as a guarantor when he said that “the pro-European parties” “shall coordinate efforts to control the actions of the local majority” in Donetsk and Luhansk regions?<sup>9</sup> Clearly, Moscow can not support this kind of “democratic” changes and reforms in Ukraine and, in any case, cannot and will not persuade the pro-Russian (and, anti-Ukrainian in the meaning of Kyiv) quasi-autonomous states to return to such Ukraine.

If the elections on 21 February 2016 will not proceed in a consistent format, which is more than likely, it will be a factor of fundamental change in the situation (consolidation of statehood of the DPR/LPR as a reaction to the absence of counter moves from Kyiv, the funeral of the Minsk document, a need to decide on the next “Minsk Group” on settlement, etc.). The “Minsk process” in its current form will cease to exist and, at best, can be saved only as a general framework to curb escalation of the conflict and maintain relative stability, i.e., to freeze the conflict, but it is not a political solution. The conflict level mitigation and its conservation would be a very important achievement in terms of de-escalation, but does not guarantee the Russian-Ukrainian settlement. **The contrary is more likely, where the conflict freeze in the south-east of Ukraine will be a long-term latent factor of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.**

The countdown has already started: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov explained that it is necessary not only to adopt a “generally acceptable Ukrainian law on local elections in Donbas”, but to do so at least 90 days prior to them – to enable their preparation. However, if a “common acceptable” version still has not been reached, can we count on it when running out of time and after Ukraine’s adoption of a new

<sup>9</sup> See: Website of President of Ukraine. – <http://www.president.gov.ua/ru/news/zvernennya-prezidenta-ukrayini-shodo-viboriv-do-organiv-misc-36238>.

election law? And if this is unachievable, then it will be obviously necessary to “appoint” the culpable parties for the failure of the Minsk agreements. For Kyiv the culpable parties are the separatists and the Kremlin, for Russia it is the Kyiv government. The failure of Minsk II would have provoked an escalation of political confrontation between Kyiv and Moscow, and it would be extremely difficult to agree on a new menu at the Normandy table.

In other words, the path to Russian-Ukrainian conflict settlement lies through Donbas. A chance to implement the Minsk agreements still remains – but very quick and bold decisions should be taken for that end. There can be only one positive result, from my personal point of view: Ukraine adopts due amendments to the Constitution and legislation (including decentralisation, a special status of DPR/LPR, the amnesty law), Poroshenko shakes hands with elected regional leaders and cancels the ATO. Only then one can develop a set of measures to restore the jurisdiction of Ukraine in the eastern regions, including control over borders and the judicial system.

If Kyiv still insists that this is a prerequisite for the holding of elections – the settlement will not take place. Nobody – neither Poroshenko, nor Putin nor Merkel nor Hollande may return Donbas to the unitary Ukrainian state, especially the one built on a national basis and on anti-Russian ideology. After all, the decentralisation in Kyiv is not intended to provide greater autonomy to regions and corresponding “special status” to DPR and LPR, which, in turn, are not ready to abandon the proclaimed and reclaimed independence for the phantom decentralisation with a view to subsequent cleansing and deprivation of rights.

If the Kyiv authorities further proceed from the fact that “there are no problems with the south-east – there is a war with Russia,” the main problem is the “Russian threat called Putin,” Kyiv will not be able to solve the fundamental problem of saving the collapsing state. And if the “virus of separatism,” especially the one introduced from the outside, is considered the cause of the state’s erosion, it means simply turning a blind eye to the accumulation of a critical mass for internal decay reaction (outside the ATO zone as well). This is the path to self-destruction, including, of course, the destructive energy of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. And no Western “Energizer batteries” can force the unbalanced Ukrainian mechanism to work.

**The Russian-Ukrainian settlement should be viewed in the long run of overcoming the Ukrainian crisis.** The option of a relatively fast “reset” is virtually impossible. However, a lot depends on the direction in which the events will unfold in the near future, on the fate of the Minsk agreements.

But even in the event of their implementation and further settlement of the crisis in Ukraine, this is not enough on its own to end the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. To a greater extent it will be worked on by an intensified anti-Russian component of modern social and political life of Ukraine. Russia is declared the main threat to Ukraine’s security and its military adversary (the new National Security Strategy and the Military Doctrine), and it is in accordance with this concept that Ukraine is drawing up its long-term objectives.



Russia refuses to answer “symmetrically”, but this does not mean that Ukraine will not be perceived as a new line of advanced presence of the West, also given the development of partnership between Ukraine and NATO. This confrontational trend can be reversed only if Russia and the West return European cooperation (first of all, once again, through resolution of the Ukrainian crisis). In the foreseeable future, the new shift of figures in the two parts of the European equation, eastern and western, is hardly likely. It is therefore necessary to focus on de-escalation on all lines, so as not to drive ourselves to a standstill confrontation and keep open the prospect of gradual normalisation.

**– How (on what principles) should the relations between Ukraine and Russia be built today?**

Before answering this question, it is important to understand – on what grounds they *should not* be built. It is clear that the current anti-Russian Ukrainian politics, whatever it has been motivated by, is a breeding ground for a relationship based on confrontation rather than cooperation. This has already led to termination by Kyiv of many bilateral cooperation agreements with Russia, which “wages an economic war on Ukraine.” Is it possible in this situation to talk about the most important principles, such as good neighbourly relations? Or a mutually beneficial partnership?

**Rather, the highest point the bar can go is peaceful coexistence.** But even for this it is necessary to lower the level of confrontation and work at it consciously. The clash of interests and positions, even of the fundamental kind, should not result in nationalism, in the consolidation in the political field and public opinion of “anti-Ukrainian” or “anti-Russian” ideology. **It is important to restore the destroyed humanitarian and cultural ties, expand communication and cooperation of the expert community, especially that of political science.**

**– What kind of relations will Kyiv and Moscow have in the coming years?**

I think I have already answered this question. There are ways to resolve the conflict, but the prospects are highly problematic. Confrontation scenarios are still quite likely. Crimea, in any case, will remain a heavy load that is not conducive to building neighbourly relations. However, much depends on what will become of Ukraine in the coming years. On whether it will be possible to strengthen state institutions and carry out real reforms, or, on the contrary, the centrifugal forces within the country and the society will evolve,

threatening the collapse of Ukraine. And if Kyiv still focuses on the mobilisation of the country to oppose the external enemy, the question can be changed: not “what will the relationship be” between Russia and Ukraine, but “with which Ukraine”?

#### PROMOTING THE RESTORATION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN DIALOGUE



**Sergey OZNOBYSCHEV,**  
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#### – What are the ways and prospects for settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?

After the conclusion of the next Minsk Agreement on 12 February 2015 there has been a gradual decline, with periodic, but increasingly damped bursts of intensity of hostilities in eastern Ukraine. The geopolitical project of “Novorossiya” [New Russia], for the implementation of which much has been done by representatives of the DPR and LPR of various levels and which received strong support from the Russian side, is apparently being “frozen” and has the potential not to be implemented at all. It has lost the initial momentum, and the representatives of Ukrainian and Russian elites that promoted it have lost their initial enthusiasm.

The annexation of Crimea and the project of “Novorossiya”, as well as any major foreign policy actions, had pursued several goals supported by various parts of the Russian ruling elite. They include: keeping Ukraine in “Russia’s orbit” (not the way to the EU, but accession to the Customs Union), and guarantees for non-aligned and non-nuclear status of Ukraine, enshrining the official status of the Russian language. In the opinion, and the “feel” of the Russian elite, Russia was stepping back too long and played on the terms of the West and its geopolitical and security interests were ignored. The signing of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (opening a “direct route” to the EU and NATO) disregarding the interests of Moscow, the increased involvement of Washington in Ukrainian events, straw that breaks the camel’s back for the Russian ruling class that mentally perceived Ukraine as a part of their own “Slavic world.” Here the same red line has been laid, of whose existence the Russian elite repeatedly warned and advised the West not to cross for a long time.

Now the “Novorossiya” project hit an iron ceiling: its support in Ukraine was much lower than expected, and the further continuation was fraught with significant deterioration in relations with the West, the

economic situation in Russia, and also faces the prospect of a costly arms race and other major costs that have become apparent.

At the same time, the Ukrainian crisis and its regulation have not ensured the beginning of a dialogue on modernisation (new principles) of the European security system that Moscow had advocated for many years. Neither had the crisis provided an opportunity to start a dialogue between the US and Russia on new terms, when the latter becomes an equal partner, regaining the position as a world power it has lost after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russia will now seek to secure this status as a result of active involvement in the military campaign in Syria, also having a “noble” anti-terrorist dimension.

As a result, by its scale and global objectives, “the Syrian project” overlaps and relegates the “Novorossiya” project to the background, drastically reducing the latter’s relevance. At the same time there was a considerable increase in incentives for settlement (at any level) of the Ukrainian crisis and the “offset” of Russia’s goals it purported as at least partially fulfilled given the available geopolitical opportunities.

The format of the Minsk process remains a specific way to resolve the crisis. At the same time, apparently, “the letter” of the Minsk agreements will be difficult to implement, so the participants of the Normandy 4 will eventually put forward and approve the compromise solutions, agreeing that “in general,” the Minsk agreements are being executed. Thus, the settlement of the Ukrainian crisis (which is not referred to as the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in Russia, officially not being a party to it) receives sufficient incentives and good prospects.

#### – How (on what principles) should the relations between Ukraine and Russia be built today?

It is important to understand that there are formal principles of international relations and there is what has been called *real politics*. It is the informal side of the Russian-Ukrainian relations that should be given priority attention. Whether they like hearing it in Kyiv or not, an important factor is the prevailing view in Russia that in solving many fundamental problems of the Ukrainian status and policy of the country, the views of Russia and its interests must be taken into account. It is ignoring these interests when making the initial decision on the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement that was the reason for the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis.

For Kyiv, at this stage it is very important not to undermine the incipient progress of the Minsk process. To do this, first of all, it is necessary in the near future to withdraw from the political agenda those issues causing rejection and a possible sharp reaction on Russia’s part, such as the prospect of NATO membership. Accordingly, any military action with the participation of NATO in Ukraine should be limited if possible.

At the same time, continued and, if possible, maximally active involvement of “third parties” in the process of normalising relations between Moscow and





Kyiv could substantially contribute to resolution of the crisis. Here, along with the engagement of the “Normandy two” (Germany and France) serious acceleration of the settlement can be achieved through the involvement of Washington.

**The Ukrainian crisis is not only and not so much “about Ukraine.” To a large extent, it is a matter of Russia winning back the status of a world power, whose opinion should be considered by other members of the European and global process.**

For Russia itself it is the growing understanding that Ukraine’s interests do not conflict with or threaten the interests of Russia that is important. Any official persistent rhetoric about returning Crimea to Ukraine can only aggravate the situation.

Any confrontational rhetoric should gradually give way to the vector of restoring cooperation. In the historical perspective – there is no alternative to this and nor can there be. If Kyiv cannot completely abandon the repetition of a number of postulates for internal, political reasons, the interests, based on “real politics” should gradually make their way along with them: a return to elements of collaboration and even cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

**– What kind of relations will Kyiv and Moscow have in the coming years?**

Relations between Kyiv and Moscow are destined to gradually undergo a process of return to the normalisation route. The objective reason for this is simple – we will always remain neighbours, and neighbours have common interests that require dialogue and joint solutions. How soon this will happen depends on a number of circumstances.

The Ukrainian crisis is not only in the dimension of the bilateral relations between Ukraine and Russia, but is largely a reflection of the crisis of interaction between Russia and the Western countries, primarily the United States. Only in the context of renewed dialogue on a wide range of issues of international security, economic and other types of cooperation, the beginning of interaction in the elements, which Russia believes to be its security concerns, is it possible to stabilise relations between Moscow and Kyiv. Reducing the scope of interaction and cooperation does not meet the long-term interests of either side, and in the current period, it may inflict particularly sensitive damage to Ukraine’s position.

Much will depend on the content and results of the political cycles in Ukraine and Russia. It is crucial for our two countries not to take a course that leads to final separation, especially since it is absolutely impracticable and can only make the situation worse.

**Much depends on the political and expert elite, which should contribute to restoration and establishment of dialogue. As a result, bilateral relations have a very real opportunity to embark on the course of “limited-realistic” normalisation, gradually and simultaneously solving controversial issues, including concerning the status of the DPR and LPR.** ■

## IN HIS UKRAINIAN ADVENTURE PUTIN HAS SUFFERED A SERIOUS POLITICAL AND MORAL DEFEAT



**Andrei PIONTKOVSKY,**  
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**– What are the ways and prospects for settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?**

“The Russian-Ukrainian conflict” is Russian aggression towards Ukraine, the war which has continued since 20 February 2014, the date engraved on the medals handed to “polite green men”. At the moment, in the course of this aggression, Russia occupied Crimea and some areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. **Russian aggression is aimed not just at the annexation of certain areas, but at the destruction or the complete subordination of the Ukrainian state to the Kremlin** when saving some formal state institutions in a part of its territory.

The victory of the Revolution of Dignity made Putin’s aggression inevitable. The European vector of Ukraine proclaimed by the Revolution is an existential threat to Putin’s kleptocracy. The success of Ukraine on this path would be too catching and appealing to Russian society.

A conflict of this kind can not be settled by anyone. Ukraine is struggling for its existence as an independent European state. Until the last hour of his political life, the “Dickhead Judoist” dictator will do anything to destroy this country. **Therefore, until Putin’s regime steps back from the political arena, the relations of the present-day Russia and Ukraine will be the relations of an aggressor and a state suffering from this aggression.**

**– How (on what principles) should the relations between Ukraine and Russia be built today?**

How will they [relations] develop in the nearest historical outlook? Before answering this question, we will try to summarize the preliminary results of the first 20 months of this war. In our view, Putin has suffered three fundamental defeats there.

**First**, he expected to unleash an ethnic war between Russians and Ukrainians. But Russian citizens of Ukraine overwhelmingly rejected the chimera of the “Russian world”. They recognize themselves as part of the nascent civil society of a united Ukraine that has chosen the European path and struggles for its choice with the ideological heirs of the Golden Horde.



*Second*, the West gave a serious rebuff to Putin's nuclear blackmail, by which he tried to frighten the West and force it to give up not only on support of Ukraine, but also on the commitment of collective defence of NATO's new members. The NATO staffs, equipment and soldiers, including of the US, have been located in the Baltic States, which would automatically bring Russia into a state of full-scale war with the United States should the "little green men" appear in Lithuania or Estonia. The Kremlin leaders are not going to engage in a nuclear battle with the United States: They are not crazy, but only pretend to be so. The Kremlin's intention was to scare NATO and the US, and it failed.

*Third*, the idea of the "Russian world" was not supported in Russia itself, and this is probably the most painful defeat for Putin, who overestimated the imperial complexes of his fellow citizens. It is true that the annexation of Crimea was supported by the majority of Russians: The TV campaign for turning into zombies proved efficient for some period of time. However, further war against Ukraine in Donbas had no support among Russian citizens. It is no accident that the total number of fatalities among servicemen is the most classified information in Russia.

In the last 2-3 months, terms such as the "Russian world" or "Novorossiya" have already fallen into disuse in propaganda. The "Novorossiya" project has been closed. All that the Kremlin is now trying to get as a kind of consolation prize for Ukraine – is pushing the DPR/LPR back into the political body of Ukraine. Putin does not need formal territorial acquisitions – he has not digested Crimea yet. He wants control over political processes in Ukraine, blocking its European development vector. For this purpose he has to introduce the separatist entities he controls, so they would decompose Ukraine like a cancer, thereby providing him with a lever of influence on the political situation in the country.

The Minsk agreements are a self-contradictory document, which can not be fully realized. In particular, Putin's Russia will never fulfil two provisions prescribed in Minsk: withdrawal of foreign troops (how can the Kremlin do that if they claim they are not there?), and giving back control of the border to Kyiv.

In turn, Ukraine will not go for what Putin is pressing to gain from it by his interpretation of the Minsk agreements:

a) all these figures – Zakharchenko, Plotnitskiy, Motorola and the company have become part of the political field of Ukraine, met in the parliament, and determined the country's policy;

b) Kyiv maintains these territories financially.

Putin and Lavrov repeat every day that they support the territorial integrity of Ukraine (without Crimea, of course) trying to lure Ukrainians with an illusion of imaginary "territorial integrity".

But this plan also fails – Ukrainian authorities and Ukrainian society sees this simple ruse, and hopefully, will not go for the entrenchment of the LPR/DPR in Ukraine. The Parliament has already adopted a law on the temporarily occupied territories. These territories (Crimea and LPR/DPR) are considered to be temporarily occupied by the aggressor and, therefore, it is the aggressor who is fully responsible for what is happening there.

Today, Ukraine can not return these territories by force, because the terrorists are supported by the Russian army against which the Ukrainian army is not able to conduct a large-scale offensive. However, the Ukrainian army is strong enough to protect the line existing to date that separates the parties and to avoid further military expansion on the part of Russia.

In this stalemate military situation, the scenario of the "frozen conflict", in our opinion, is more preferable for Ukraine than the script of fictitious restoration (without control over its own borders) of its "territorial integrity", into which its Western allies will persuade it to some extent. All the more so that such a "recovery", in addition to the introduction into the body of Ukraine of the LPR/DPR cancer controlled by Moscow, will also mean a tacit recognition of the annexation of Crimea. As Chancellor Angela Merkel made it clear during her joint press conference with President Hollande after the summit of the Normandy 4 in Paris on 2 October 2015.

At a meeting in Paris, Putin agreed to cancel the elections in the occupied territories, scheduled for October, hoping that in response Merkel and Hollande would exert some pressure on Poroshenko, so that he would introduce certain wording into the Constitution of Ukraine, meeting Putin's interpretations of the Minsk agreements half way.

These diplomatic battles will continue, but the essence of the situation can be summarized as follows: the purely military phase of the conflict in the east of Ukraine most likely now over; Russian encroachments like the capture of Mariupol and the corridor to Crimea are no longer referred to; the region will eventually become another isolated Transnistria.

**At the same time, it is obvious to all that in his Ukrainian adventure Putin has suffered a serious political and moral defeat.** As the losing adventurer he upped the ante and got involved in Syria, primarily to dramatically change the agenda and somehow disguise his defeat in Ukraine.



**– What kind of relations will Kyiv and Moscow have in the coming years?**

Until Russia returns the Ukrainian territory it seized, the hybrid war imposed by Moscow will go on between them in various forms. In this situation, not only political, but also economic ties of Kyiv with the territories occupied by the aggressor would appear to be a form of recognition of the results of indirect aggression.

It is absolutely inappropriate to use the term “blockade” in this context. Can you imagine that in 1942, for example, when Ukraine was occupied by Nazi Germany, Moscow would have sent food and industrial goods to the territory occupied by the Germans? And in the case of refusal, human rights organisations would have criticized the Soviet Union for the blockade?

**Ukraine has only one guaranteed way to return all the occupied territories. Isolate itself from the any influence of DPR/LPR and Crimea, leaving full responsibility for the humanitarian situation at the line of separation of the parties with “the Great Russia that has risen from its knees.”** Carry out successful political and economic reforms on mainland Ukraine and become a modern European state.

This success will be a nightmare come true for Putin, for the fear of which was what made him begin his war against Ukraine.

The example of Ukraine will become compelling not only for the residents of Crimea and DPR/LPR but for the whole of Russia. Ukraine’s success is not just its own return to the family of European nations, of which our common mother Kyivan Rus had been a full member. It will simultaneously become the liberation of Russia from Putinism and a final historic victory of Kyivan Rus over the Golden Horde in the post-Soviet space. ■

**RUSSIAN POLICY IN THE UKRAINIAN AREA SHALL BE AIMED AT GRADUAL NORMALISATION OF RELATIONS ON A NEW LEVEL**



**Dmitriy TRENIN,**  
Director of the Carnegie  
Moscow Center

**– What are the ways and prospects for settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?**

After the crisis of 2014, the relations between Russia and Ukraine have fundamentally changed. The post-Soviet period of ambivalence and, uncertainty has come to an end. The annexation of Crimea and especially the war in Donbas engendered enduring hostility not



only of the Ukrainian government, but of most of the elites and a large part of society towards the Russian Federation. Such an attitude is likely to persist for a long time. There will be no large-scale war, but the settlement in Donbas will take a long time. The non-recognition of Crimea as part of Russia by Ukraine will last even longer.

Much has yet to be determined in the political and economic development of Ukraine but its geopolitical orientation is clear. **Ukraine has clearly turned towards the West, towards Europe, with its back to Russia. The “divorce” between Moscow and Kyiv is final.** With all the tragic circumstances of this divorce, it has its own merits for the Russian Federation. The economic and financial problems in Ukraine will not be added to the array of Russian internal problems, and the threat of “turning Ukraine to the West”, once implemented, will no longer loom over the relations between the two countries.

At the same time, the prospects for Ukraine’s European integration remain vague. The pace and depth of integration depend primarily on the success of Ukrainian reforms, whose fate has not yet been determined. The EU itself is at the same time going through a series of crises that could significantly change its nature and configuration. Ukraine’s membership in the EU is beyond the foreseeable future. Ukraine’s accession to NATO is unlikely because of the conflict with Russia, in which the US and its allies do not want to participate directly. Therefore Ukraine, will remain so far a kind of trust territory of America and Europe.

**– How (on what principles) should the relations between Ukraine and Russia be built today?**

From the perspective of Russian interests, its policy in the Ukrainian area shall be aimed at **gradual normalisation of relations on a new level.** One should avoid building illusions about the fact that Ukraine will be disappointed in the ideals of Euromaidan and Western aid, and will turn in the direction of Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union. The Ukrainian national project in principle is not compatible with the idea of integration with Russia: in the course of the actual integration, Ukraine is gradually disappearing, entering the all-Russian community (in the medieval meaning of Rus).



With that in mind, it is more beneficial for Russia to build a relationship with Ukraine as a foreign country than to maintain the illusion of communion persisting at a state level. Economic relations will be determined by the economic actors. The “Russian world”, although this concept proved to be thoughtlessly compromised, requires a profound rethink. Such rethinking should be based on two ideas: The Russian world is wider than the Russian Federation, and does not belong to it alone; the Russian world is a sphere of *soft power*, with its inherent instruments, excluding tanks and artillery.

Russia is unlikely to be given legal guarantees of non-entry of Ukraine into NATO and the non-deployment on its territory of military facilities and troops of the United States. Moscow will therefore mostly have to rely on the deterrence factor: the inclusion of Ukraine in the NATO defence perimeter would be direct US participation in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which Washington will likely be seeking to avoid.

Another goal of the Russian policy – the federalisation of Ukraine as a guarantee of internal hindrance to NATO membership is also unlikely to be achieved. Unitary Ukraine will consider Russia as a threat to its security. However, mitigating confrontation in Donbas and the priority of internal problems in the conditions of real pluralism of Ukrainian society may eventually reduce the relevance of the NATO issue in Ukraine.

**The creation of a new basis for Russian-Ukrainian relations will take a long time – probably more than 10 years.** First we need to achieve stabilization of the current situation on the basis of performance of the Minsk agreements (Minsk-2). It is important not to stop at the stage of frozen conflict, and consistently move towards a political solution to the issue. This way will be neither quick nor easy, but Russia has no reason to reject it. In parallel with the military and political issues, the financial and economic problems have to be solved. This will also be a long and difficult process.

**– What kind of relations will Kyiv and Moscow have in the coming years?**

In the future, Russia and Ukraine, even before full normalisation of relations, can establish a relationship of a new type, based on pragmatism. The economic revival of Ukraine will require a partial restoration of relations with Russia, which could be beneficial for Russia. The economic development of Russia after the end of the current crisis will require involvement of human resources, including those from Ukraine. The gas transit to the EU via Ukraine is most likely to continue after 2019.

**The main direction of preparing the ground for the future development of Russian-Ukrainian relations could be the contacts between professional communities and individuals, in which political issues are either factored out or do not dominate.** At some stage it will be possible to restore economic contacts. It will be reasonable for Russia’s political elite to focus on learning the lessons of the latest Russian-Ukrainian relations and defining priorities and long-term strategies of Russian policy towards Ukraine. ■

## NEW APPROACHES AND SOLUTIONS IN THE CONFLICT SETTLEMENT ARE NEEDED



**Igor CHERNOV,**  
Director of the Information  
Centre for International Security  
(Volgograd)

**– What are the ways and prospects for settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?**

In my opinion, the prospects for a settlement are not visible, because there is no common ground for settlement. There is a desire for settlement on all sides, but the problem lies in the mutually acceptable terms. In addition, the information warfare hampers an objective critical analysis of the situation and the development of constructive and pragmatic solutions.

I would classify the conflict as an inter-elite conflict and would not raise it to the level of a Russian-Ukrainian conflict. I have some optimism as regards its resolution in the future, especially because it seems to me artificial and dependent on the activity of the main players who can be replaced, grow tired, run out of resources, or switch to other issues. It’s hard to predict anything now, because the acute phase of the conflict has not yet passed and too many players are involved, whose behaviour is also dependent on many factors.

**In my opinion, all means of settlement are in the field of compromise, to which the major players must sooner or later arrive. And this applies not only to Ukraine and Russia.** These compromises are just not visible, more precisely, they are not formulated as a single list, adopted by all parties, and are not discussed as a single set. In any case, in public. The parties firmly hold their ground.

The Russian leadership is not wholly satisfied with the new Ukrainian project for building up a new state. They see serious risks and even threats, including for themselves, and insist that these risks should be taken into account, and concerns of threats removed. The Ukrainian side rejects the claims of neighbouring states to participate in the discussion and implementation of a new project that does not seem realistic from the sidelines in the sense of *real politics*, because it is impossible to ignore such a neighbour as Russia, no matter how someone would like it. All countries have their own interests, and Russia declares them, as well as other states do. The question is, how is it possible, how is it necessary and by what methods and means may these interests be confronted if they are, at the least, in conflict with the interests of neighbours? One can argue about the adequacy of realisation of interests, but we have what we have.

(Western) experts in conflicts claim that forceful opposition to the aggressive actions of a powerful

neighbour does not always appear optimal. Active discussions in an attempt to alleviate concerns could lead to the desired result. One can question the adequacy of risks and threats formulated on both sides, but it appears that this dispute should be conducted with the participation of other partners in the project, which also cannot be ignored because of their involvement in the processes in Ukraine and around Ukraine.

Thus, the ways and prospects of the settlement will depend on the negotiation of compromise positions on known key issues: membership in NATO and the status of Crimea and the economy that must be placed at the forefront and the issues of territorial management, with regard to the ethnic composition of the population. The problem of a higher level is the demand of the Russian leadership to the US and the EU to stop the “export of democracy” within the boundaries of the former Soviet Union, and in other places too, and to take into account the particular interests, the particular role and the responsibility of the Russian Federation in this area. Given the current situation, compromises can not be seen in almost all positions, although, in my opinion, they are possible under certain efforts of the sides for pragmatic reasons, including sharing awareness of the challenges and threats of a different order.

Based on current analysis of the situation, we should expect a continuation of confrontation, possibly with the transition of the conflict into a slow stage with mutual exhaustion, with attempts to destabilise the Ukrainian state with the help of various tools and demonisation of Ukrainian reforms; an expectation of weariness of the population from economic problems and the ruling elites being replaced by others, capable of finding compromises. Will the partners in the EU and US have the resources and patience enough to support reforms in Ukraine – this is also a factor that affects the prospects for conflict resolution. Russia will suffer because of the sanctions. But in this sense time is working against Ukraine. Russia has a much higher margin of safety. **New approaches and solutions in conflict resolution are needed.** I am not sure that the ruling elites in both countries can resolve the situation in cooperation and with due regard to mutual interests.

**– How (on what principles) should the relations between Ukraine and Russia be built today?**

One could simply answer: on the universally recognized principles of international law, the principles of civilized relations between states, meaning primarily the sovereignty, territorial integrity, etc. But that would be a formal answer. There is the real world and real-world examples where the rule of force prevails over international law. It is difficult to give prescriptions and even reason pragmatically in the situation which emerged between Ukraine and Russia.

The rhetoric on both sides defies the normal building of relationships. Emotions are running wild. In general, the rhetoric and the words in this situation are important. They should be changed first of all.

In addition, relations between states have not been interrupted. Economic relations continue, albeit in narrower confines; people maintain active contacts. In this situation, the responsibility of both states is seen primarily in the preservation of the mobility regime



for the public, including business entities. This is the groundwork for future. **It is important not to create an image of the enemy in the face of population. It should be borne in mind that the “current” Ukraine and the “current” Russia are not static images and stiffened structures with perennial leaders and dominant public sentiment. Building a relationship now, it is worth looking at least two generations ahead instead of “burning all the bridges.”**

Rationalism and pragmatism as well as realism can be regarded as the optimum principles of mutual relations in the current situation. All that is beneficial for the development of Ukraine and the building of a new state should be involved. Some of Kyiv’s actions in its relations with Moscow do not appear totally rational in terms of the economy, which, in my opinion, is crucial for reforms in Ukraine.

Constraints in the supply of agricultural products to Crimea to their producers and limiting air travel to Moscow is difficult to explain from a rational point of view, because these are detrimental for Ukraine itself. There are many emotions and slogans, supported by little real action to benefit from economic relations. On the other hand, a natural desire of Russia to have a friendly state as a neighbour is in contradiction with the real actions of the Russian leadership. A radical change for the sake of the future is also needed here.

**– What kind of relations will Kyiv and Moscow have in the coming years?**

It’s hard to be optimistic in this regard. My prediction is that the relationship will not be completely severed; it will be built as long as compromise is found, but will remain extremely tense. The divorce has already taken place, but needs to be secured to the degree of irreversibility on the initiative of Kyiv. The divorced parties have not remained friends, but have not become mortal enemies for objective reasons. Both sides will attempt to maintain the minimum required economic and political cooperation, based on the realities and on survival limit. A possible change of leadership will fundamentally change nothing. Over time, the tactics can be changed toward greater pragmatism, compromise and a lower level of conflict. Moscow will be concerned about the recovery of Ukraine as a friendly country in the future and will stop trying to exert an active influence on Ukraine. A key issue will be the extent to which Kyiv and its partners will be able to remove the concerns of Moscow about potential security threats that the new Ukrainian state poses, according to Moscow.

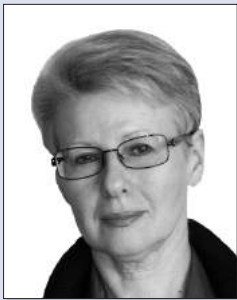
Currently, both sides are limited by internal political objectives. Kyiv is limited to compromises that are acceptable to both sides on account of the unstable state of authority. The Russian leadership is concerned about the possible external attempts of political destabilisation of Russia and is busy restoring Russia's status as a global player. In this context, the example of Ukraine is indicative for Russia.

Relationships will be built progressively with the cessation of armed confrontation and the demilitarisation of Donbas. With the retention of territorial integrity, everything will fall into places over time in a natural evolutionary course with the strengthening of the state and development of integration processes with the EU. The problem with the territory of Crimea, apparently, will also be fixed de facto and de jure by each party in its own way and will remain for future generations to solve.

In the coming years, the key problems between Kyiv and Moscow will remain, as follows:

1. acceptance by Moscow of the new Kyiv authorities with their European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations, the search for ways to preserve and develop economic cooperation based on deepening ties between Ukraine and the EU as part of this association;
2. preservation of Ukraine's de facto non-aligned status, despite preparations for NATO membership;
3. the issue of Crimea;
4. normalisation of life in the territory of Donbas and recovery of control to some extent on the part of Kyiv over the ATO territories. ■

#### WAYS AND PROSPECTS FOR NORMALISATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE



**Lilia SHEVTSOVA,**  
*Russian publicist*

##### **–What are the ways and prospects for settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?**

Relations between Russia and Ukraine – a dramatic example of civilizational collision, for which the world proved to be unprepared. Meanwhile, this collision was not at all unexpected. All the problems that have continually arisen in Ukrainian-Russian relations over the last decade, starting from the gas and trade wars and ending with an open, already “hot” war this time (though unrecognised by one party to the conflict), were the result of increasingly obvious incompatibility of the civilization vectors of these states. Moscow tolerated Ukraine's presence in the “grey zone”, when Ukraine was still hesitating about its regulatory choice and



tried to drift between the West and Russia, which was beginning to position itself as an alternative to the West. However, after the fall of Viktor Yanukovich's regime and Ukraine's transition from a policy of hesitation to a focus on Europe, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia became inevitable.

There are several systemic causes that determine this inevitability. **First**, on Putin's return to the Kremlin in 2012 as President, the Russian political regime switched to a new formula of survival, from the imitation of liberal institutions and ideas of “movement in Europe” to deterrence of the West (and its principles) both in Russia and in the former Soviet Union. **Second**, Putin's Russia began to consider itself a centre of the geopolitical galaxy, which must resist the western model of integration. **Third**, the Kremlin has put forward a claim to the role of a carrier of traditional values, alien to the liberal West, and not only in Russia. **Fourth**, the Kremlin attempted to shift the objective of protecting Russian citizens outside of Russia (however, after the failure of the “Novorossiia” project, this problem has been pushed into the background). The new doctrine of survival of the autocratic system thus gained revisionist and even revanchist potential.

**In a situation when Ukraine was perceived by the Russian political class as a “suburb” of Russia and the most important component of the empire, and Ukrainians – a component of the “Russian people”, Ukraine's leaving the Russian orbit was perceived as a threat to the survival of the Russian state.** The political design of the new Russian doctrine – “Putin's Doctrine”, which has been reflected not only in the speeches of the leader, but also in the updated concept of Russian foreign policy, was completed in early 2013 (although this process actually began immediately after the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004). In short, already before the Ukrainian Euromaidan, it was obvious that the system of autocracy set itself up for a more militant means of reproduction – and that the system would respond to the Ukrainian events.

In a situation where due to a lack of internal resources and the inability of the Russian authorities to respond to the problems of internal development, the Kremlin began to reformat the internal challenges, making it all the more obvious that Ukraine had become a major factor in Russia's domestic politics. The idea is that the Kremlin used the Ukrainian developments and



anti-Ukrainian propaganda as the most important element (and very successful at the initial stage, throughout 2014) to restore the state patriotic and militaristic legitimacy of power. By the end of 2015, evident attempts have been made by Kremlin to dampen the Ukrainian issue, which started losing its “mobilizing” impact on the population. However, the transition of the system of autocracy to a stage of decline increases the need to appeal to foreign policy arguments and the “Ukrainian card” may be called upon again.

**At the same time the nature of relations between Russia and Ukraine is affected by the situation in Ukraine itself and its capacity for a serious diplomatic and military-political response, and the position of the West (and especially its main actors – the US and Germany) regarding the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.** The weakness of the Ukrainian state, demoralisation of the elite and the degradation of the Ukrainian army at the end of 2013 undoubtedly became a serious issue that influenced the decision of the Kremlin to keep Ukraine in Russia’s “embraces” using force. The crisis of the EU and the isolationist trends in American foreign policy, as well as President Obama’s lack of interest in a response to international crises, the policy of connivance of Western leaders towards the Kremlin policy – all this has also become an important incentive for the Kremlin’s actions.

The shock and paralysis, as well as the slow response of the West to the Russian annexation of Crimea urged the aggressive actions of the Kremlin in the east of Ukraine. It is unlikely that Moscow would dare to wage war on Ukraine given a clear and unified position of the Western community as regards Russian policy at the previous stage. So, it is safe to conclude that the strong position of the West to curb the Kremlin’s aggression against Georgia in 2008 could have prevented the repetition of aggression in the case of Ukraine. Therefore, the Western leaders certainly bear their share of responsibility for creating a situation that provokes forceful adventures by the revanchist forces in the Kremlin.

But by mid-2014, apparently, it became clear in the Kremlin that a rapid and successful blitzkrieg in Ukraine, leading to disintegration of the country and formation of a pro-Russian enclave of “Novorossiya” would fail. Since autumn 2014 Moscow is starting to look for ways to end the war in Ukraine, but on its own terms. These terms are as follows: Ukraine remains within the Russian sphere of influence and outside the field of security and influence of Europe (i.e. outside NATO and the EU); Moscow has an impact on the constitutional format of the Ukrainian state; Ukraine becomes a de facto confederation and the Ukrainian South-East becomes a region controlled by Moscow. In fact, we are talking about the transformation of Ukraine into a buffer zone between Russia and Europe under Russian dictate. The escalation of armed pressure applied by Russia and its direct invasion into Ukrainian territory have become a tool for coercing Ukraine into peace on Moscow’s terms.

The formula of Minsk I and Minsk II peace talks was a reflection of the impasse when Ukraine and Russia still have incompatible ideas about a peaceful



solution, and the West is unable to offer a solution that would suit both sides and could be the basis for conflict resolution. And at the same time, the West is not ready to exert pressure on Russia with the purpose of returning the situation to the *status quo ante*.

The desire of the West to “close” the Ukrainian issue and achieve at least a simulation of conflict resolution is evident. Western mediators represented by Angela Merkel and François Hollande at least, throughout 2015, sought to resolve the conflict by partial restoration of the territorial integrity of Ukraine, meaning the return of the occupied Donbas to Ukraine, but with allowance for the wishes of Russia (this is a prerequisite of the policy of compromises by Merkel-Hollande). Meanwhile, this formula is either impracticable or threatens to undermine Ukrainian statehood. **Thus, any elections, even those held under Ukrainian law, before Ukraine regains full control over its portion of the border with Russia, and all illegal armed groups and arms are withdrawn from the territory of Donbas will represent the legalisation of a territory within the boundaries of the Ukrainian state only under the control of another.** This creates the impression that the West is ready to insist on elections in Donbas in the presence of illegal groups and given the open the border with Russia (I would be delighted to be proved wrong) that turns these elections into a farce, and legitimizes the entrenchment of a separatist enclave in the “body” of the Ukrainian state, which will undermine its foundations.

In autumn 2015, the Kremlin offered the West an antiterrorist coalition that would enable Russia to get out of isolation and return to the forefront of the world as a member of the “World Concert” of great powers. It was a confirmation of the Kremlin’s desire to withdraw from the conflict with Ukraine, in particular through the exchange of agreements on Ukraine to assist the West in the fight against Islamic fundamentalism. A new political situation with so far unpredictable consequences has emerged.

It seems to me that at this point the potential of current Western leaders as mediators in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has been virtually exhausted and they could not offer anything new except for mutual concessions that did not satisfy both sides and turned them towards simulation. It was obvious



that Kyiv will never accept Moscow's demands, destroying the Ukrainian national framework. In turn, the Kremlin will never agree to fully abandon support for the separatist enclaves. All this, even given the de-escalation of military action, leads to a long-term conflict freeze and to a transformation of the currently occupied territories into an entity with a transitional status and questionable viability.

However, even if elections are held under Ukrainian legislation, the withdrawal of illegal armed groups from Donbas and the return of control over the Ukrainian border and full integration of the region into Ukraine will be a complex process. But even the solution of the Donbas issue does not mean establishment of a lasting peace between Russia and Ukraine on the basis of the provision of territorial integrity of Ukraine and its sovereignty. At present the Russian regime is seeking a balance between deterring the West and cooperating with it, trying to offer the West a new formula of "peaceful coexistence." **However, this formula does not mean the Kremlin is abandoning its spheres of influence and its attempts to keep the newly established independent states in Russia's sphere of interest. Moscow will search for more flexible forms of impact and will try to persuade the West to accept the policy of spheres of influence.**

Moreover, one should take into account the difference between the civilization vectors of Russia and Ukraine. This very fact (as well as the consequences of the war between the two states) largely complicates the restoration of trust between the two countries; and without trust we can not exclude new causes for tension. Thus, even when the majority of "Minsk formula" conditions is fulfilled (which is hard to believe) and with the West's readiness to take action to ensure peace in the region, systemic sources of conflict between Russia and Ukraine still remain, which could boil over at any moment.

Can the West exert pressure on Moscow to force it to completely abandon revenge and attempts to influence Ukraine? That is doubtful. The pressure Moscow exerts on Ukraine will be perhaps reduced only in the case of Ukraine's inclusion in NATO and application of the principle of collective defense, although even in this case, Ukraine (as has been the experience of the Baltic States) will always feel the "breath of Moscow" on the back of its neck. However, the issue of Ukraine's membership in NATO is not yet on the agenda. Current Western leaders (especially the top players – Berlin

and Washington), being committed to diplomacy and economic pressure (in the case of Russia, the latter was effective), will further endeavour to find a compromise that would take into account Moscow's demands – in their opinion, this is the only way to achieve peace. However there is a bitter irony in the fact that any attempt to find a compromise with this autocracy makes its leaders feel that the West is weak, and tempts them to continue a search for the "red line."

**– How (on what principles) should the relations between Ukraine and Russia be built today?**

These principles are known and have been repeatedly confirmed by international agreements after World War II. These are the principles of respect for the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of any state. **However, the thing is that non-liberal states, primarily Russia, are now offering their own interpretation of these principles, which constitutes a serious challenge for the world order.**

**– What kind of relations will Kyiv and Moscow have in the coming years?**

These relations will depend on the triad: on the situation in Ukraine itself and its ability to implement reforms that will lead to the strengthening of the integrity of the state and its viability; on how the Russian autocracy will defend itself and how Russian society is ready for the transformation; on the West's capability to overcome its current crisis and the loss of the vector and to return to development on the basis of normative values. The historical pause – the *interregnum*, that came after the falloff of the Soviet Union in 1991, which involved the West losing a reference point of value and its complacency that led to the crisis of the current model of liberal democracy, is apparently is coming to an end. **There is growing awareness in the West that the *status quo* politics should be changed to a policy of renovation and search for new development stimuli.** This instils hope that the West – not straight away, but will gradually return to the normative dimension of foreign policy and will become interested again in the destiny of states that are transforming themselves and need support of the Western community. This creates chances to draw attention to Ukrainian reforms. But the process of a new renaissance of the West will be a long one and we should not be lured by hopes that in the coming year the liberal democracies will support the movement of Ukraine to Europe.

In its turn, Russia is in the process of exhaustion of the autocratic system and it will face an inevitable deepening of the crisis. This crisis aggravates the unpredictability of Russian foreign policy – the autocracy, struggling for survival, is capable of any zigzag movements and convulsions. Therefore, a new aggravation of relations between Russia and Ukraine cannot be ruled out.

**However, no matter how complicated the dynamics of processes in the post-Soviet space, where the process of disintegration of the Soviet Union is not over, it seems clear that Ukraine will float freely, having chosen its geopolitical and civilizational motion vector in Europe. It will be a difficult and painful path, as in other post-Soviet states. However the success of Ukraine on this path creates the prospect and an example of European orientation for Russia, even in the longer run.** ■

# RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT: THE VIEW OF WESTERN DIPLOMATS AND EXPERTS<sup>1</sup>

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has affected the security situation on the European continent and in the whole world, changed the atmosphere and nature of the West-Russia relations.

The world diplomacy is working hard to find the ways and means for the settlement of this conflict. In April, 2014, Geneva became the venue of talks among Ukraine, the USA, the EU and Russia. Later, talks in the Normandy format were initiated, involving Ukrainian, German, French and Russian foreign ministers. In September, 2014, representatives of Ukraine, OSCE and the Russian Federation signed the Minsk agreements on settlement in the East of Ukraine. In February, 2015, leaders of the Normandy Four countries supported the Set of Measures at Implementation of the Minsk Agreements. At present, negotiations for settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict go on in different formats and on different international platforms.

Escalation of the war in Syria caused by Russia's military intervention and massive terrorist attacks in Paris prompted the world community to grope for answers to new challenges and threats, make more efforts for settlement of «frozen» and «simmering» conflicts.

In this connection, the opinions and assessments of the head of diplomatic missions accredited in Ukraine are of interest. Ambassadors assessed international implications of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, suggested ways of its settlement, and elaborated what the West expected from Ukraine in the given situation.

## THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST SUPPORT UKRAINE



**Judith GOUGH,**  
*Ambassador Extraordinary and  
Plenipotentiary of the United  
Kingdom of Great Britain and  
Northern Ireland to Ukraine*

### – Which are the international consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?

Russian actions – its illegal annexation of Crimea and its military intervention in support of the so-called DNR and LNR in the Donbas – are a clear contravention of international law. They threaten Europe's stability and the international order. The Russian Federation has no right to interfere in the sovereign affairs of another state. It must allow the people of Ukraine to decide for themselves what sort of country they wish to build. For these reasons, EU sanctions must remain in place, until Russia fulfils her commitments under the Minsk Agreement. And we have not forgotten Crimea, for which separate EU sanctions remain in place.

### – What are the ways and prospects of resolving this conflict?

First and foremost, it is important that people understand the true nature of conflict in Ukraine and recognise

that this is not a civil war. In my short time here, I am struck more by the ties that bind Ukrainians (regardless of their backgrounds), than the differences which separate. There are plenty of people quick to criticise the Minsk agreements. But few, if any, can offer a credible alternative. So the Minsk agreements are the only realistic game in town. If implemented fully, they would allow Ukraine to regain control of its border with Russia and reassert its territorial integrity. The international community must support Ukraine until this happens – through maintaining sanctions and its support for reform. Then will come the need to mend those relationships broken by conflict, for reconciliation and for reconstruction of the areas damaged by the fighting.

### – Which steps does the West expect from Ukraine?

Ukraine needs to work on three main fronts. Firstly, it must continue to show that it is ready and willing to implement its Minsk commitments. It has, on the whole, a good story to tell. The Russian Federation and the so-called DNR and LNR must make good their commitments, especially in terms of a durable ceasefire and the withdrawal of armed formations. Secondly, Ukraine must push ahead with reforms to transform and modernise its institutions and economy.

Some real progress has been made, but much more needs to be done before the people of Ukraine can say that the goals of the Revolution of Dignity have been achieved. I would highlight the particular need to do much more to root out the cancer of corruption. I would also stress the vital importance of ensuring that ordinary Ukrainians have a clear sense of the government's reform priorities and receive regular updates – through the media, for example, – on the progress being made. And, finally, Ukraine will need to work hard to rebuild the internal relationships and ties that have been damaged in the current crisis.

<sup>1</sup> The interviews were taken in October-November, 2015.



Clearly, no two situations are the same, but one lesson from Northern Ireland that I would draw is the need for ongoing outreach between communities and the need for politicians to listen to ordinary people and their concerns. **There may not always be easy answers or solutions. But it's important that ordinary Ukrainians, wherever they live, feel that their government is on their side and trying to help.** ■

#### THE EMERGING ARMED CONFLICTS IN EUROPE ARE A STEP BACK



**Cornel IONESCU,**  
*Ambassador Extraordinary  
and Plenipotentiary of Romania  
to Ukraine*

##### – Which are the international consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?

Developments in Eastern Ukraine give good grounds for concern since they are a major source of insecurity in a state in the very vicinity of the EU and NATO. In the short run, the international community, mainly the European nations and particularly the ones neighboring Ukraine, is seeking to avoid Donbass' turning into a new frozen conflict. And here I would like to underscore Romania's being one of the countries that has constantly aimed at making the international public opinion aware of the risks originated in the wider Black Sea region as well as of the continued and protracted conflicts in the secessionist Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Nagorno-Karabakh.

The illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, followed by the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine, has put the EU-Russian Federation as well as the NATO-Russia military cooperation on hold.

Developments in Ukraine in the last two years have renewed the focus on the cooperation and efficiency of the regional security organizations. One should remember that OSCE launched a strategic dialogue on security in Europe in 2008 (also after an armed conflict, namely after the conflict in Georgia) aimed at i.a. rebuilding of the OSCE member nation's mutual confidence that had been seriously damaged by that armed conflict. The situation in Ukraine has furthermore affected the level of confidence in Europe and reconfirmed the fact that the efficiency of the OSCE inclusive dialogue platform depends first of all on member nations' political will of putting arrangements in place. The illegal annexation of a part of a state (the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol) by another state has further complicated the regional stability and security in our area.

Furthermore, conflicts and their consequences result into wasting of resources that could otherwise be channelled to and made available for fulfilling an enduring development and prosperity agenda. **The emerging armed conflicts in Europe are a step back that is wasting decades of diplomatic efforts aimed at the recovery of the unity of the continent.** Such conflicts are the most tangible piece of evidence of the re-emerging division lines in Europe.

##### – What are the ways and prospects of resolving this conflict?

It is of course hard to accurately predict the day when the current situation in Eastern Ukraine comes to an end. But what I can tell you is that international community is seriously seeking a solution. The very issue of fully implementing the Minsk agreements is evidence of as well as key to the necessity of agreeing on a deadline in that regard. Normandy format (Germany, France, Ukraine, Russia) is at work and the cease-fire truce agreed on in September holds on despite some provocations so one may say that there is encouraging evidence at this point.

**But we all believe that all actors involved in the management of the conflict in Donbass must understand that the solution depends first and foremost on themselves and their political will.** They must also agree on the fact that only a mutually accepted political arrangement can offer a solution in the long run.

And in these complex negotiations one should not forget a minute about the situation of the Ukrainian population in the area. At the end of the day, population is the one that should benefit from the restauration of a stable and secure climate and the recovery of the possibility of restoring their existence as it was before the conflict.

##### – Which steps does the West expect from Ukraine?

The West expects Ukraine to prove vision in the long run and to stay the European course mirrored by its commitment to an agenda of structural reforms capable of securing the grounds for its political association to and economic integration in the EU. This requires a European stance, observation of the Association Agreement, and fulfilment of the Visa Liberalization Action Plan (VLAP) prerequisites that can be all proven through continued and fast-tracked reforms as well as through responsible attitude towards Donbass. **At the same time, the West understands that Ukraine cannot possibly be successful by itself and that it needs political support and technical assistance in order to achieve these goals.** ■

#### THE BEST RESPONSE TO RUSSIAN AGGRESSION IS FOR UKRAINE TO SUCCEED AS A DEMOCRATIC, PROSPEROUS, EUROPEAN STATE



**Geoffrey R. PYATT,**  
*Ambassador Extraordinary  
and Plenipotentiary of the USA  
to Ukraine*

##### – What are the international consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?

As President Obama has said, the international community cannot stand by when the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a nation is flagrantly violated. Russia has flagrantly violated Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. What is at stake is a basic norm of international law, and the bedrock principle of the post-World War II European order that borders cannot

be changed by force. And this is why there is overwhelming international support for Ukraine, along with overwhelming condemnation of Russia's aggression.

**The United States is working to help Ukraine protect and defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity in a number of ways.** First and foremost, with our partners and Allies, we continue to press for full implementation of the Minsk Agreements. The United States believes the road to a solution of this terrible war lies in full implementation of the Minsk Agreement. Ukraine is implementing Minsk, while Russia and its proxies are not. We have imposed broad reaching sanctions on Russia and its proxies, and have made clear that if Russia fails to comply with Minsk, the costs will continue to increase.

As President Obama stressed in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly last month, there have been significant costs to Russia. The Ukrainian people are more committed than ever before to aligning with Europe instead of Russia. Sanctions on Russia have led to capital flight, a contracting economy, a weaker ruble, and a brain drain of highly educated Russians.

Since the beginning of the Revolution of Dignity two years ago, Ukrainians have been standing up for the universal values that unite what we call the West: sovereignty, territorial integrity, human rights, dignity, clean and accountable government, and justice. Ukraine's success is central to creating a more democratic, prosperous, stable Europe. Ukraine's aspirations are Western aspirations.

#### **– What are ways and prospects of this conflict regulation?**

The September 2014 and February 2015 Minsk agreements remain the best hope for peace, weapons withdrawal, political normalization, decentralization in eastern Ukraine, and the return of Ukrainian state sovereignty over that part of its border. Ukraine is fulfilling the Minsk Agreements, while Russia and its separatist proxies are not. As Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland has said, if these commitments are kept – if weapons are pulled back and stored, if the OSCE gets in, and legal, monitored elections are negotiated and held – Ukraine will once again have unfettered access to its own people and its territory. That's what Minsk promises: peace, weapons withdrawal, political normalization, followed by a return of the border.

And that's why the United States will continue to push for Russia to implement the remaining, unfulfilled aspects of the Minsk agreements: the return of all hostages, including Nadia Savchenko, Oleg Sentsov, and those held in Russia; full humanitarian access for UN agencies, Ukrainian NGOs, and government relief agencies; and the removal of all foreign forces, weapons, and landmines.

I know that many Ukrainians, and indeed some in the West, are deeply skeptical that Russia and its proxies will ever fully implement the Minsk agreements. But Minsk implementation remains, as Assistant Secretary Nuland has described, a goal worth fighting for. The alternatives for Ukraine are not attractive ones: at best, a frozen conflict in which Donbas becomes an unrecognized gray zone for the foreseeable future; and at worst, a return to the war that has already claimed too many Ukrainian lives.



The United States will continue to support Ukraine as it continues to implement Minsk. Along with the Normandy powers, France and Germany, we will continue to push Russia and its proxies live up to their side of the bargain. We will judge Russia and the separatists by their actions, not their words. We will work with our European partners to keep sanctions in place until the Minsk agreements are fully implemented. And of course, Crimea sanctions will remain in place for as long as Russia continues to illegally occupy that peninsula.

And we are not just providing moral support to Ukraine. The United States has committed to provide over \$548 million in assistance to Ukraine since the start of this crisis, in addition to two \$1 billion loan guarantees. We've also committed more than \$69 million in humanitarian support to help 2.4 million internally displaced Ukrainians through international relief organizations and local NGOs.

We've committed \$266 million in the security sector. This includes 130 HMMWVs, 150 thermal and night vision devices, over 300 secure radios, 5 Explosive Ordnance Disposal robots, and 20 counter-mortar radars. In addition to those radars, two more life-saving long-range counterfire radar batteries are on the way. Finally, we are running a \$19 million train and equip program for Ukraine's National Guard and will soon begin training Ukrainian Ministry of Defense forces using \$45 million in European Reassurance Initiative funding.

#### **– What steps in this situation does the West expect from Ukraine?**

**The best response to Russian aggression is for Ukraine to succeed as a democratic, prosperous, European state.** For that to happen, the Ukrainian government must continue to live up to its promises to its own people and maintain the trust of the international community.

We recognize that Ukraine has taken major steps to implement reforms, which we applaud. And the United States has partnered with Ukraine in key reform areas, such as the new patrol police being rolled out already in Kyiv, Odesa, Lviv, and Kharkiv, procuracy reform and retraining, and improving energy efficiency.

There are also areas that require significant further effort. For example, the United States would like to see procurement and revenue management reform in the gas sector, and unbundling of services along with the restructuring of Naftogaz by Ukraine's deadline of June 2016. Ukraine should continue the measures it's taking to stabilize the economy, and it should continue to reform its justice system to improve its efficiency and transparency. However, by far the biggest reform challenge lies in continuing the fight with corruption.

**Corruption throughout government and society, at every level, remains the greatest threat to Ukraine today. As I've said many times before, corruption is a bigger threat than Russian tanks.**

Just as Ukraine has reinvented its police force, the Prosecutor General's Office has to be reinvented as an institution that serves the citizens of Ukraine, rather than serving its own interests. It must investigate and successfully prosecute corruption and asset recovery cases – including locking up corrupt personnel in the PGO itself. These bad actors are making things worse by openly and aggressively undermining reform.

Relatedly, the new Inspector General's Office, led by David Sakvarelidze and Vitaliy Kasko, is critical to this effort. Their investigations into corruption within the PGO have delivered important arrests and have sent the signal that those who abuse their official positions as prosecutors will be investigated and prosecuted. The Inspector General's Office must be able to work independently and effectively, without political or judicial interference.

**The United States is with you throughout the difficult reform process.** Through training programs and other assistance, we are working with Ukraine to make judges independent so they can uphold the law free from political pressure. We continue to support your efforts to build a modern police force and public prosecution service focused on serving the citizens, and providing an equal playing field for all.

**Ukraine has every reason to succeed. This is a resource-rich country. Your highly educated workforce can supply Europe and its neighbors with human capital and competitive products. Ukraine's famous black earth already feeds the world. U.S. businesses will continue to look for opportunities to invest in Ukraine, provided Ukraine stays committed to reform, transparency, accountability, and clear rules, properly enforced. And if Ukraine keeps reforming, the United States government will keep helping.** ■

#### WE CAN ONLY HELP UKRAINE IF IT HELPS ITSELF



**Jon Elvedal FREDRIKSEN,**  
*Ambassador Extraordinary  
and Plenipotentiary of Norway  
to Ukraine*

#### **– What are the international consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?**

The conflict between Ukraine and Russia following the Maidan events have had broad impact on international relations. The annexation of Crimea has forced NATO and EU to analyze and deal with Russia in a different way. Furthermore the conflict has changed



the perception of a post-war, post-conflict Europe, where differences would be settled only by international law and peaceful processes. We may always discuss policy decisions regarding how we as European countries, how EU or NATO has dealt with Russia on different cross-roads. Nevertheless, to me there is no doubt that Russia, through its actions in Ukraine, bears the full responsibility of the unfortunate turn of events, trying to reinstall spheres of influences and zero sum games as the main drivers of international politics.

For a country like Norway this is worrying. We are like other smaller countries, dependent on international law to be effective and respected by greater powers. As a founding member of NATO and with good neighborly relations to Russia we do not feel our security threatened directly by this conflict. Still, we stand firm with those allies and neighbors deeply worried by Russia's more aggressive politics in the region.

#### **– What are ways and prospects of this conflict regulation?**

Therefore the Ukrainian conflict must be resolved politically. There is no other way. Minsk agreements, for all its shortcomings, is the best instrument we have, and must be respected by all sides to the conflict. Our role, as firm partner of Ukraine, neighbor of Russia, EU-partner and NATO-member is to take a firm stance on international law, support the Minsk process and OSCE special monitoring mission, and support Ukraine to become a functioning European state.

#### **– What steps in this situation does the West expect from Ukraine?**

**But, we can only help Ukraine if it helps itself.** To my mind we should expect the following of Ukraine: All branches of power must be committed to democratic reform and rule of law as well as good governance in accordance with international obligations. The systemic, not individual, fight on corruption must be number one on the to-do list. We do indeed see reform results, especially in the regulatory. However the tangible changes to secure rule of law are still in the preliminary stages. I am convinced that rule of law and stronger democratic institutions is the best defense for Ukraine. How can you build a strong and sustainable defense sector without it? ■





The Russian-Ukrainian conflict, observed since February, 2014, is not a local, “peripheral” event in the relations between Kyiv and Moscow. It acquired a regional and global dimension, posing a challenge and a threat for the global security system, fundamentally changed the West-Russia relations. The international community has not recognised the annexation of the Crimea, denounced the Russian military expansion in Donbas and imposed political and economic sanctions against the Russian Federation.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine – annexation of Crimea and the hybrid war in Donbas – is a topical subject of the international discourse. Experts analyse the reasons and sources of the conflict between Moscow and Kyiv, look for the ways and means of its settlement, predict further developments in the relations between the West and Russia.

#### TO APPLY PRESSURE ON RUSSIA WITH THE AIM TO CHANGE HER POLICY TOWARDS UKRAINE



**Alexander DULEBA,**  
Director, Research Center  
of the Slovak Foreign Policy  
Association

**– In your view, what are the means and future prospects for a settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?**

The question sounds whether the conflict can be settled with the present Russian leadership at all. The settlement would assume a dramatic change in Russia's approach towards Ukraine. In theory, there are three main options how that might happen: *first*, Russian leaders change their policy voluntarily, *second*, they will be forced to that end, and *three*, new leaders will come to power in Russia with different policy towards Ukraine. That's so far in theory. Having a deal with the present Russian leadership, a road towards the better relations between Russia and Ukraine, if not towards the settlement of the conflict, starts in Donbas and Crimea. In Donbas, first step in the above direction are fair and transparent local elections upon Ukrainian law and under OSCE monitoring. As far as Crimea is concerned, the only solution of its status that can be accepted internationally is a status, which will be agreed by Ukraine. However, we are very far away from such a state of affairs in Russian-Ukrainian relations.

**– What are the facilitating and restraining factors (both internal and external) that influence relations between Kiev and the West in the context of Ukraine-Russia conflict?**

The crucial factor, which frames the West policy towards Kiev is understanding that Russia violated sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine by acts of aggression. Regardless of some voices in the West that try to relativize Russian aggression against Ukraine, there is prevailing reading of the conflict as “European crisis”, which, *first*, threatens European security in unprecedented way since the end of the WWII, *second*, undermines sovereignty of post-Soviet countries as well as existing international regime in post-Cold War Europe. **Interests of most of European states are in stake and therefore most of European governments view support for Kiev as their vital national interest.** At the same time, there is clear apprehension in the West that Ukrainians only can change and defend their own country. The most restraining factor in the West approach towards Kiev concerns corruption in Ukraine

and worries about a capacity of the current Ukrainian government to implement reforms. Of course, problems with Greece and recently with migration crisis are drifting focus of European governments; nevertheless Ukraine remains on the top of their policy agendas.

**– How (according to what principles) should Western nations carry out relations with today's Russia?**

*First*, Europeans should be ready for a war. *Second*, they should apply pressure on Russia with the aim to change her policy towards Ukraine, including by political and economic sanctions. And finally, they should support Ukraine and the Eastern Partnership countries in their reform process so that in the end of the day Eastern Partners will become full-fledged members of the EU. Successful European transformation of Ukraine is the best “Russia policy” of the West for years to come. ■

#### TO RECOVER FROM THE CRISIS, THE UKRAINIANS SHOULD IN THE FIRST PLACE RELY UPON THEMSELVES



**Tatiana KASTOUÉVA-JEAN,**  
Head of the Russia/NIS Center  
at the Institut français des  
relations internationales

**– What are the ways and prospects of settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?**

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has two component parts: the Crimea, and Donbas. As regards the Crimea, currently it looks apparent that Russia's Russia will under no circumstances give the peninsula back. The thing is that giving it back would mean the fall of the president's rating and, possibly, the “political death” of Vladimir Putin's regime. In the nearest future, under the current regime, the solution of that question seems final and irreversible. In a longer run, after the retirement of Vladimir Putin, there may be a talk about another referendum in the Crimea that may well confirm the desire of the peninsula residents to stay a part of Russia. Anyway, that annexation will forever stay a black spot in the history of the Russian-Ukrainian relations.

The problem of Donbas is different. While the Kremlin, to all appearances, has given up the “project of Novorossiia” – New Russia (*Ed.*), and even the leaders of the separatist republics of “DPR” and “LPR” claim their desire to stay in Ukraine, with a special status though, there is a risk that the region will stay a grey zone with an indefinite future for a long time. **It is absolutely apparent that Russia's goal will**

remain the same: to influence the strategic choices of Ukraine, the choice of its alliances, to push for its non-bloc, neutral status. Donbas is to become a tool of influence, where the degree of tension and resistance to Kyiv's government may be easily raised, if necessary. For that, Russia wants that region to be in Ukraine. The concept of "Novorossiya" might have been taken seriously at the beginning of the crisis but soon became a "bugaboo" to raise stakes, to take an advantageous position at negotiations and to make an impression of softening its line with further repudiation of that project.

The scenarios of developments may be different. They may include a special status for Donbas, which may cause dissent of many political forces in Ukraine, as was witnessed by the turmoil at the doors of the [Verkhovna] Rada in late August, 2015. A frozen conflict seems another probable scenario. By the way, at present, actually all countries of the Eastern Partnership, except Belarus, have frozen conflicts on their territory, in one or another way involving Russia and giving it tools of influence on national governments, barring their rapprochement with the European Union and the USA.

In any event, there arises a question of economic recovery of the region. Due to the difficult economic situation in Ukraine, the region may for a long time stay an open wound, barring restoration of the Ukraine-Russian relations. **By and large, some kind of a *modus vivendi* with Russia may be found, with regular crises though, for instance, focused on energy supply and transit. But unfortunately, there can be no talk of full-scale conciliation and beginning of a new stage in the foreseeable future.**

Irrespective of its relations with Russia, Kyiv should retune its policy towards Donbas: for full-scale reintegration of the region, in the long run, a policy of involvement of its population, rather than punishment for separatism, might win sympathies and change the general attitude towards Kyiv in the region.

**– What facilitates, and what bars the development of relations of the Western countries with Ukraine in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?**

The Maidan events have had strong repercussions among the Western public and caused a tide of sympathy for the nation trying to leave the sphere of influence of Russia that does not enjoy much of a positive image in the West. Later, other factors came to the forefront, both dependent and independent on Ukraine, making the Western attitude less unambiguous, and the West – not ready to fully and unconditionally support Ukraine.

**Firstly**, economic problems of the Euro zone bar sufficient funding of Ukraine for prompt crisis recovery. Beyond doubt, the problem of the Greek debt crisis has become an extra serious obstacle for that. Regarding the allocated funds, the West has the right to demand their efficient use. **Two points are important in this respect: fighting corruption, and de-oligarchisation of the economy.** The West believes that the Ukrainian authorities should be more active, quick and resolute fighting on those two fronts. Additionally, in order to boost the economy, it is important to create the best conditions and complete guarantees for domestic and foreign investors.

**Secondly**, Ukraine's internal politics are unclear for the West, specifically, the rivalry between President Petro Poroshenko and Prime Minister Arseniy Yatseniuk arouses strong criticism, clearly resembling the rivalry

of Viktor Yushchenko and Yuliya Tymoshenko. Furthermore, many of Kyiv's decisions met controversial reaction in the West, among them – the appointment of Mikheil Saakashvili, the former President of Georgia as the Head of the Odesa Regional Administration, seen as an unnecessary provocation against Russia. Other dubious decisions included the laws of historic memory and rehabilitation of questionable historic figures, which may put the unity of the nation to a new test at this difficult time.

**Thirdly**, the West is interested in relations with Russia – a member of the UN Security Council, a nuclear power, an energy supplier, a market, in which, Western companies have invested huge funds. Furthermore, Russia is a key partner in other global case files, such as the Middle East; in particular, the Syrian crisis put on the agenda a dilemma for the West: how should the West cooperate with a country, sanctioned because of Ukraine?

And **finally**, great many problems faced by the West at a time (of migrants, Greece, economy, Ukraine, Syria) pave the way for a compromise in the least "pressing" domains. That said, the West is not united in its approach: there are differences between the USA and the European Union (for instance, in the issue of possible arms deliveries to Ukraine, strongly opposed in the EU, by contrast to the USA) and within the EU, between the "old" and "new" members. So, most probably, the policy of the West will continue to straddle different poles. In the end, Ukrainians should rely upon themselves to recover from the crisis.

**– How (on what principles) should the Western countries build relations with present-day Russia?**

In early 2015, Dmitriy Medvedev said that the Russian response to disconnection from the SWIFT would be "unlimited". One might expect a similarly "unlimited" response to US arms deliveries to Ukraine. Today, the Western diplomacy faces a very difficult task: to find equilibrium in the relations with Russia between readiness for negotiations, on one hand, and pressure (sanctions, additional security guarantees within the NATO framework) for the defence of its principles and values, on the other hand. Russia remains an important economic, geopolitical, energy partner. **There is no other option apart from a combination of diplomatic negotiations (in the Minsk format) and military signals (rise in defence budgets, guarantees for the Baltic and Central European states within the NATO framework).** Much attention must be paid to Serbia and Montenegro, the candidates for the EU membership with traditionally strong Russian influence.

One should also not forget about initiatives targeting rank-and-file Russians. It is erroneous to assume that the strong support for the president by the Russians is a result of pure propaganda. The Russian society indeed strongly miscomprehends what happens in Europe in many fields: migration policy, marriage for all, secularism, multiculturalism. Ever less room remains for manifestation of solidarity among the peoples. Neither the Olympic Games, nor the response to the terrorist attacks in Paris against *Charlie Hebdo* editorial board in January, 2015, or the Nobel Prize in literature for the Russian-writing Belarusian authoress Svetlana Alexievich have become such uniting factors. Today, the West is an anti-model for Russians. The trajectories of development of the societies sharply diverged and continue to diverge further, and Russia's foreign policy will stay a hostage to internal evolution of its political regime and society. ■

# THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT: EXPERTS' OPINIONS

Expert polls by the Razumkov Centre on foreign policy issues enable the identification of experts' positions and evaluations. The past ten years have seen a series of expert surveys on issues surrounding Ukraine-Russia relations. The last two surveys — the previous one (October 2014) and this one (November 2015) — reflect the attitude of the Ukrainian expert community to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the dynamics of expert evaluations during the year.<sup>1</sup>

There is no reason today to speak of any conflict resolution in the nearest future; on the contrary, Moscow is still waging its “hybrid” war against Ukraine, the Donbas situation threatens not only to evolve into a “frozen conflict”, but to provoke further military expansion aimed at the destruction of Ukrainian statehood.

Russian aggression which has lasted for almost two years prompts us not only objectively to assess the current state of relations between Ukraine and Russia, but also to identify practical steps and measures to counter the expansion of the Russian Federation and attempt to form a new vision of Ukraine's policy towards Russia.

Expert opinions are important to understand the consequences of the conflict, forecasting further development of events and to search for a new model of relations with Russia.

The poll suggested that the experts assess the state of relations between Kyiv and Moscow, the situation in the east of Ukraine, it predicted the scenario and noted certain conceptual approaches to forming relations with Russia.

The survey findings give grounds for the following observations and conclusions.

## Implications and prospects of the Russia-Ukraine conflict

**In the experts' opinion, the most negative consequence of the Russia-Ukraine conflict is the breakdown of economic ties.** A large proportion of respondents noted, among other negative consequences, an increase in a negative attitude of Ukrainians and Russians towards each other, and a deterioration of interstate political and diplomatic relations. It should be noted that, in the previous survey, experts mainly stressed an increase in the negative attitude between Ukrainians and Russians. These changes may result from the fact that the deterioration of interpersonal relations is already seen as obvious, as a proven fact.

**What will contribute most to settlement of the Russia-Ukraine conflict is international pressure on Moscow and expansion of Western sanctions on Russia.** In addition, the experts regard the mediation efforts of third countries and international organizations as quite effective means. The respondents consider the military operations on instituting control throughout Ukraine as being a somewhat heavy-handed approach. However, the experts do not exclude that the driver in resolving the conflict may be the awareness of that further loss of life on both sides is simply inadmissible.

**The majority of respondents shared the opinion that no concessions should be made to Russia and the separatists in the process of conflict resolution.** At the same time, most experts speak out against granting special status to Donbas or Ukraine rejecting joining the EU and NATO for the sake of peace-making. None of the experts agree that Ukraine should waive claims concerning the illegal annexation of the Crimea.

**Opinions regarding the tactics and strategy of Ukraine's actions towards Russia are rather ambiguous.** Most experts are critical of the tactics and strategy of action of the Ukrainian leadership. However, as compared with the previous poll, a slightly greater number of respondents agree that the nation's leaders do have an action plan regarding Russia. Most experts are in no doubt that the Russian leadership is employing tactics and a strategy of action towards Ukraine.

**The most realistic scenario of further development of Ukraine-Russia relations is conflict suspension followed by a period of non-weapons-based confrontation.** This opinion is shared by most respondents. As compared with the previous survey, the share of those who predicted further escalation of the conflict has decreased.

<sup>1</sup> The latest expert poll was conducted by the Razumkov Centre on 9 to 27 November 2015. The survey covered 80 experts representing the central and regional authorities, governmental and non-governmental research institutions, independent experts and representatives of the media.

The findings of this survey are compared with the findings of the previous poll (October 2014) published in the National Security and Defence magazine, 2014, No.5-6, pp.60-67.



## Situation in Eastern Ukraine

Summing up the experts' views and opinions on the situation in Eastern Ukraine, we can state the following:

**First.** According to the absolute majority of respondents, **Russia is an aggressor state and a party to the conflict.** None of those polled said that Russia is not involved in the Donbas events.

**Second.** The respondents generally believe that the so-called “DPR” and “LPR” are **terrorist organisations** that have no right to represent the population of the respective territories. Only one in ten holds the opposite opinion.

**Third.** Most experts support the idea of **prolonging the anti-terrorist operation** until full control is gained over the respective territories. Every fifth respondent shares the opinion that these territories within Ukraine should be granted special status, while every sixth respondent emphasizes the separation of these areas from Ukraine.

**Fourth.** The current results of Minsk II received mixed opinions: the respondents assess almost the same parts thereof as either negative or neutral. Only every sixth respondent was positive.

**Fifth.** Evaluating the options for resolving the situation in Donbas, most experts believe that granting special status to these territories within Ukraine presents a greater threat to Ukraine, while one third consider the freezing of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine to be a threat.

## International dimension of the Russia-Ukraine conflict

**The effectiveness of Western sanctions towards Russia received conservative estimates.** The expert assessment of their effect is 2.9 (on a five-point scale). This result is slightly lower as compared with the previous survey.

**According to most experts, the West would gradually ease the sanctions and seek a compromise with Russia.** Every fifth respondent predicts that the level of the West-Russia confrontation will remain at the current level, while only one in ten believes that the West-Russia confrontation will become more acute.

**Most experts do not rule out the possibility of further Russian military expansion (after Ukraine and Syria) to other countries.** Only every sixth respondent holds the opposite opinion. Stressing the possible further expansion, the respondents primarily referred to the Baltic States and Moldova, followed by Belarus and Kazakhstan. Thus, according to experts, there is a threat of further Russian expansion into neighbouring countries.

## Conceptual approaches and Ukraine's practical steps towards Russia

**Today, the most optimal model of relations with Russia is “limited coexistence”,** which provides for a strong defence of national interests and identification of a package of issues where compromise is not possible (the Crimea issue, Ukraine's European integration, its state and political system and so on). This opinion is supported by most experts. However, every fifth respondent favours a tougher option of curtailing cooperation and contacts with Russia as an aggressor state, which de facto means being in a state of “cold war”. However, none of the respondents shares the idea of returning to the previous practice of a declarative strategic partnership.

The experts name the following as the most important steps aimed at opposing Russian aggression: a) strengthening and modernisation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other security forces; b) implementation of effective domestic reforms; c) freedom from economic and energy dependence on Russia; d) effective use of foreign aid; e) opposing the information influence of the Russian Federation.

**Generally speaking, the experts do not expect any changes in the political regime in Russia.** Half of them believe that the current regime in Russia (Putin's next term of office) will be preserved. Every fifth respondent predicts a change in the Kremlin leadership with either a positive or negative outcome, while every sixth anticipates the economic collapse and dissipation of the Russian Federation.

**The alienation between Ukrainians and Russians will take many years to overcome; this opinion is shared by most respondents.** A small proportion of respondents believe it possible within 1 to 10 years. Few or no respondents deny such alienation. Thus, the experts believe there is a “watershed” between the citizens of the two countries.

**In the nearest future, the attitude of Ukraine to Russia will be determined by the outcome of Russia's aggression.** In the experts' opinion, the attitude of Kyiv to Moscow will be determined by the following: the human cost of the war in Eastern Ukraine; territorial losses (the annexation of Crimea and the occupation of certain areas of Donbas); financial and economic losses caused by Russian aggression; distrust of the current Russian leaders. These are the factors that will determine the long-term nature, specifics and atmosphere of relations between Ukraine and Russia.

The experts, while supporting the format of “**forced coexistence**” with Russia, define the new principles of Ukrainian policy towards Russia. In general, the picture is as follows:

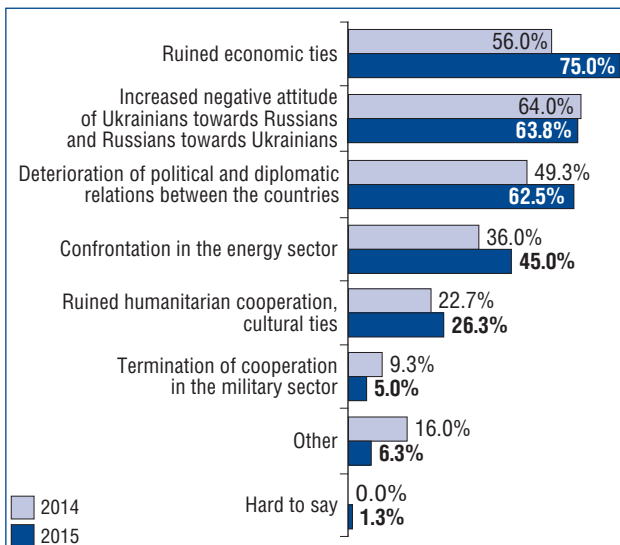
- Russia is an aggressor country. No normalisation of relations is possible with the present Russia.
- It is possible to reduce but not to completely neutralise Russia's negative influence on Ukraine's security; therefore, Russian aggression can be countered effectively only through joint international efforts.
- Such formulae as “strategic partnership”, “good-neighbourly relations”, “brother nations” are unacceptable as the principles of relations between Kyiv and Moscow, as well as the Russian model of state and political development. There are a number of issues, on which no compromise with Russia is possible.
- Kyiv will not take part in any integration projects in the post-Soviet space under the aegis of Moscow; the European integration of Ukraine has no alternative and is irreversible.
- Any change for the better in relations between Kyiv and Moscow must be conditioned by the following: termination of Russian aggression against Ukraine and the return of the occupied territories, compensation for damage caused by the annexation and military operations.

**Summing up the experts' opinion, it should be noted that the current situation in the relations between Kyiv and Moscow requires a new assessment and review of the nature, ideology and entire institutional system of relations with Russia in key areas, in view of the fact that the main threat to Ukrainian statehood lies in Russia's current policy towards Ukraine.**

## CONSEQUENCES AND PROSPECTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

### What are the most negative consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict for the bilateral relations?\*

% of respondents



\* Experts were asked to choose three acceptable options.

### Do Ukrainian leaders have....?

% of respondents



### What can facilitate the resolution of the Russia-Ukraine conflict?\*

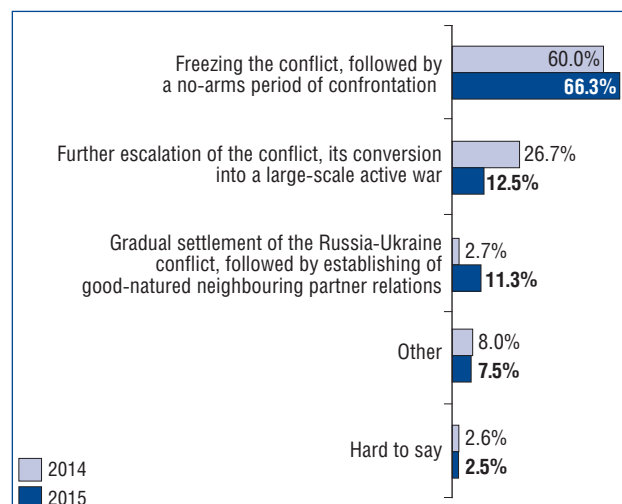
average score



\* On a five-point scale from 1 to 5, where "1" is the minimum facilitation and "5" – the maximum.

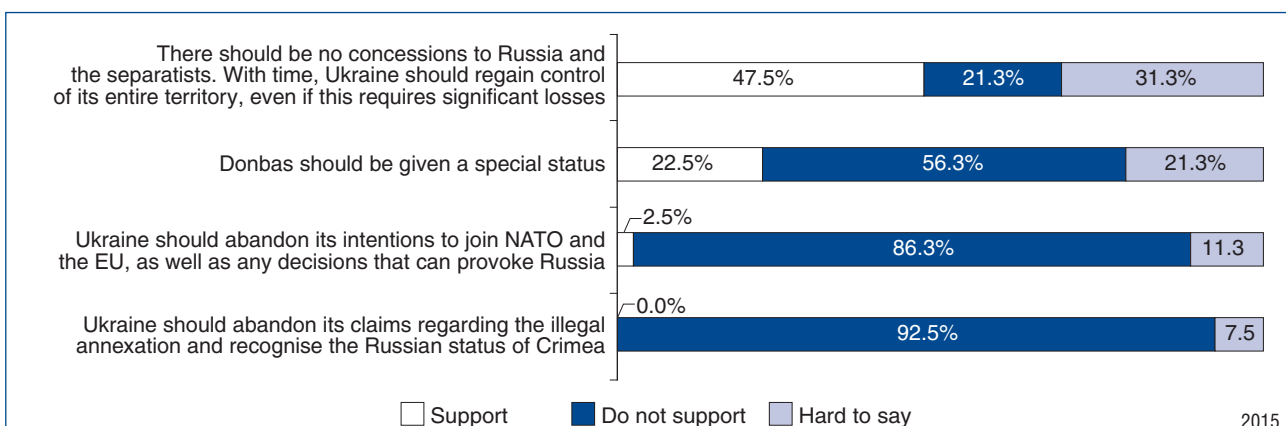
### What is the most realistic scenario of further development of relations between Ukraine and Russia in the nearest future (1-2 years)?

% of respondents



### Do you support the presented possible solutions for settling the Russia-Ukraine conflict?

% of respondents

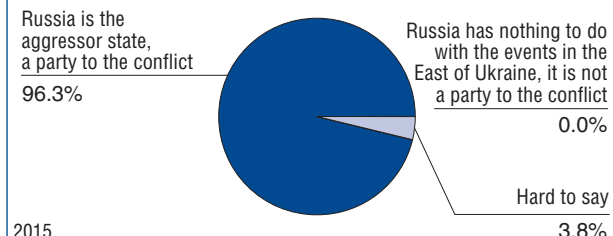


2015

## SITUATION IN THE EAST OF UKRAINE

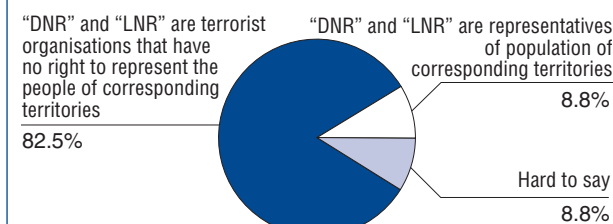
**With what opinions and assessments regarding the situation in the East of Ukraine do you agree most?**  
% of respondents

### Assessment of Russia's place in the conflict in the East of Ukraine



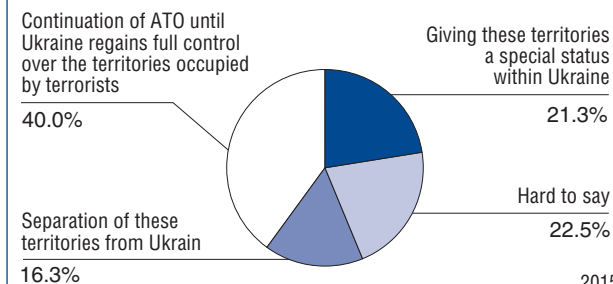
2015

### Assessment of "DNR" and "LNR"



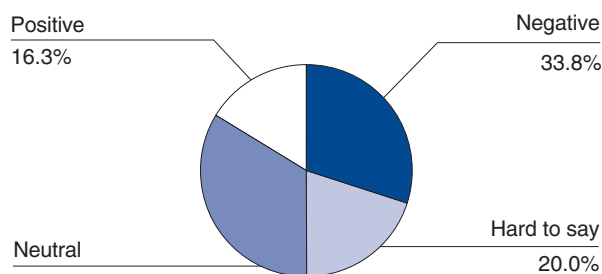
2015

### Further actions to resolve the conflict in the East of Ukraine



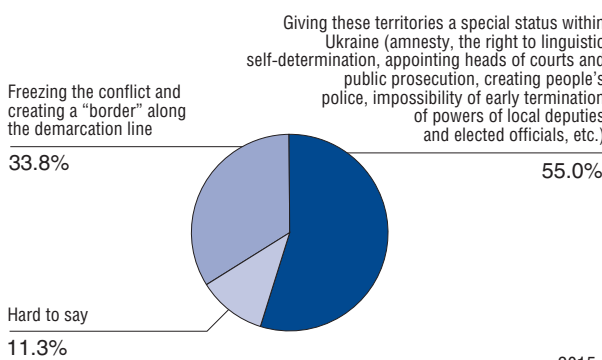
2015

**What is your assessment of current results of Minsk Agreements regarding the situation in Donbas?**  
% of respondents



2015

**Which option of settling the conflict in the East poses a bigger threat to Ukraine's stability and development?**  
% of respondents



2015

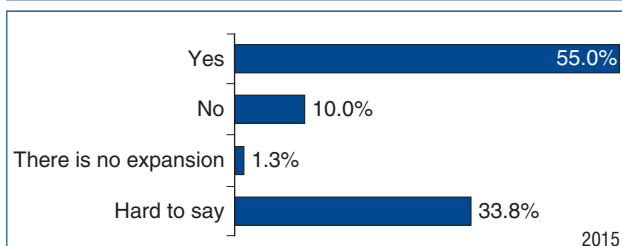
## INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

**What is your assessment of the efficiency of sanctions introduced by Western countries against Russia with the purpose of resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict?\***  
average score



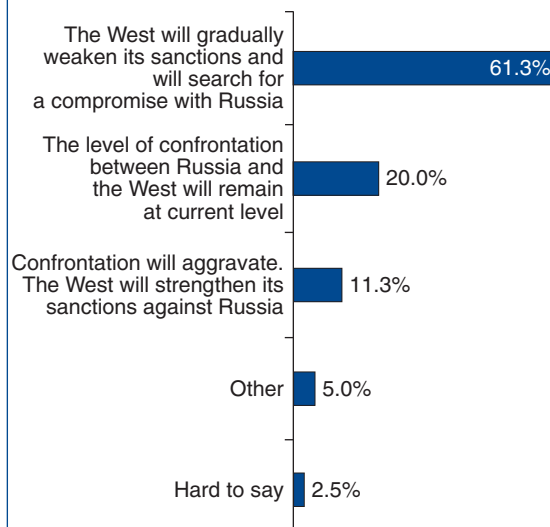
\* On a five-point scale from 1 to 5, where "1" means that sanctions are not efficient, and "5" – very efficient.

**Can Russia's military expansion (after Ukraine and Syria) spread to other countries?**  
% of respondents



2015

**Will the politics of Western countries change in the nearest future (1-3 years) in regard to Russia?**  
% of respondents

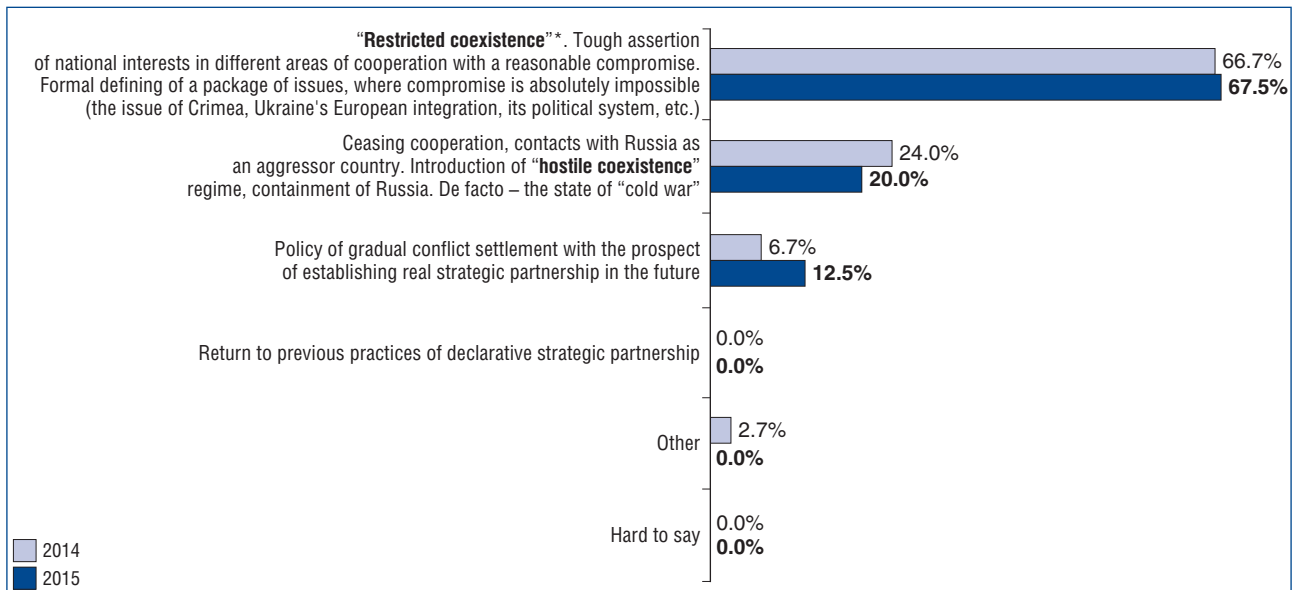


2015



## UKRAINE'S CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES AND PRACTICAL STEPS IN RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

**What model of relations with Russia is the most appropriate at this stage?**  
% of respondents



\* In the survey of 2014 this option was titled "restricted partnership".

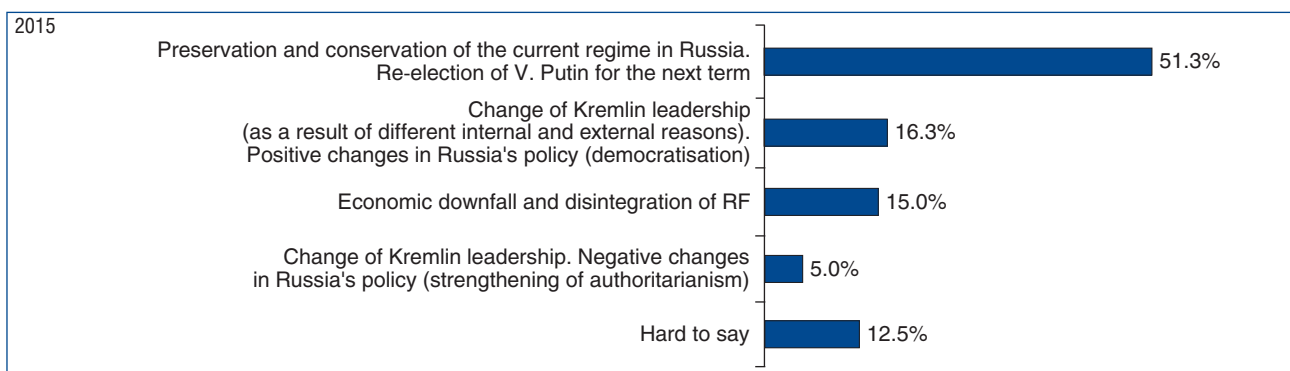
**Assessment of importance of the following practical steps Ukraine must take to resist Russia's aggression\***  
average score

Strengthening and modernisation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other security agencies (including, with the outside help), providing reliable protection of borders	4.8
Conducting efficient domestic reforms (overcoming corruption, reforms of judicial, law enforcement systems, etc.)	4.8
Shedding excessive economic, energy dependence on Russia	4.7
Effective use of external financial-economic support and political-diplomatic solidarity	4.6
Opposing Russia's informational influence	4.6
Tough assertion of national interests with involvement of third countries – Ukraine's partners and international organisations, in the process of negotiations with the RF	4.5
Successful integration in the EU	4.5
Realisation of NATO integration course with a prospect of membership	4.3
Reviewing (restricting/cancelling) contacts with Russia in different areas and sectors (foremost, in the area of military-industrial complex)	4.2
Review of regulatory framework of Ukraine-Russia relations taking into account the current state of bilateral relations	4.0
Review of bilateral institutional mechanisms of Ukraine-Russia relations	3.8
Implementation of Minsk Agreements	3.7
Introduction of visa regime with RF	3.5
Restoration of Ukraine's nuclear status	2.8
Other	3.0

\* On a five-point scale from 1 to 5, where "1" means "not important", and "5" – "very important".

2015

**What is the most realistic scenario of further development of the domestic situation in Russia?**  
% of respondents





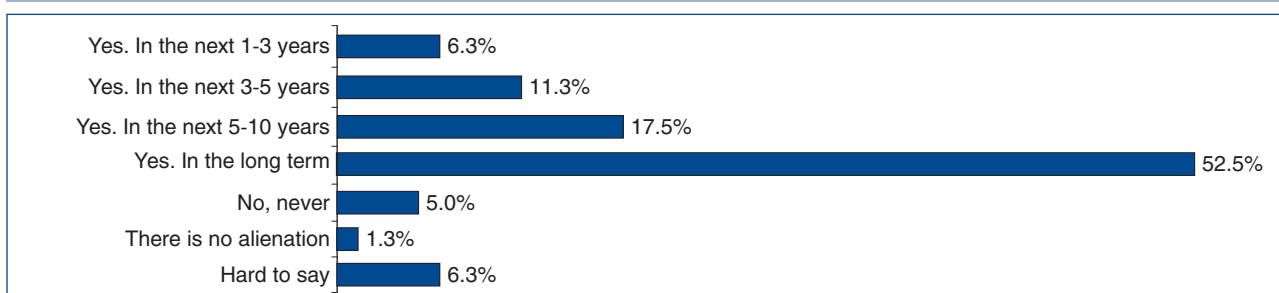
**What will be the strongest influence on Ukraine's attitude to Russia in the nearest future (1-3 years)?\***  
average score

Human losses in the East of Ukraine	4.6
Territorial losses (annexation of Crimea, occupation of separate districts of Donbas)	4.5
Lack of trust in current leadership of Russia	4.3
Financial and economic losses from the Russian aggression	4.0
Alienation between the citizens of Ukraine and Russia	4.0
Political and economic situation in Ukraine	4.0
Political and economic situation in Russia	3.6
Political and economic situation in Europe and the world	3.6
Position and influence of Western countries	3.4
Other	4.3

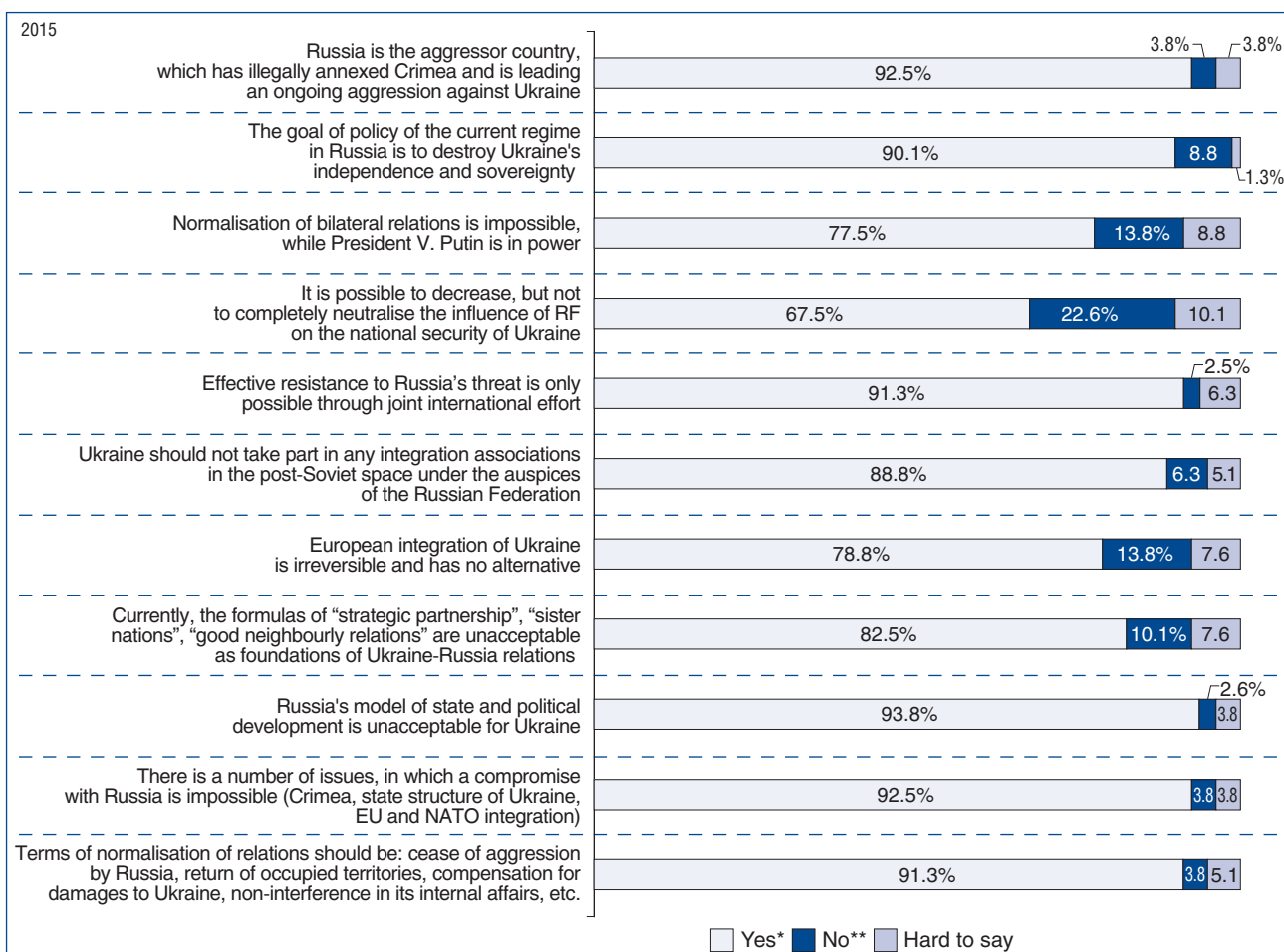
\* On a five-point scale from 1 to 5, where "1" means "the weakest influence", and "5" – "the strongest influence".

2015

**Is it possible to overcome the alienation between the citizens of Ukraine and Russia?**  
% of respondents



**Can Ukraine's policy towards Russia be based on the following grounds?**  
% of respondents



\* Sum of answers "yes" and "rather yes".

\*\* Sum of answers "no" and "rather no".

# UKRAINIAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS AS SEEN BY THE PUBLIC

Monitoring of public opinion is an important component of research conducted by the Razumkov Centre in foreign policy. The findings reflect the dynamics of Ukrainians' geopolitical orientations and make it possible to ascertain their assessment of relations with other countries and international organisations and to determine the respondents' attitude to current events in the world.

As a result of Russian aggression Ukrainian society has endured a considerable, "traumatic experience". During the hybrid war lasting from February 2014, public opinion and assessment of relations with Russia, Russia's policy towards Ukraine, the nature and prospects of contacts between Kyiv and Moscow have changed. The watershed of distrust to and alienation from the aggressor state has deepened. Obviously, it is this humanitarian component of the Russia-Ukraine conflict that will determine the nature, the atmosphere and the specifics of relations between Kyiv and Moscow for many years to come.

The social research conducted by the Razumkov Centre in November 2015 deals with the problems of Ukrainian-Russian relations.<sup>1</sup> The poll suggested that citizens assess the state of Ukraine-Russia relations, Russian policy towards Ukraine, outline the events in the East, predict further development of bilateral relations and express their opinions as regards Ukraine's foreign policy priorities.

## STATUS OF UKRAINE-RUSSIA RELATIONS

**Most citizens view the relations between Ukraine and Russia as hostile.** However, the share of respondents who think so, having reached its maximum (57%) in October 2014, has then been gradually decreasing (reaching 44% in November 2015). Simultaneously, the share of those who deem the relations to be bad, has increased (from 27% in October 2014 to 35% in November 2015). This may be due to the decrease in the intensity of fighting in the Donbas that, however, does not mean that the armed conflict cannot flare up again if influenced by a number of factors.

A paradox is that the closer one gets to the conflict zone, the lower the percentage of those who consider Ukrainian-Russian relations to be hostile: this share decreases from 58% in the Western region to 24% in the Donbas<sup>2</sup> (due to the increase in the share of those who consider them bad or unstable). This can be explained by the fact that residents of the eastern regions, with a traditionally higher degree of leaning toward Russia, tend to give more "moderate" appraisals of the Ukrainian-Russian relations.

In public opinion, **the main causes of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict** are Ukraine's attempts to escape from the influence of the Russian Federation, Russia's failure to accept Ukraine's focus on European integration, Russia's failure to accept Ukraine as an independent sovereign state pursuing an independent foreign policy and Ukraine's possible accession to NATO, posing a threat to Russia. All of them are related to a single, integrated reason: Russia considers Ukraine as falling

under its sphere of influence, Ukrainian independence as a "temporary" and "abnormal" phenomenon and it opposes Ukraine's attempts to escape from this influence using a whole range of methods, from economic pressure to armed hostilities against Ukraine and the support of terrorist organisations in its territory. Ukraine's integration into the EU and NATO is perceived by Russia as Ukraine's desire to release itself from Russia's influence.

Only a fraction of respondents (7%) believe that the reason for the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is the violation of the rights of Russian speakers in Eastern Ukraine. As we know, this is the reason given by Russia's leaders and the government-controlled media as the main cause of the Ukrainian crisis. In addition, the proportion of those citizens of Ukraine who share this opinion has decreased as compared to October 2014 (then it was 12%).

**The most negative consequence of the Russia-Ukraine conflict is the breakdown of economic ties between the countries.** This view is shared by most (56%) respondents. Then comes the deterioration of interstate political and diplomatic relations (39%) and confrontation in the energy sector (34%). As compared to previous surveys, we see a significant decrease in the proportion of respondents who, of the most negative consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, named the increase in the negative attitude of Ukrainians and Russians towards each other (for example, as compared to September 2015, their share declined from 40% to 28%). We can assume that the reason for this aspect falling by the wayside is that Ukrainians are gradually "getting used" to the fact that relations with Russians can no longer be the same as before the conflict.

<sup>1</sup> We use the findings of surveys conducted by the Razumkov Centre in recent years. The latest survey was conducted on 6 to 12 November 2015. The survey covered 2008 respondents aged over 18, in all regions of Ukraine, except Crimea and the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, using a sample representing the adult population of Ukraine according to basic social and demographic indicators. The survey sampling was constructed as multistage and random, with quota selection of respondents at the last stage. The theoretical sampling error (excluding the design effect) is no more than 2.3%, with a probability of 0.95.

<sup>2</sup> We use the following regional division: **West**: the Volyn, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil, Chernivtsi regions; **Centre**: the Kyiv, Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Kirovograd, Poltava, Sumy, Khmelnytsky, Cherkasy, Chernigiv regions; **South**: the Mykolaiv, Odesa, Kherson regions; **East**: the Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia, Kharkiv regions; **Donbas**: the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.





The vast majority of respondents (73%) noted that **relations between the people of Ukraine and Russia** have deteriorated over the last year. However, this proportion has been gradually decreasing (in October 2014 it amounted to 83%). It is entirely to be expected, given that in November 2015 the respondents compared the relationship with that of the end of 2014, when it was bad already, while in October 2014 the comparison was with the end of 2013, meaning with the situation before the Russian-Ukrainian conflict commenced.

**The attitude to the state leaders of Russia has been negative in 2014 and 2015.** In November 2015, the proportion of those having a negative attitude towards the President, State Duma and the Government of Russia exceeded 70% and was slightly higher than in April 2014. For example, if, in April 2014, negative attitude towards the President of Russia was expressed by 71% of respondents, in November 2015 this figure was 74%.

**The attitude to Russian citizens is better than that to the Russian government.** However, in comparison with April 2014, the number of Ukrainians having a positive attitude to Russians has fallen from 45% to 30%, while the share of those having a negative attitude has increased from 17% to 24% and the share of those with a neutral attitude has also increased from 33% to 38%. Thus, the relative majority of Ukrainians responded that they have a neutral attitude towards Russians. However such an attitude (especially in contrast to the traditional “brotherhood” between the two nations) can be seen as a distancing of Ukrainians from Russians.

The share of those having a negative attitude to both Russian state leaders and the citizens of Russia is the highest in the Western and Central regions. However, the negative attitude towards the state leaders of Russia prevails in all regions. As for the attitude to Russian citizens, a relative majority of respondents in the Eastern and Southern regions have a positive attitude; in the Donbas, roughly equal shares of respondents express a positive and neutral attitude; in the Central region, a relative majority express a neutral attitude; in the Western region, roughly equal shares of respondents have a neutral and negative attitude.

Presumably, the decrease in the intensity of fighting in the Donbas has led to a rapid decrease (September to November 2015) in the number of those who stated a feeling of alienation between the citizens (societies) of Ukraine and Russia from 65% to 52%. Such alienation is felt by most respondents in the Central, Western and Eastern regions. In the Donbas, a relative majority of respondents responded that they feel no alienation, while in the Southern region the shares of the former and the latter are approximately equal.

## SITUATION IN EASTERN UKRAINE

Assessing the situation in Eastern Ukraine, **most respondents answered that there is a separatist rebellion taking place, supported by Russia (32%) and a war between Ukraine and Russia (28%).** 16% say that there is a civil war going on in this region – a conflict between the pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian citizens of Ukraine, 8% think that there is a war between Russia and the USA, and 7% describe the situation as a struggle for independence of the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics.

Residents of the Western region tend to believe that there is a war between Ukraine and Russia in the East (45%) and a separatist rebellion supported by Russia (38%); residents of the Central region name a separatist rebellion supported by Russia (45%) and a war between Ukraine and Russia (30%); residents of the Southern region, that there is a separatist rebellion supported by Russia (25%), a civil war, a conflict between the pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian citizens of Ukraine (23%), a war between Russia and the USA (18%); while residents of the Eastern region name a civil war, a conflict between the pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian citizens of Ukraine (24%), a separatist rebellion supported by Russia (22%), a war between Ukraine and Russia (19%); and residents of the Donbas state there is a civil war, a conflict between the pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian citizens of Ukraine (35%) and a war between Ukraine and Russia (23%).

**The vast majority (72%) of Ukrainians believe that Russia is an aggressor state, a party to the conflict in the Eastern Ukraine, and that the so-called DPR and LPR are terrorist organisations that do not represent the population of the respective territories (64%).** Statistically, these results are not significantly different from those received in March and August 2015. Russia is considered an aggressor state by most residents of the Western (93%), Central (92%) and Southern (53%) regions and by a relative majority in the Eastern region (48%) and the Donbas (42%). DPR and LPR are believed to be terrorist organisations by the vast majority of the Western (86%) and Central (84%) regions and by a relative majority in the Southern region (48%). In the Eastern region and the Donbas, the shares of those who consider DPR and LPR terrorist organisations and those who believe that DPR and LPR represent the population of the respective territories are not statistically significantly different.

In assessing **what should be the next steps to resolve the conflict in Eastern Ukraine**, 34% of the respondents support the idea of prolonging the anti-terrorist operation until full control is regained over the territories currently occupied by the terrorists, 23% support granting special status within Ukraine to these territories and 20% favour the separation of these areas from Ukraine.

The respondents who favour the separation of these areas from Ukraine most often justify this opinion by the fact they do not want the residents of these areas to influence the policy of Ukraine and receive money from the Ukrainian budget (62%), while only 27% believe that residents of this region have the right to self-determination.

The share of respondents in favour of granting these territories a special status within Ukraine has decreased as compared with August 2015 (when it was 29%).

Typically, the idea of prolonging the anti-terrorist operation until full control is regained over the territories occupied by the terrorists is favoured by the residents of the Central (45%) and Western (43%) regions, while the idea of granting special status within Ukraine to these territories is favoured by residents of the Southern (31%) and Eastern (40%) regions and the Donbas (42%).

If Ukraine has to coexist with the uncontrolled part of the Donbas, almost half (45%) of the respondents consider it necessary to terminate any relations (including economic ties) between Ukraine and the uncontrolled part of the Donbas, and 28% think that the Donbas should be granted special status with the possibility of influencing Ukrainian policy, including foreign policy.

Termination of relations is favoured by the majority of respondents in the Western (56%) and Central (54%) regions. In the East, a relative majority (47%) are in favour of granting special status to the Donbas, while in the South and the Donbas, the shares of supporters for both points of view are not statistically that different.

**Evaluating which option for resolving the conflict in the East poses a greater threat to the stability and development of Ukraine** — either freezing the conflict and creating a “border” along the boundary line, or granting special status to these areas within Ukraine (amnesty, the right to linguistic self-determination, designation of court and officials of the chief prosecutor’s office, establishment of the people’s police, the impossibility of early termination of powers of local MPs and elected officials, etc.) – the respondents’ opinions were divided: 37% believe that the greater threat is the former of these options, 32% that the latter, while 31% have no opinion. A greater danger of freezing the conflict is stated by a relative majority of respondents in the Central, Southern and Eastern regions, while residents of the Western region and the Donbas consider both options approximately of equal danger.

As compared to March 2015, **the assessment of the current results of the Minsk agreements within Ukrainian society has changed**. When in March 2015 these were positively evaluated by 34% of respondents, in August 2015 it is only by 12%. In November, the share of those who evaluate them positively increased slightly (to 16%), although it remains significantly lower than in March. The share of those who negatively assess current results of Minsk II has increased from 22% in March to 44% in August. In November, the negativism in estimates decreased slightly (to 33%). In November, as compared with August, the share of those who assess Minsk II neutrally increased (from 23% to 28%). Negative opinions as regards the Minsk II results are mostly expressed by residents of the Western and Central regions and the Donbas.

45% of the respondents answered that in 2014 and 2015 they provided voluntary assistance to the Ukrainian Army, the National Guard and volunteer battalions; 15% provided assistance to wounded soldiers, 14% to refugees from Crimea and Eastern Ukraine and 8% to the families of the bereaved. 35% of the respondents answered that they did not provide any aid.

## PROSPECTS OF UKRAINE-RUSSIA RELATIONS

**Citizens are rather sceptical about the prospects of development of Ukraine-Russia relations in the next few years.** In 2014, after the Russian-Ukrainian conflict began, the share of respondents who expect

an improvement in relations between Ukraine and Russia sharply declined and, consequently, the proportion of those who believe that relations will continue to deteriorate, significantly increased.

Only 8% of respondents hope for an improvement in Ukraine-Russia relations within the next one to three years, 22% hope this will happen within the next three to five years while those who hope for an improvement in relations between the two countries over the next five to 10 years account for a significantly larger share (42%).

The scepticism in evaluating the prospects of development of Ukraine-Russia relations is based on the understanding that Russia is an aggressor state which illegally annexed Crimea and is continuing armed aggression against Ukraine (the opinion of 76% of Ukrainians) and that the political objective of the current Russian regime is to destroy the independence and sovereignty of Ukraine (this opinion is shared by 71% of the respondents). Therefore, for 65% of the respondents such formulae as “strategic partnership”, “brotherly nations”, “good-neighbourly relations” are unacceptable as principles of Ukrainian-Russian relations.

**The vast majority (72%) of Ukrainians support the position that there are a number of issues on which no compromise with Russia is possible** (Crimea, the state system of Ukraine, integration into the EU and NATO). 75% of respondents believe that the normalisation of relations must be conditioned by the following: termination of Russian aggression against Ukraine, the return of the occupied territories, compensation for damage caused to Ukraine and non-interference in Ukrainian internal affairs. Most likely, the confidence that the state government of Russia headed by Putin would never acquiesce to these conditions, leads to the belief of the overwhelming majority (71%) of respondents that no normalisation of bilateral relations is possible during Putin’s presidential term.

Over the past two years, **the respondents’ opinion as to what Ukraine’s policy towards Russia should be has changed significantly**. In 2002-2012, a stable majority of respondents supported a deepening of cooperation with Russia. Since 2014, the pattern of assessments has changed dramatically: most often, the citizens stated a need to distance Ukraine from Russia, meaning either the reduction of cooperation with and influence of Russia on Ukraine, or curtailing cooperation with Moscow altogether. In November 2015, the share of those who favour deepening cooperation between Ukraine and Russia dropped to 15% (which is even lower than in 2014). While the residents of Southern and Eastern regions and the Donbas more often favour more intensive cooperation with Russia than the residents of the Western and Central regions, it is only in the Eastern region that the percentage of people who support the deepening of cooperation constitute a relative majority (36%). In the Southern region, they represent only 26% (compared to 30% in favour of reducing cooperation and 18% for curtailing relations with Russia), while in the Donbas, almost half (45%) of the respondents believe in the need to reduce cooperation with Russia and another 15%, in the need to curtail cooperation between the two countries. The younger the respondents, the less they favour more intensive cooperation between Ukraine and Russia (only 10% of those aged 18-29 and 20% of respondents aged over 60).



## UKRAINE'S FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES

**Citizens generally support the European integration of Ukraine:** 59% of the respondents agree that the European integration of Ukraine is irreversible and has no alternative (while only 23% do not agree). The alternative (Eurasian) vector of foreign policy integration is not supported by the majority of citizens of Ukraine: 64% of respondents believe that Ukraine will not take part in any integration associations under the aegis of Russia in the post-Soviet space. This is primarily due to the fact that, according to more than two thirds (69%) of Ukrainians, the Russian model of the state and political development is unacceptable for Ukraine, while Russia's desire for hegemony in Eastern Europe is unlikely to disappear in the foreseeable future: 62% of respondents believe that Russia's negative influence on Ukraine's national security can be reduced but not completely neutralised.

The desire for European integration is motivated, *inter alia*, by the fact that Russian aggression can be countered only through joint international efforts (the opinion of 69% of respondents).

**Ukraine's priority lies in relations with the EU** – this is the opinion of 46% of respondents, while only 14% believe that priority should be given to the development of relations with Russia. 48% believe that Ukraine should join the EU, while only 16% are of the opinion that our country should join the Customs Union, while 22% are against joining either union.

Traditionally, the highest support for EU membership is in the Western (77%) and Central (56%) regions. Public opinion in other regions is less single-minded: there is no dominant majority in the matter of foreign policy integration. In the Eastern region, the three options (accession to the EU, accession to the Customs Union and accession to none of them) enjoy approximately the same support; in the Southern region, a relative majority (40%) support accession to neither of the two unions; in the Donbas, a relative majority (38%) is in favour of joining the Customs Union. The younger the respondents, the more frequently they support EU accession and less frequently, accession to the Customs Union.

## CONCLUSION

The summarised findings of the surveys facilitate the tracking of the dynamics of public opinion and assessment and lead to the following conclusions.

Most often, citizens of Ukraine assess the relations between Ukraine and Russia as hostile. However, the assessment of “hostility” between the two countries has decreased as compared to October 2014, when it was at its peak. This may be due to a decrease in the intensity of fighting in the Donbas.

Public opinion believes that the main causes of the Russia-Ukraine conflict are Ukraine's attempts to escape from under the influence of the Russian Federation, Russia's failure to accept Ukraine's focus on European integration, Russia's failure to accept Ukraine as an independent sovereign state pursuing an independent foreign policy and Ukraine's possible accession to NATO, posing a threat to Russia. All of them are related to a single integrated reason: Russia considers Ukraine as falling its sphere of influence, Ukrainian independence is seen as an “artificial” phenomenon, a “historic incident” and Russia opposes Ukraine's attempts to escape from this influence using the full range of methods, from economic pressure to

armed hostilities against Ukraine. Only a fraction of respondents believe that the reason for the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is a violation of the rights of Russian speakers in Eastern Ukraine.

Assessing the situation in Eastern Ukraine, most respondents answered that there is a separatist rebellion taking place, supported by Russia and a war between Ukraine and Russia. The vast majority of Ukrainians believe that Russia is an aggressor state, a party to the conflict in the Eastern Ukraine and that the so-called DPR and LPR are terrorist organisations that do not represent the population of the respective territories. Assessing Russia as an aggressor state leads to a negative attitude among Ukrainians as regards the senior leadership of the Russian Federation.

During 2014-2015, the share of Ukrainians having a positive attitude to Russians has decreased, although the relative majority of the respondents still answered that their attitude to Russians is neutral.

As compared to previous surveys, we see a significant decrease in the proportion of respondents who named an increase in the negative attitude of Ukrainians and Russians towards each other as one of the most negative consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. We can assume that the reason for this aspect falling by the wayside is that Ukrainians are gradually “getting used” to the fact that relations with the Russians can no longer be the same as before the conflict.

The public do not have a dominant opinion on what the status of the Donbas should be (although, the respondents slightly more often support the idea of prolonging the anti-terrorist operation until full control is regained over the territories occupied by the terrorists). This opinion prevails in the Western and Central regions, while residents of the Southern and Eastern regions and the Donbas are more inclined to grant these areas special status within Ukraine.

The respondents who favour the separation of these areas from Ukraine most often justify this opinion by the fact they do not want the residents of these areas to influence Ukrainian policy and receive money from the Ukrainian budget and not by the belief that residents of this region have the right to self-determination.

Citizens are rather sceptical about the prospects of development of Ukraine-Russia relations in the coming years. This scepticism is based on the understanding that the political objective of the current Russian regime is to destroy Ukraine's independence and sovereignty.

The vast majority of Ukrainians believe that the normalisation of relations must be conditioned by the following: termination of Russian aggression against Ukraine, the return of the occupied territories, compensation for damages caused to Ukraine and non-interference in Ukrainian internal affairs. Most likely, the conviction that the Russian state government under Putin would never acquiesce to these conditions leads the overwhelming majority of respondents to believe that no normalisation of bilateral relations is possible during Putin's presidential term.

The prevailing public view is the support for Ukraine's European integration, accompanied by a rejection of the Eurasian vector of integration under the aegis of Russia. This is primarily due to the fact that, according to the vast majority of Ukrainians, the Russian model of state and political development is unacceptable for Ukraine.



## THE STATE OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE RELATIONS

### What are the reasons of the Russia-Ukraine conflict?\*

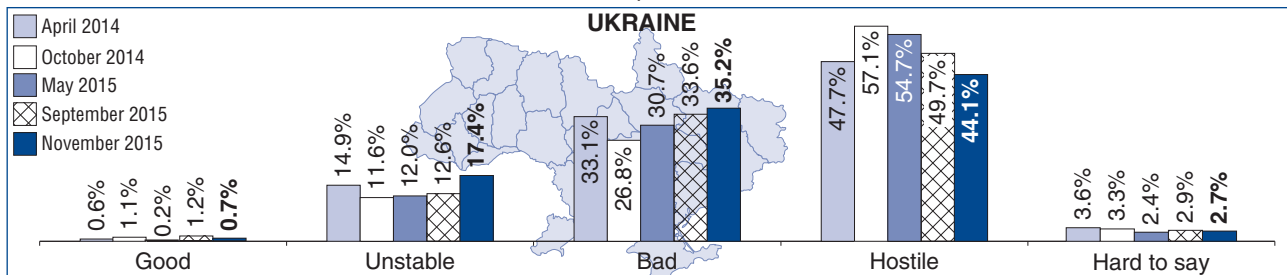
% of respondents



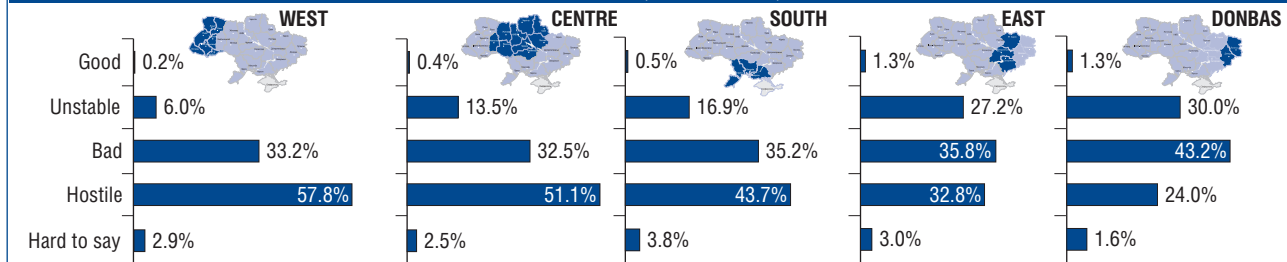
\* Respondents were asked to mark all acceptable options

### How would you describe current relations between Ukraine and Russia?

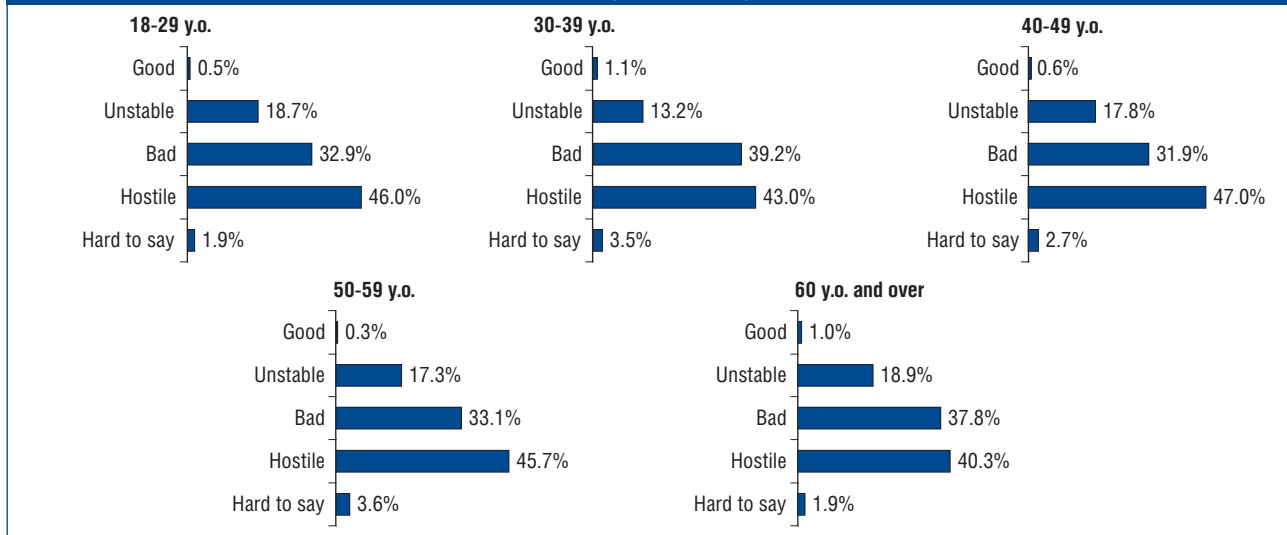
% of respondents



### REGIONS (November 2015)

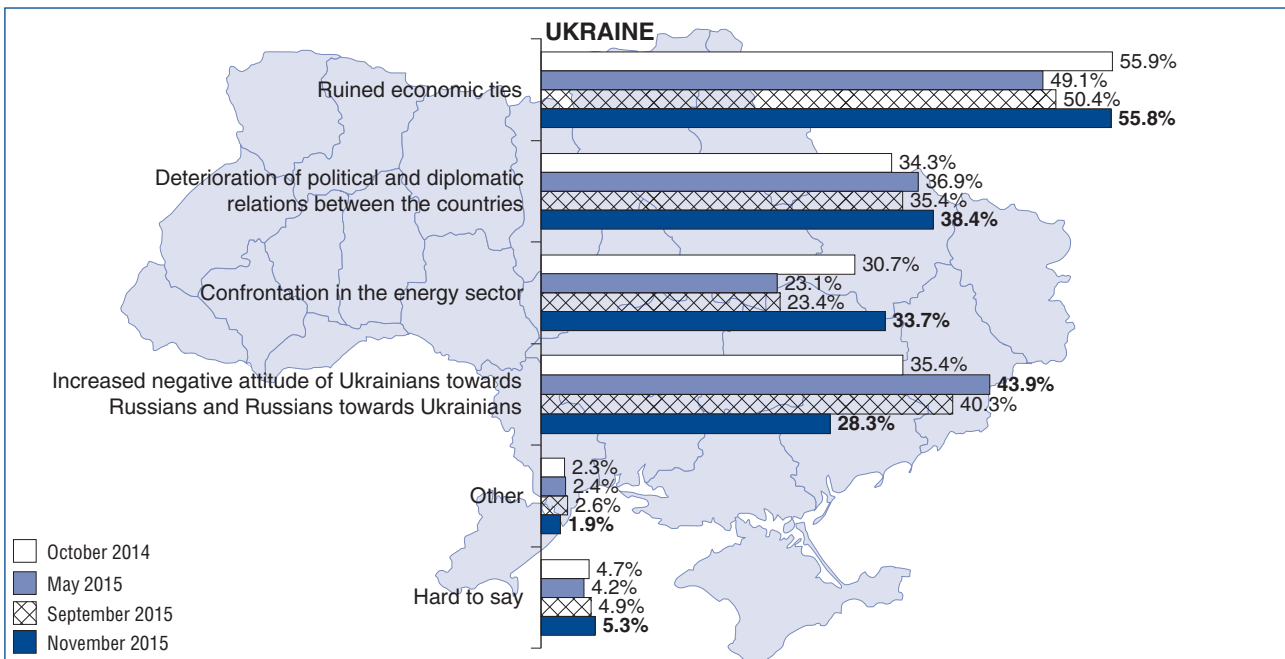


### AGE (November 2015)

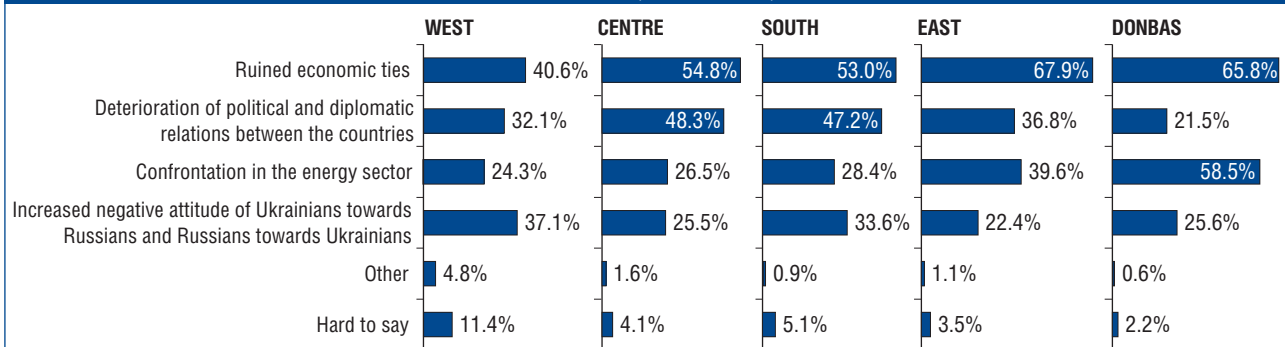


## What are the most negative consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict for the bilateral relations?\*

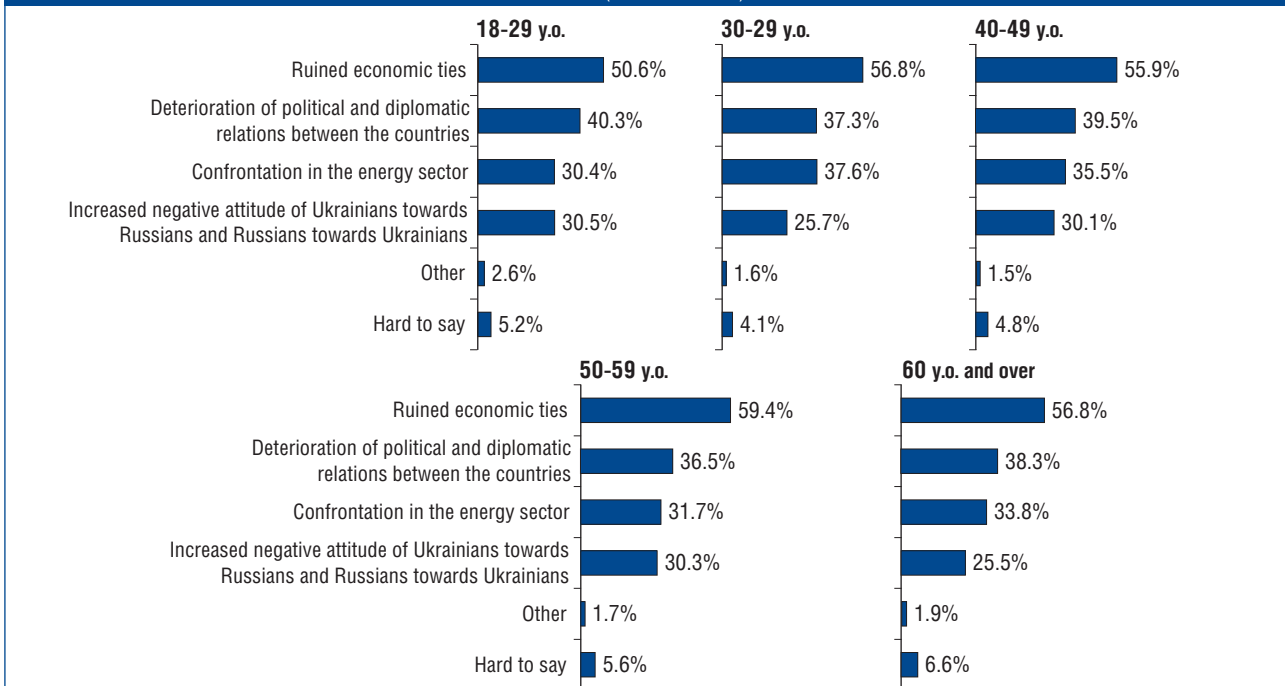
% of respondents



### REGIONS (November 2015)

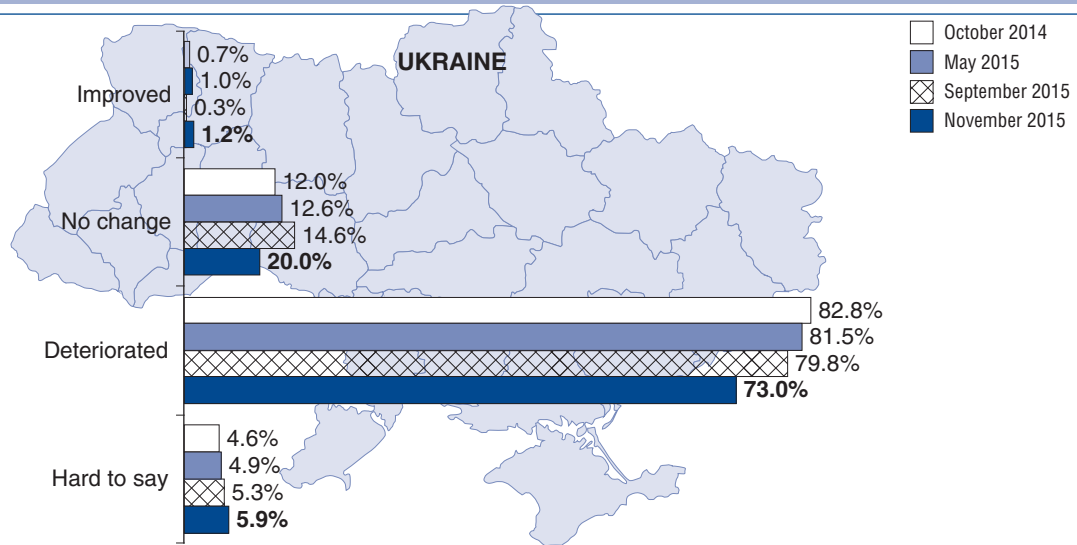


### AGE (November 2015)

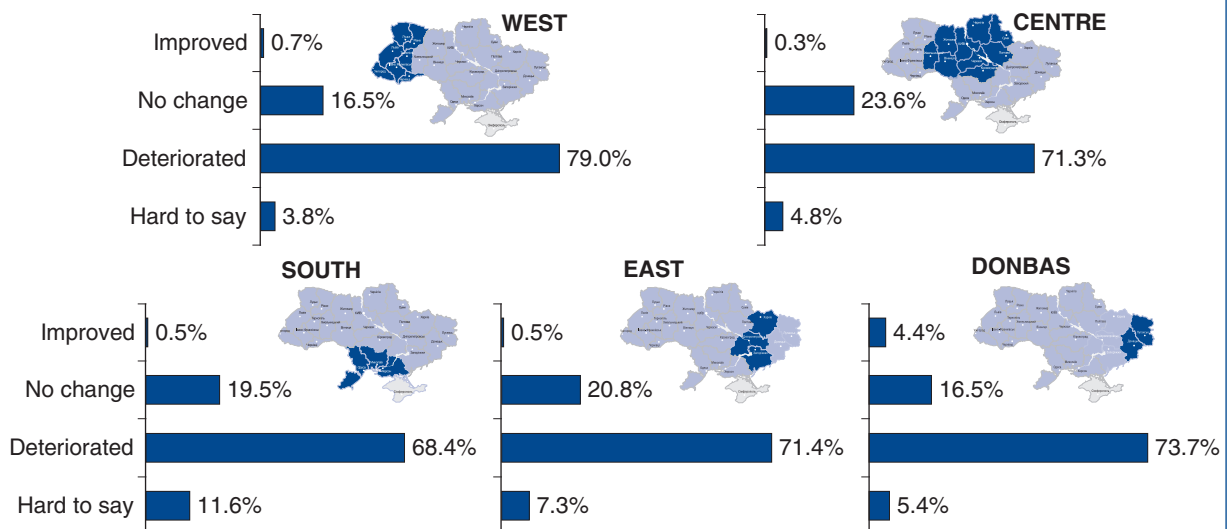


\* Respondents were asked to mark all acceptable options

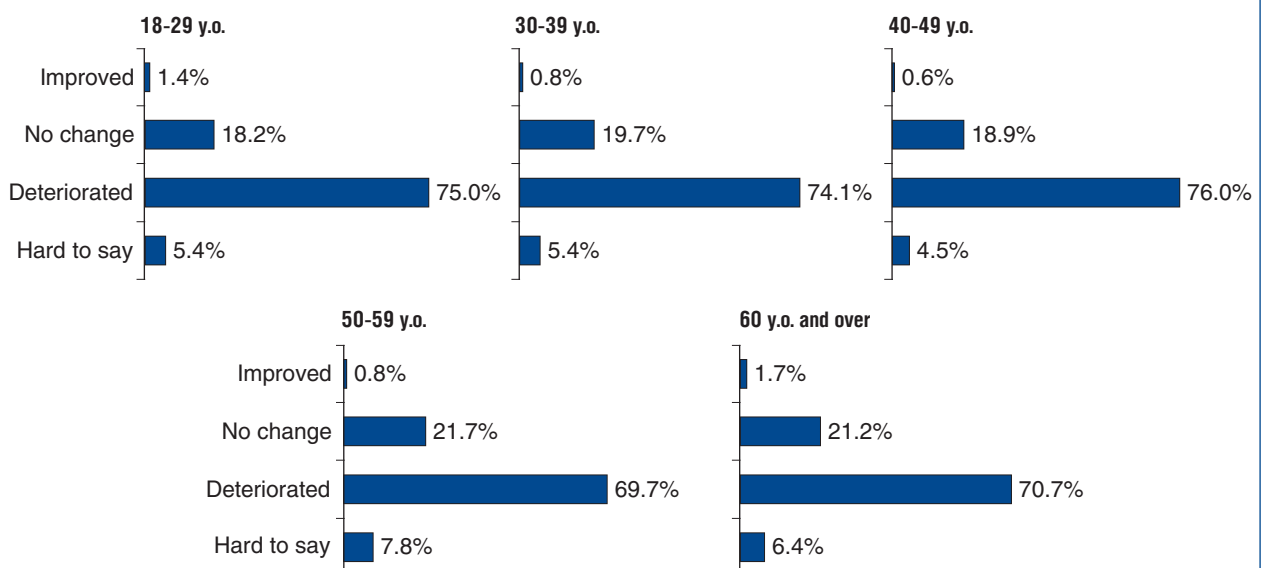
**How have relations between the people of Ukraine and Russia changed within the last year?**  
% of respondents



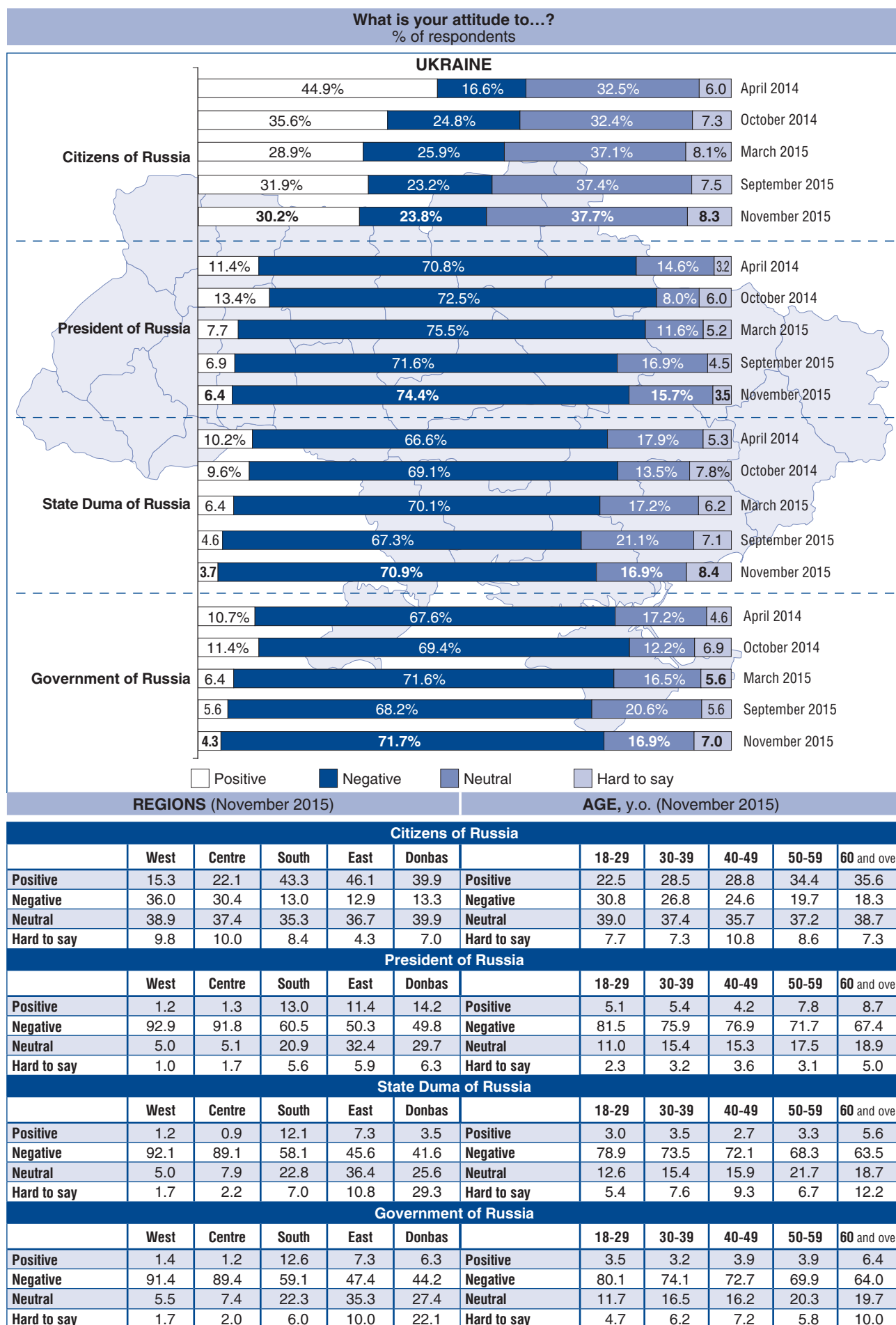
**REGIONS (November 2015)**



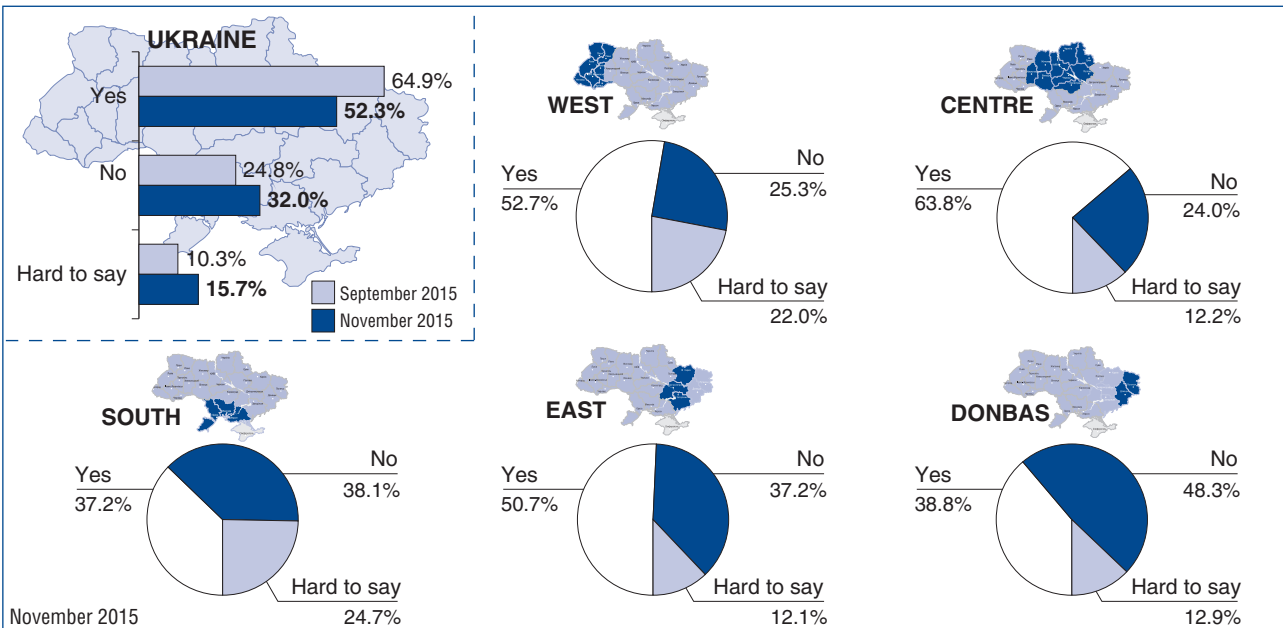
**AGE (November 2015)**







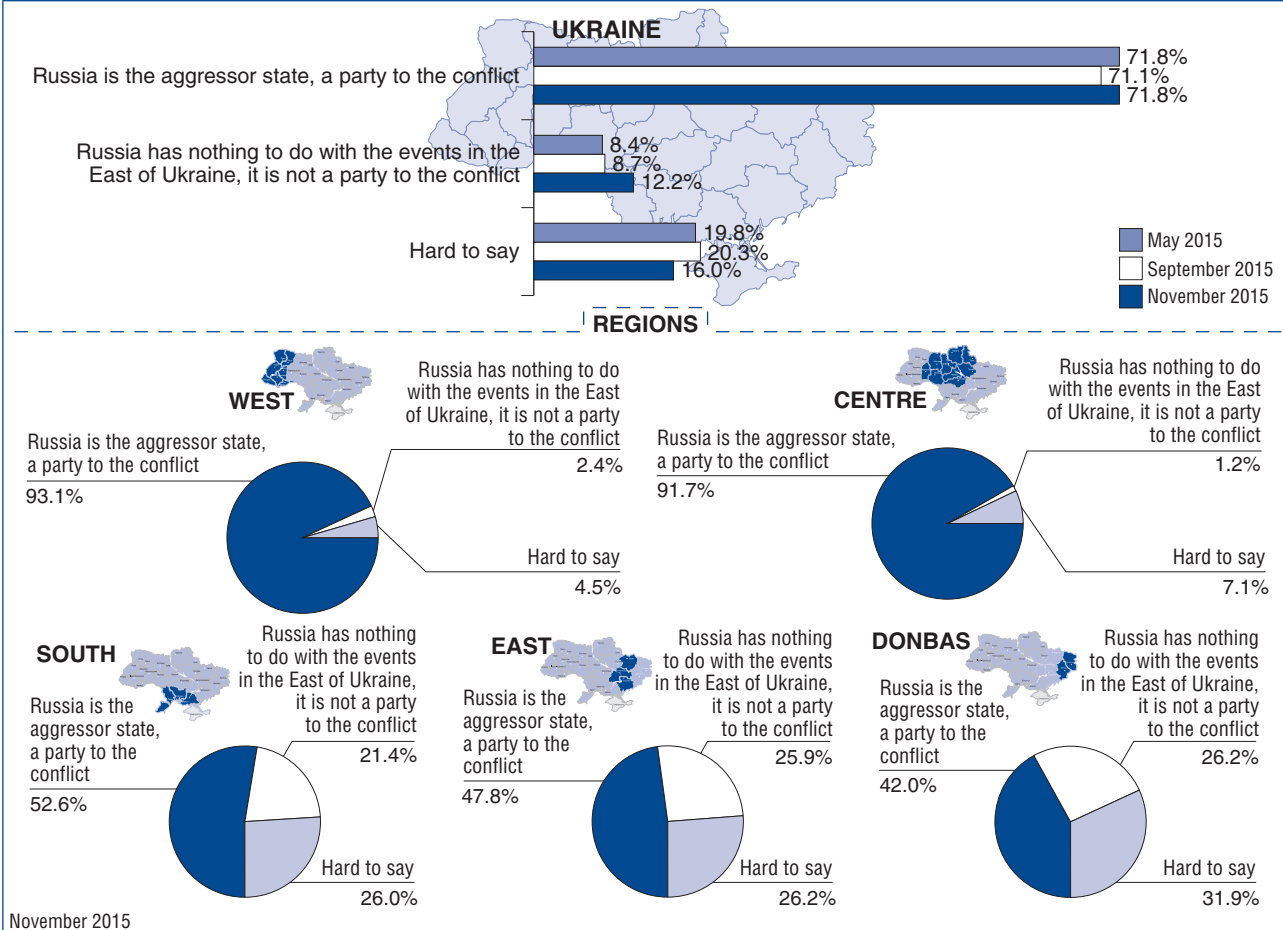
**Do you feel the alienation between the citizens (societies) of Russia and Ukraine?**  
% of respondents



**SITUATION IN THE EAST OF UKRAINE**

**With what opinions and assessments regarding the situation in the East of Ukraine do you agree most?**  
% of respondents

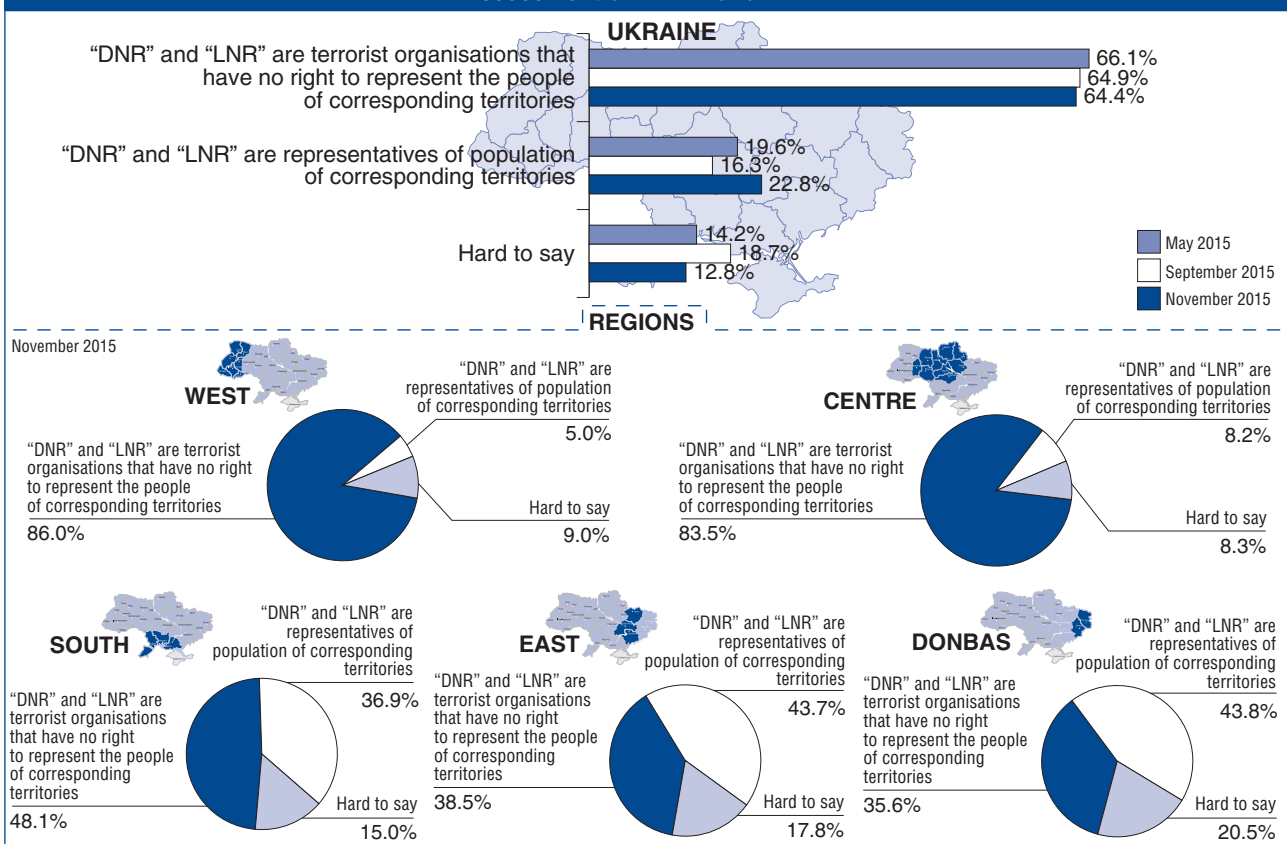
**Assessment of Russia's place in the conflict in the East of Ukraine**



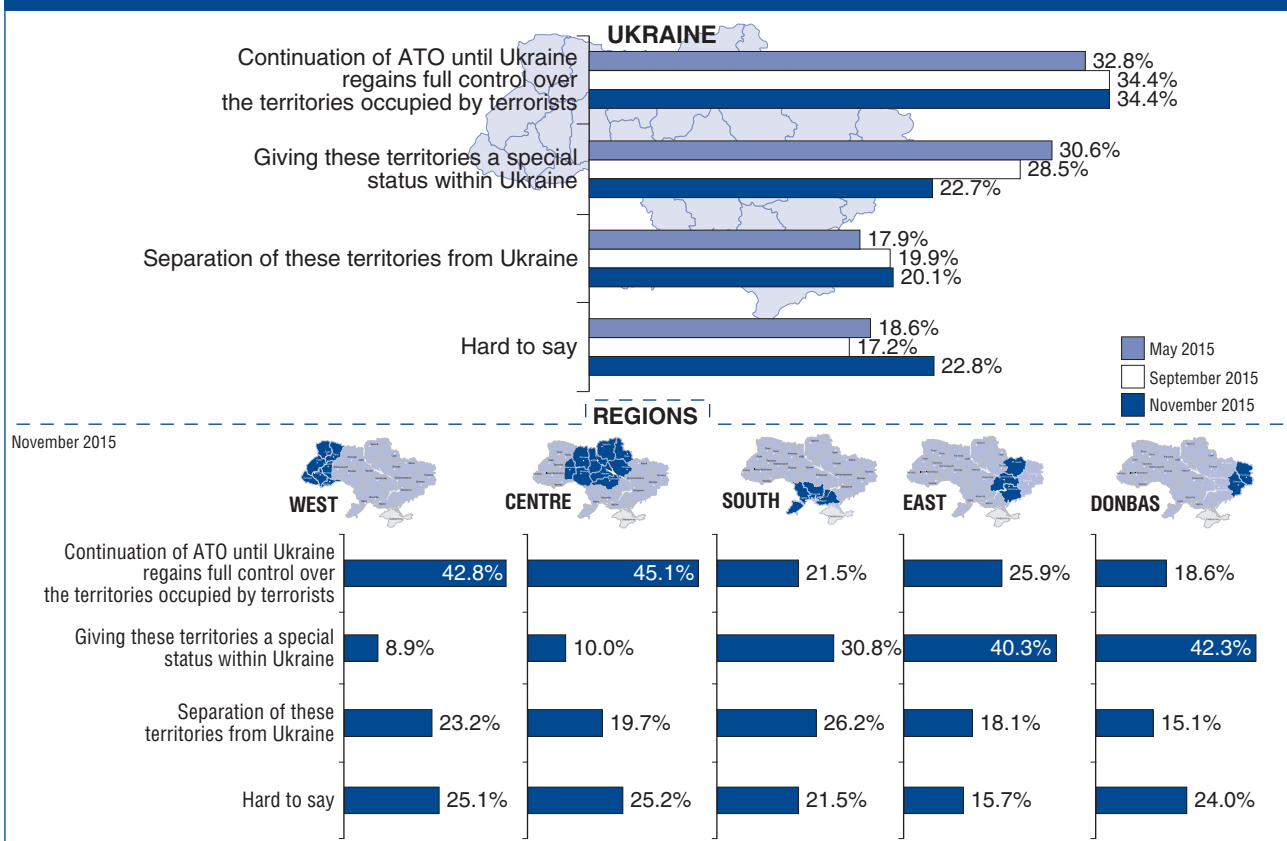
With what opinions and assessments regarding the situation in the East of Ukraine do you agree most?  
% of respondents

(Continued)

## Assessment of "DNR" and "LNR"



## Further actions to resolve the conflict in the East of Ukraine

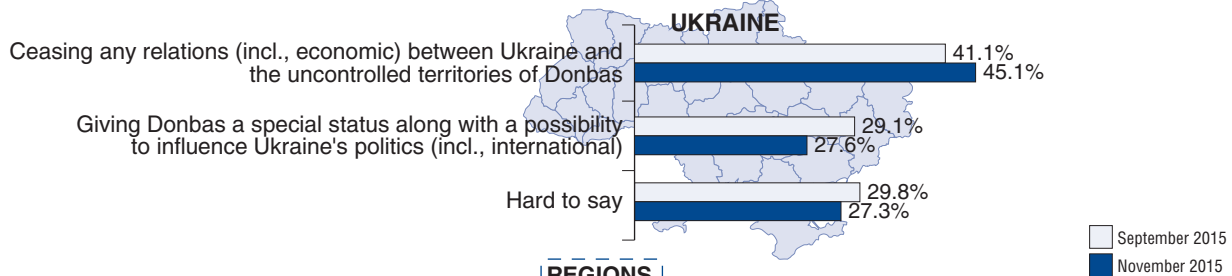




**With what opinions and assessments regarding the situation in the East of Ukraine do you agree most?**  
% of respondents

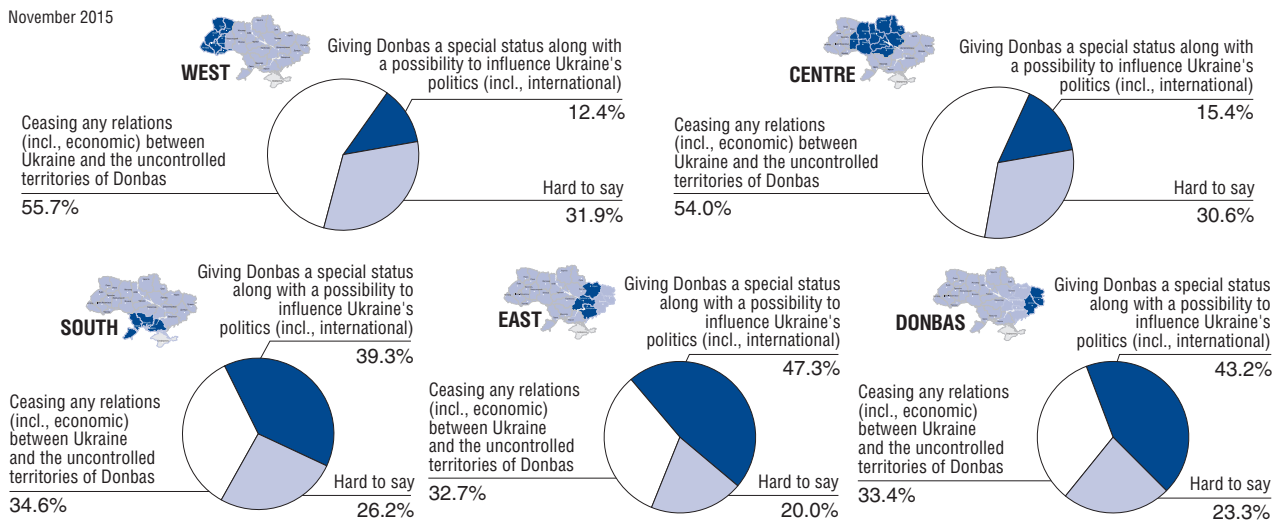
(Continued)

**Coexistence of Ukraine and the uncontrolled part of Donbas**



November 2015

**REGIONS**



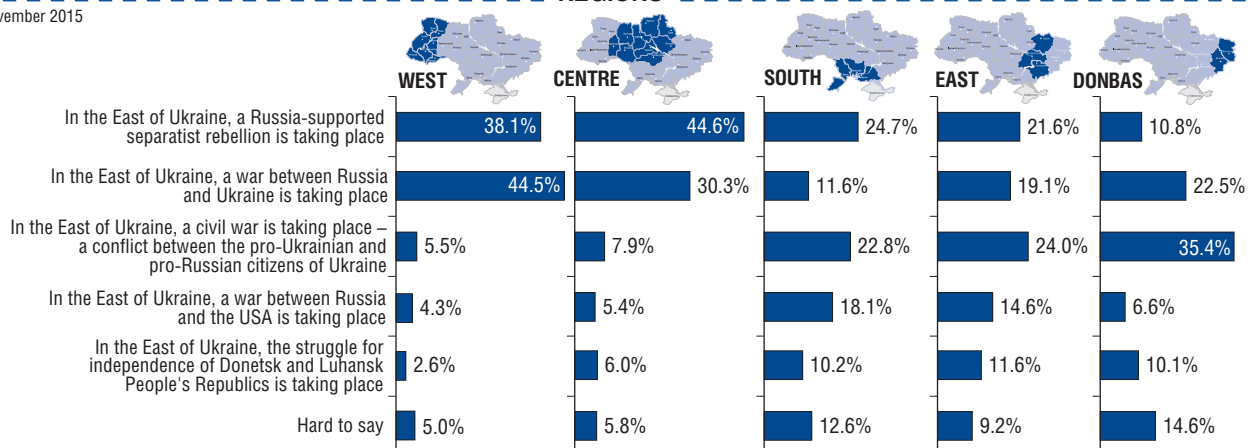
**General assessment of the situation in the East of Ukraine**



November 2015

**REGIONS**

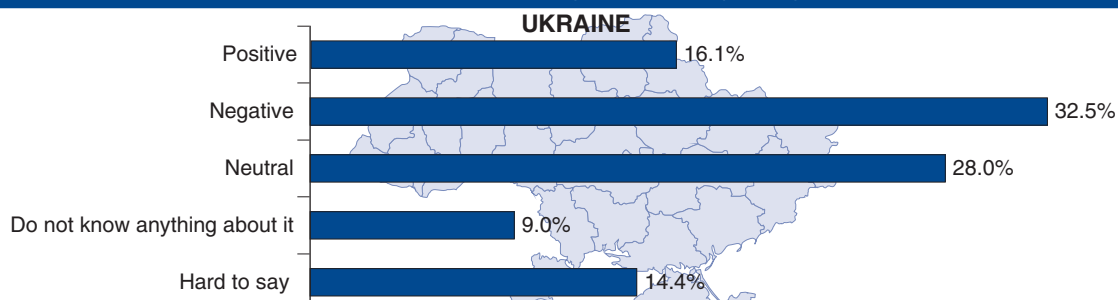
November 2015



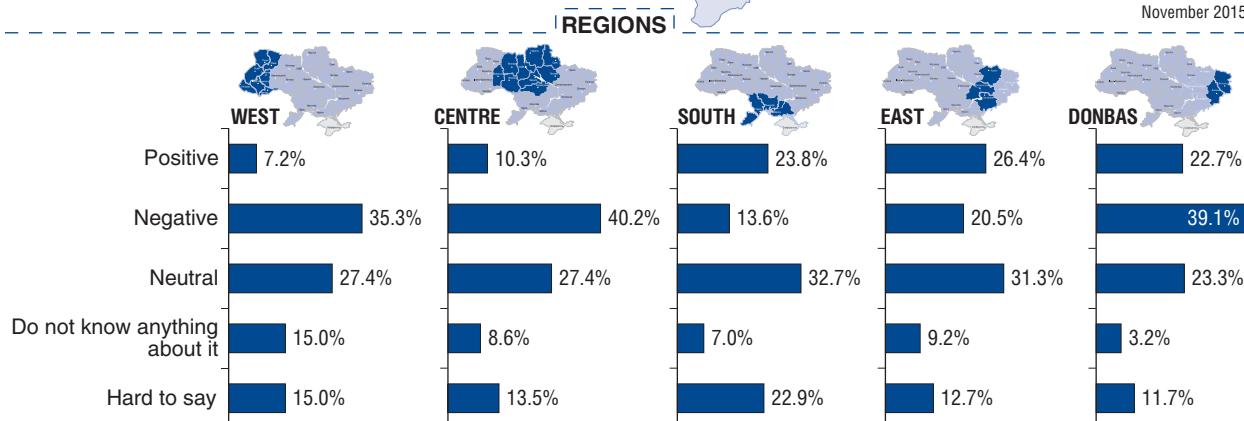
**With what opinions and assessments regarding the situation in the East of Ukraine do you agree most?**  
% of respondents

(Continued)

## Assessment of current results of Minsk Agreements regarding the situation in Donbas



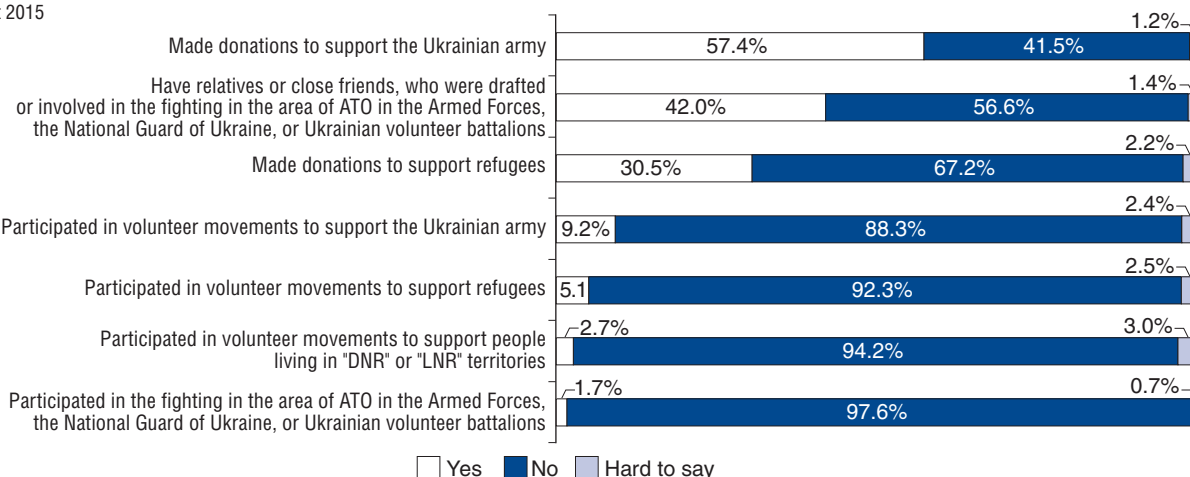
November 2015



## Can you say that you personally...?

% of respondents

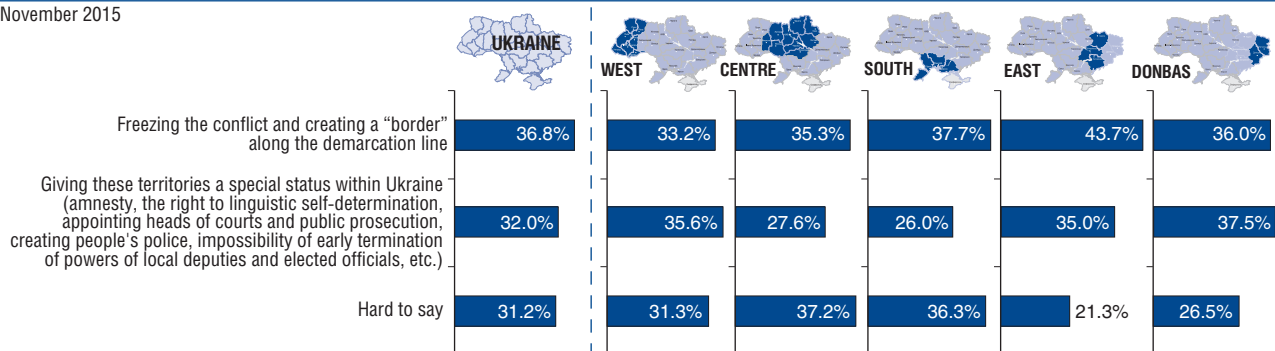
August 2015



## Which option of settling the conflict in the East poses a bigger threat to Ukraine's stability and development?

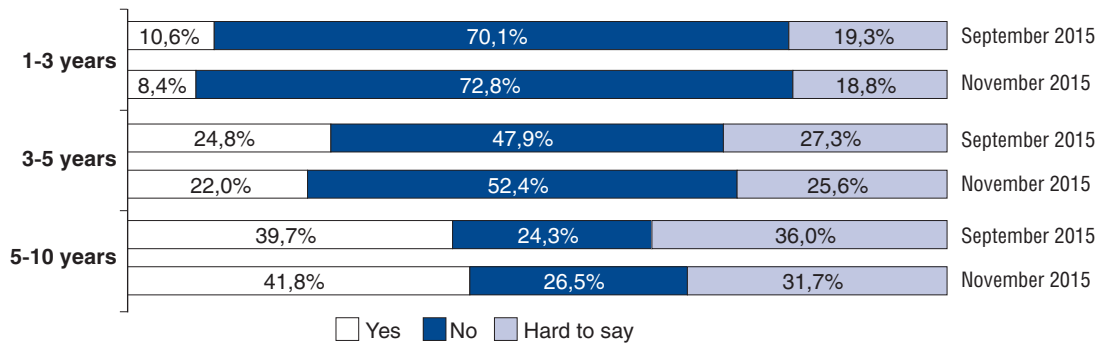
% of respondents

November 2015

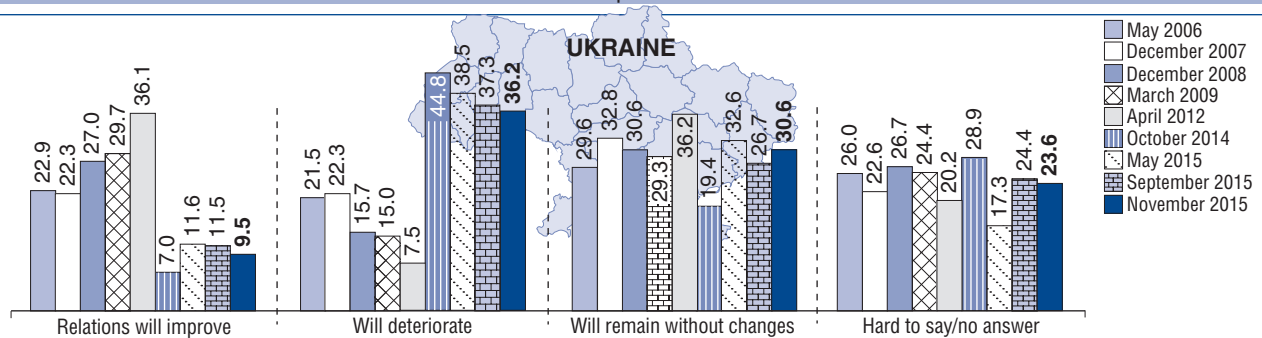


## FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR UKRAINE-RUSSIA RELATIONS

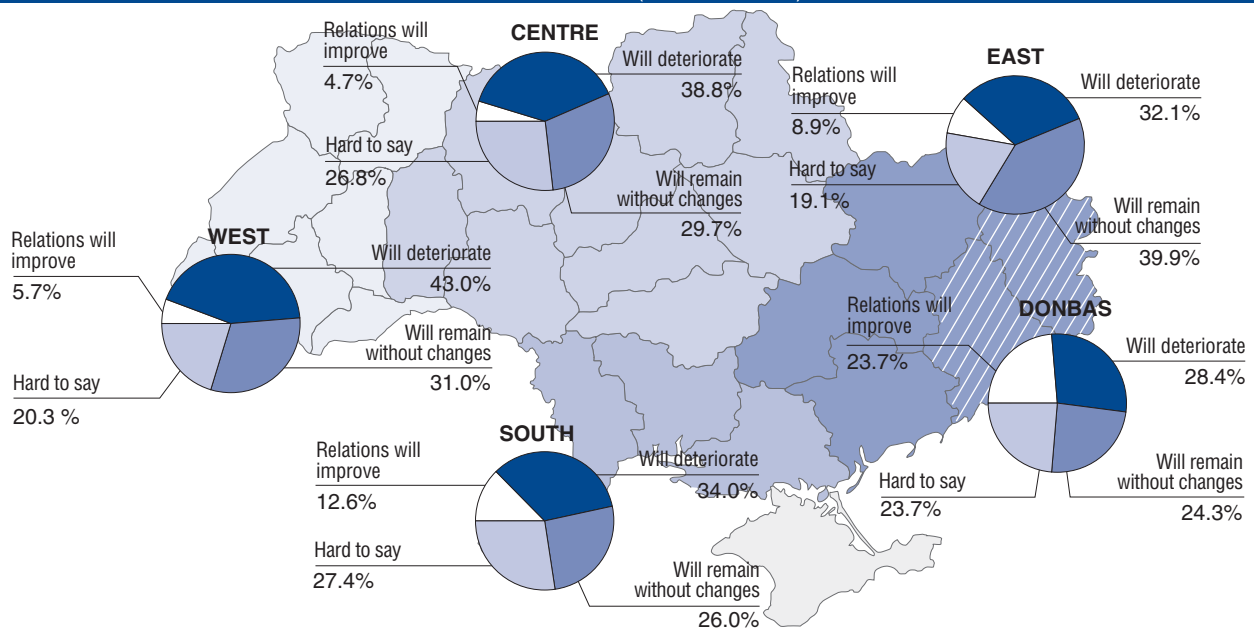
Can there be changes for the better in Russia's policy towards Ukraine?  
% of respondents



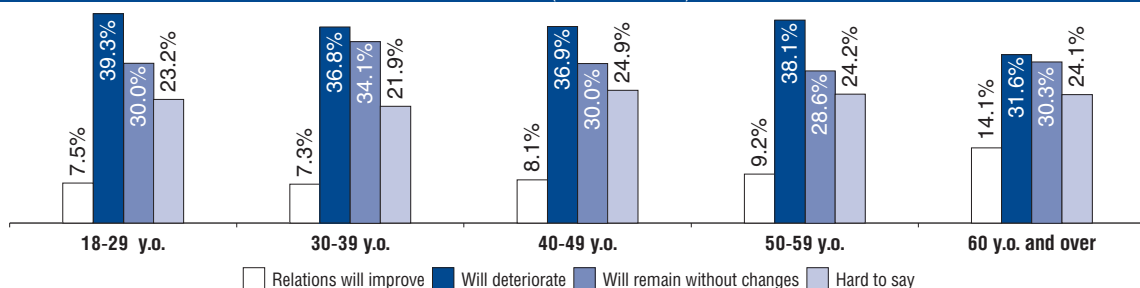
How would you describe the prospects of development of Russia-Ukraine relations for the next few years?  
% of respondents



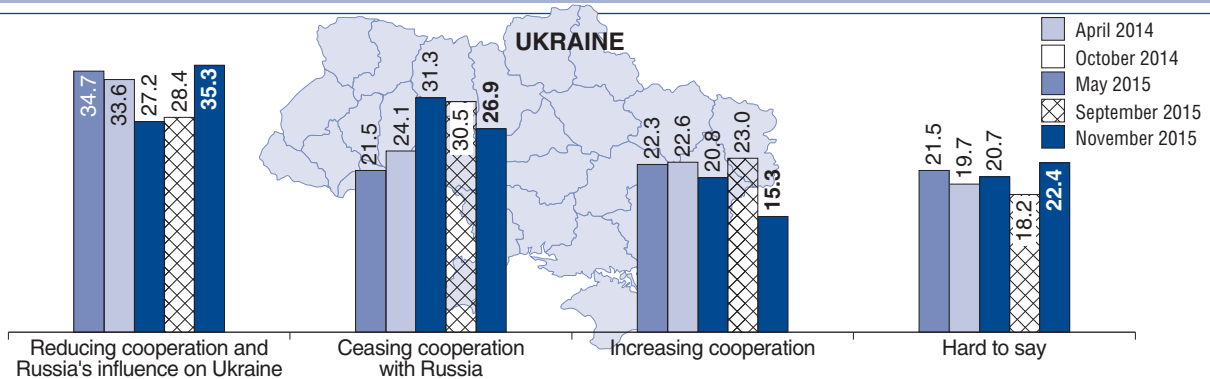
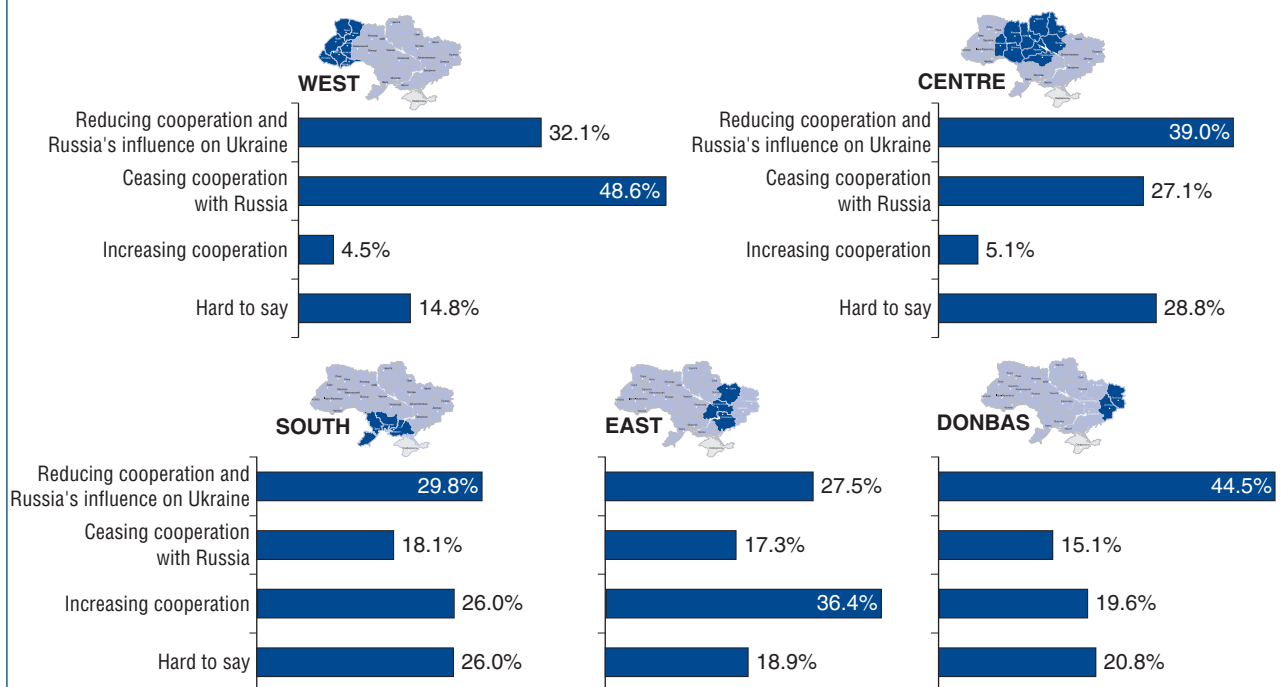
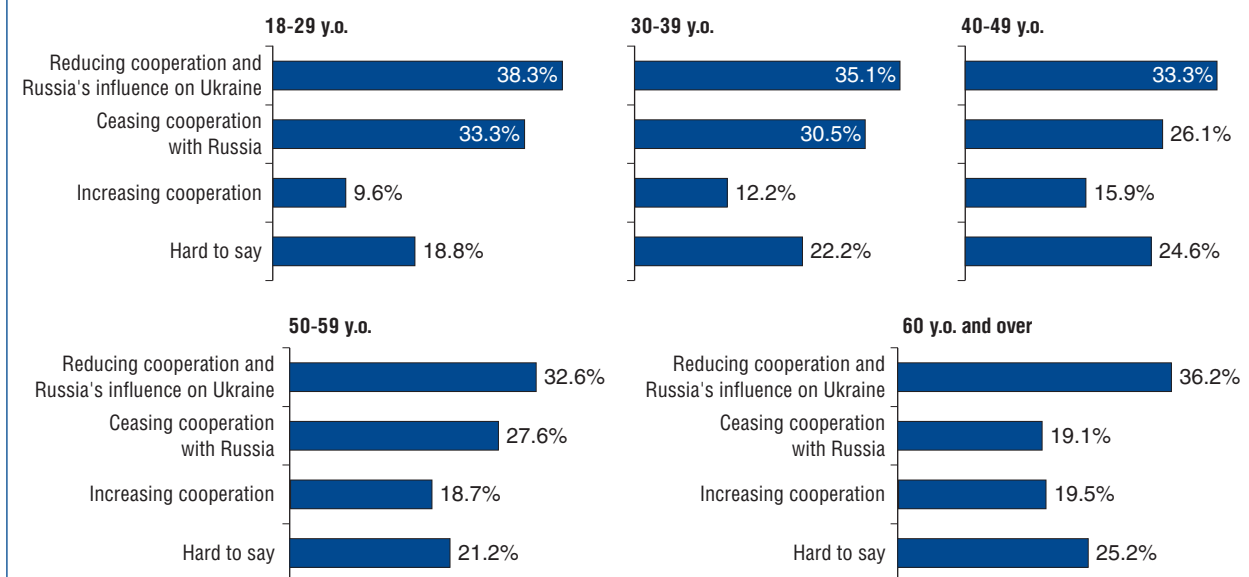
### REGIONS (November 2015)



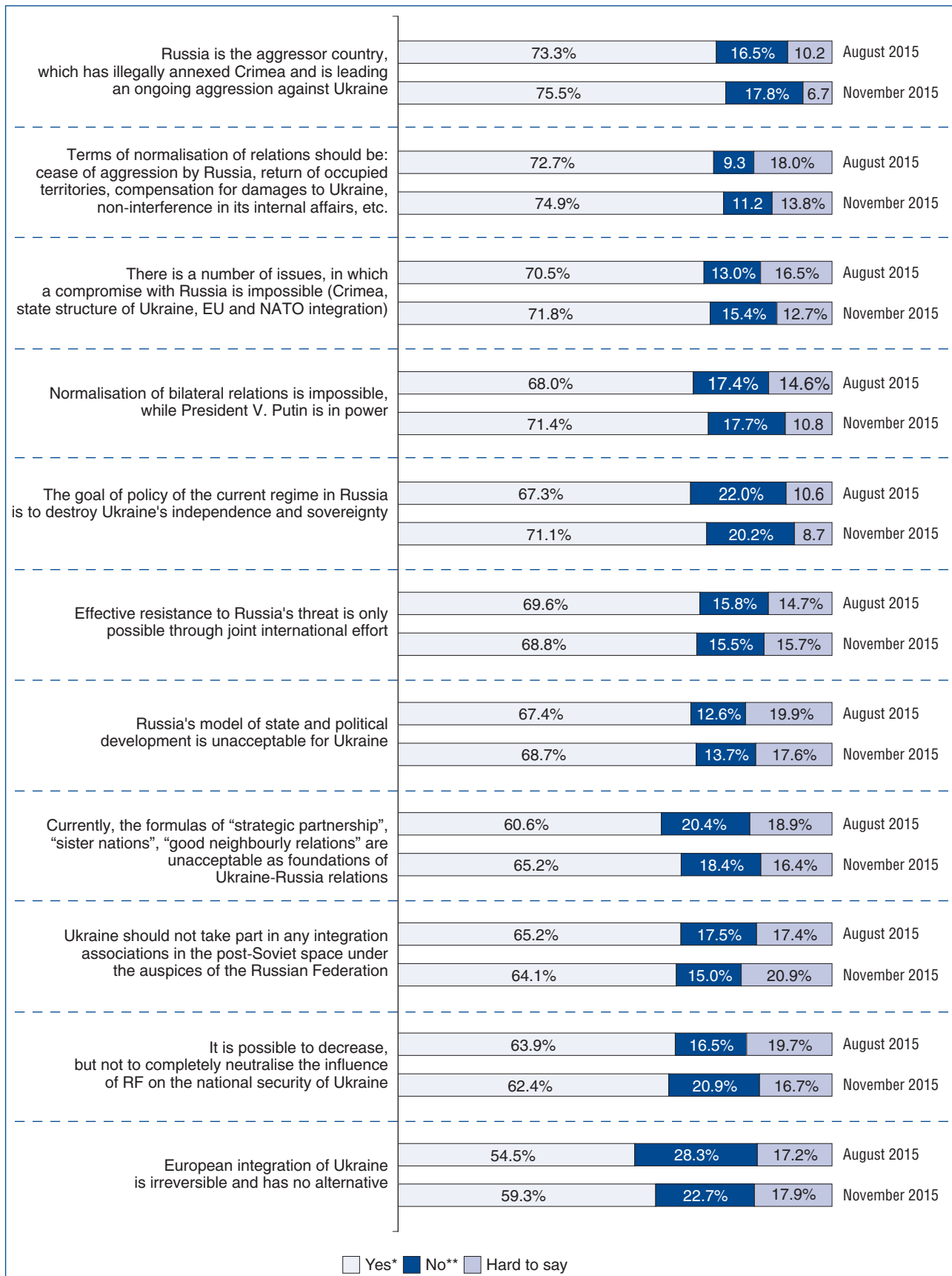
### AGE (November 2015)





**What should be Ukraine's policy towards Russia?**  
 % of respondents

**REGIONS (November 2015)**

**AGE (November 2015)**


**Do you agree with the following statements?**  
% of respondents



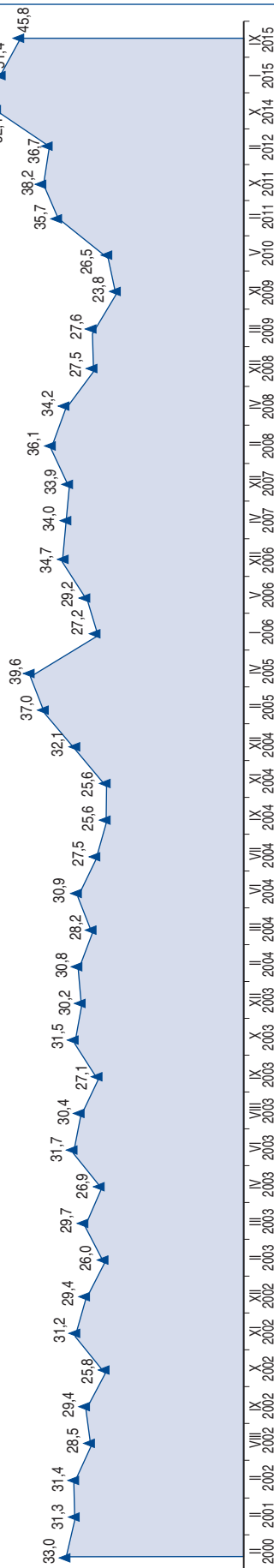
\* Sum of answers "yes" and "rather yes".

\*\* Sum of answers "no" and "rather no".

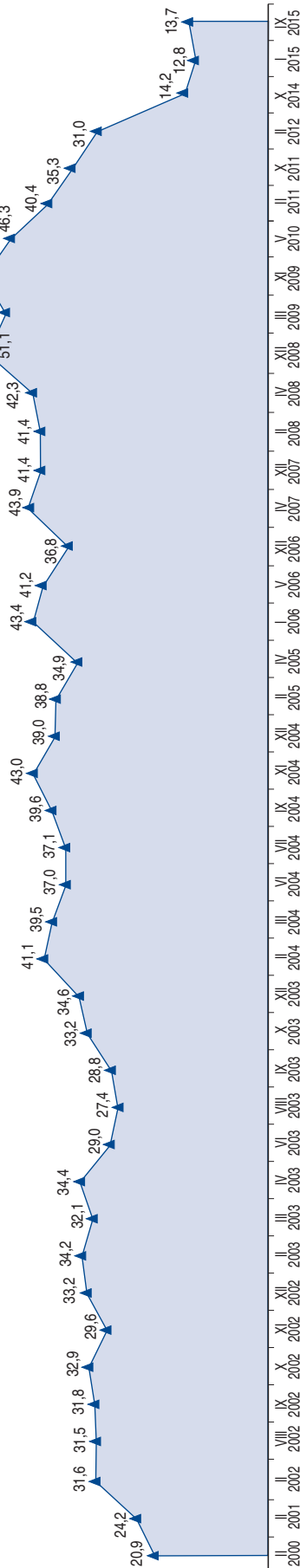
## Which foreign policy direction should be Ukraine's priority?

% of respondents

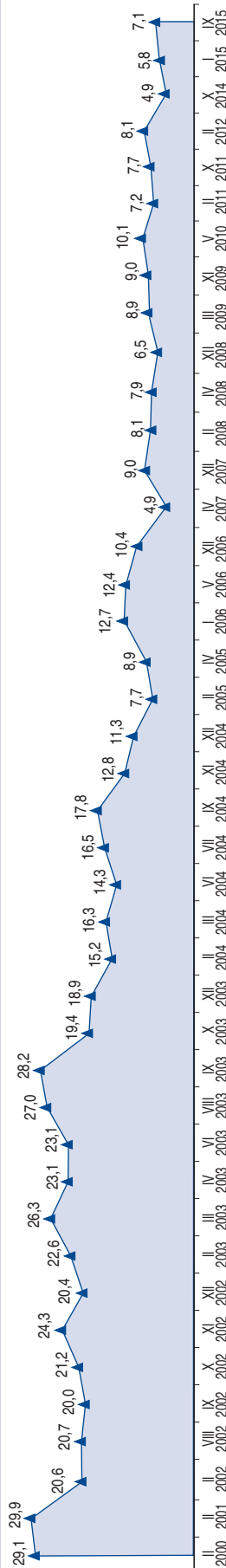
### Relations with EU countries



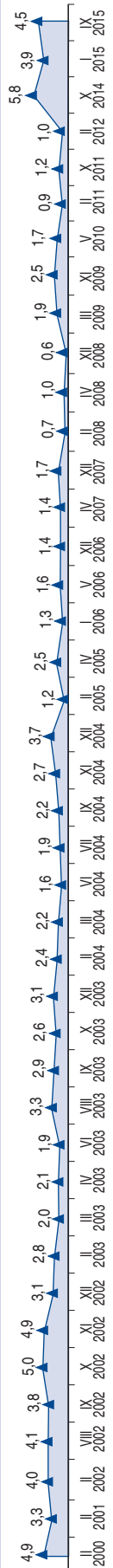
### Relations with Russia



### Relations with other CIS countries



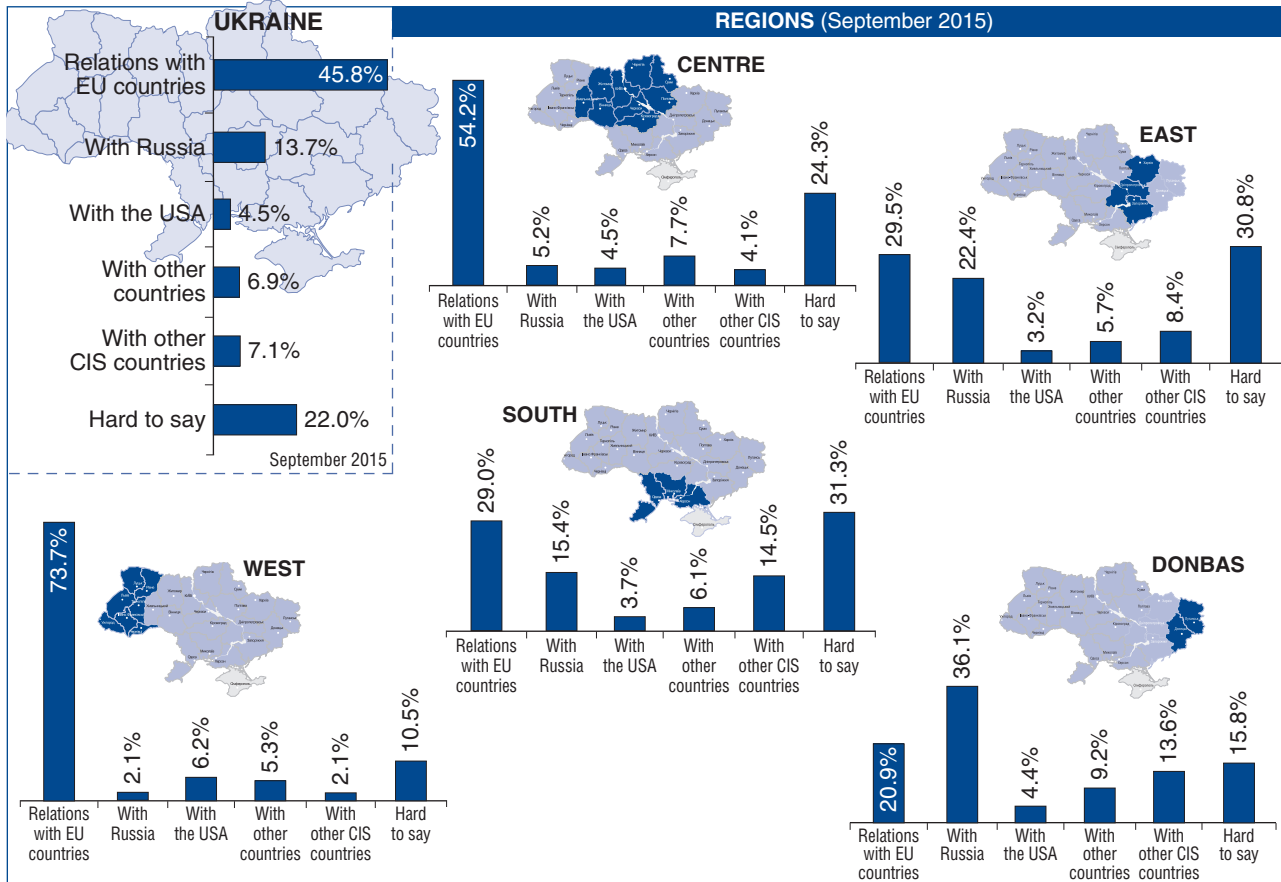
### Relations with the USA



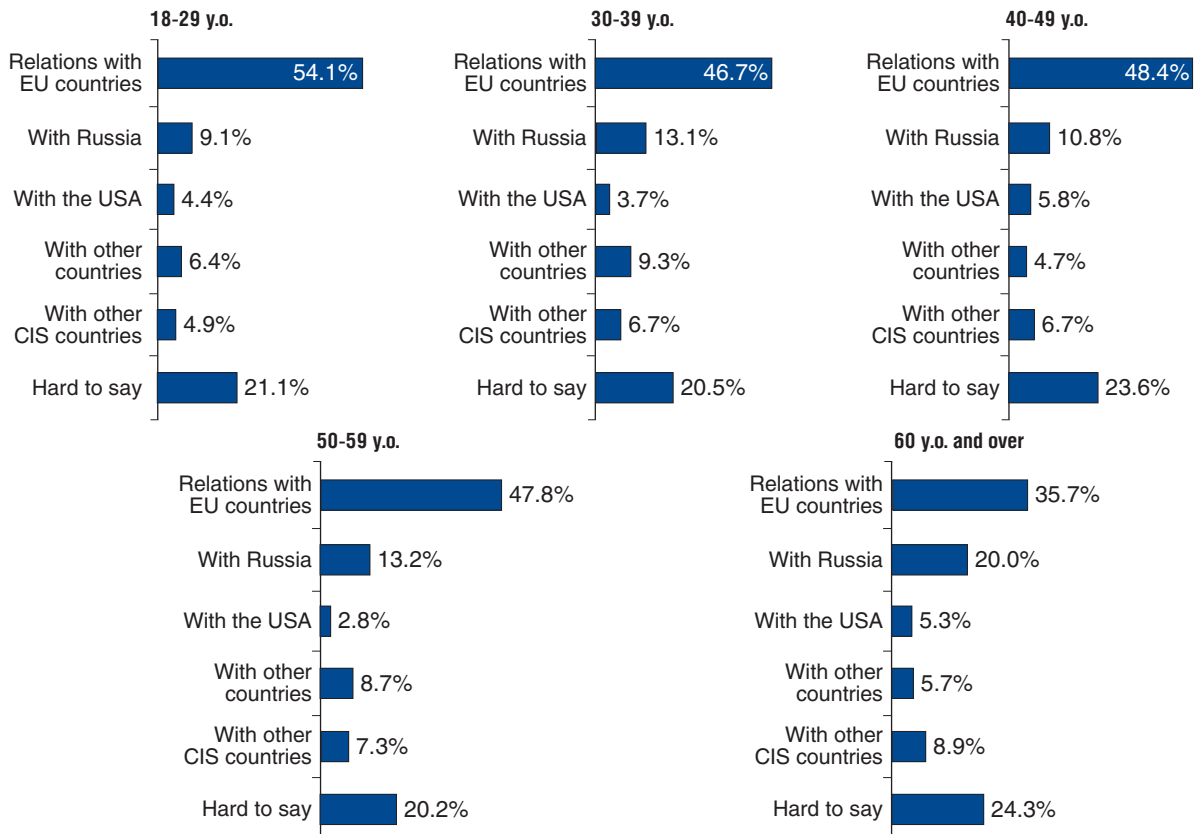


**Relations with other CIS countries?\***  
% of respondents

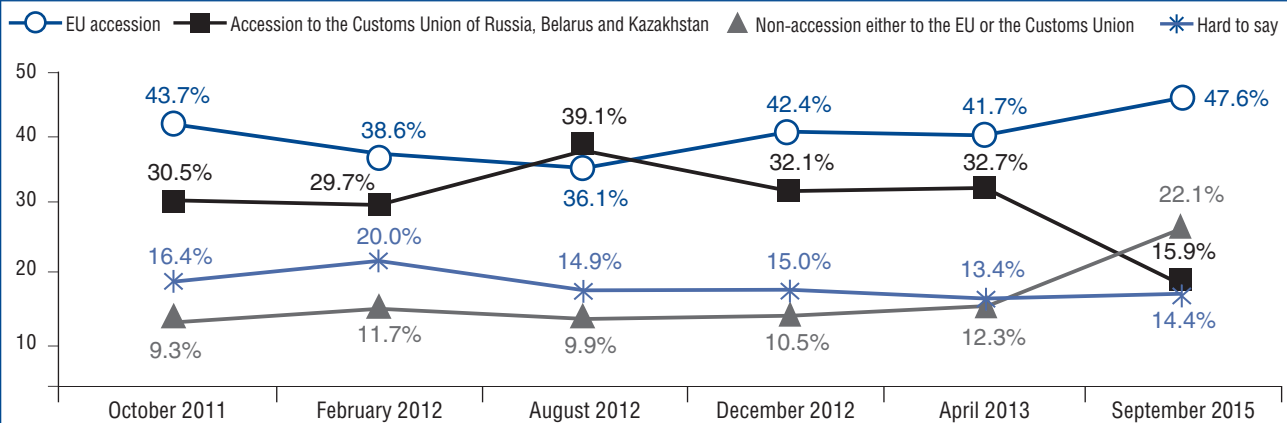
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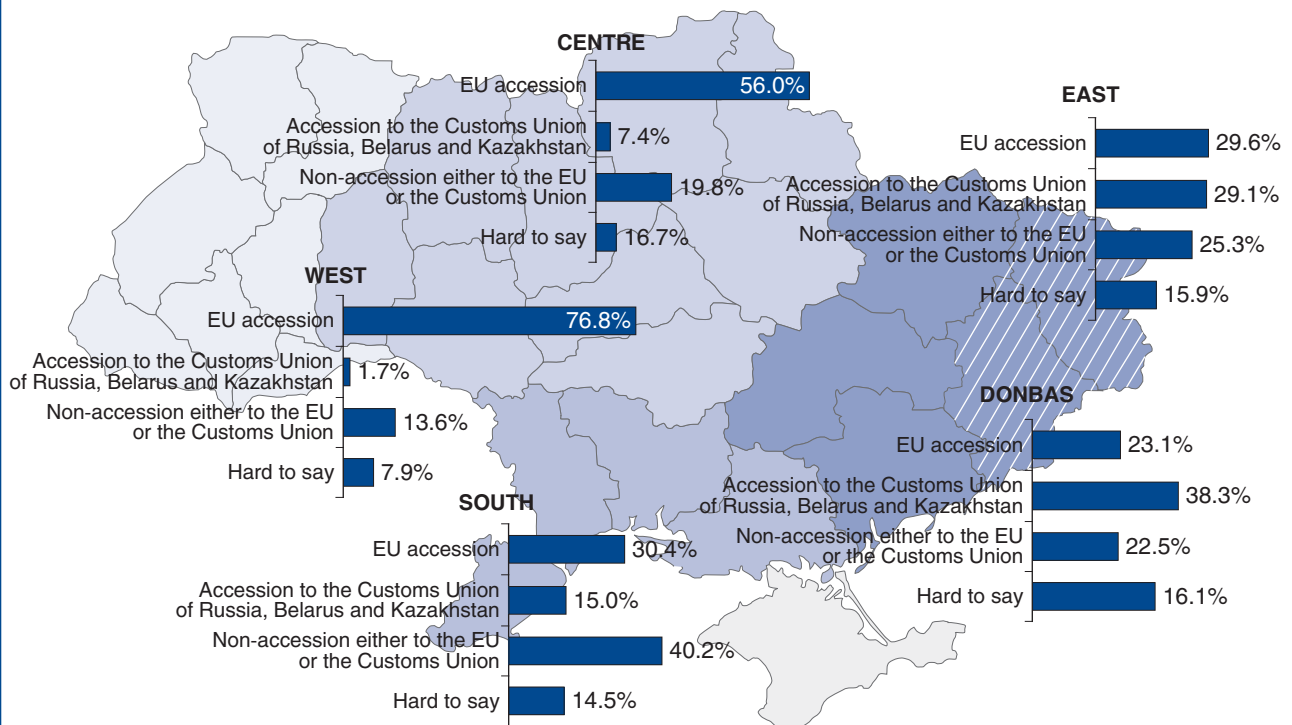
**AGE (September 2015)**



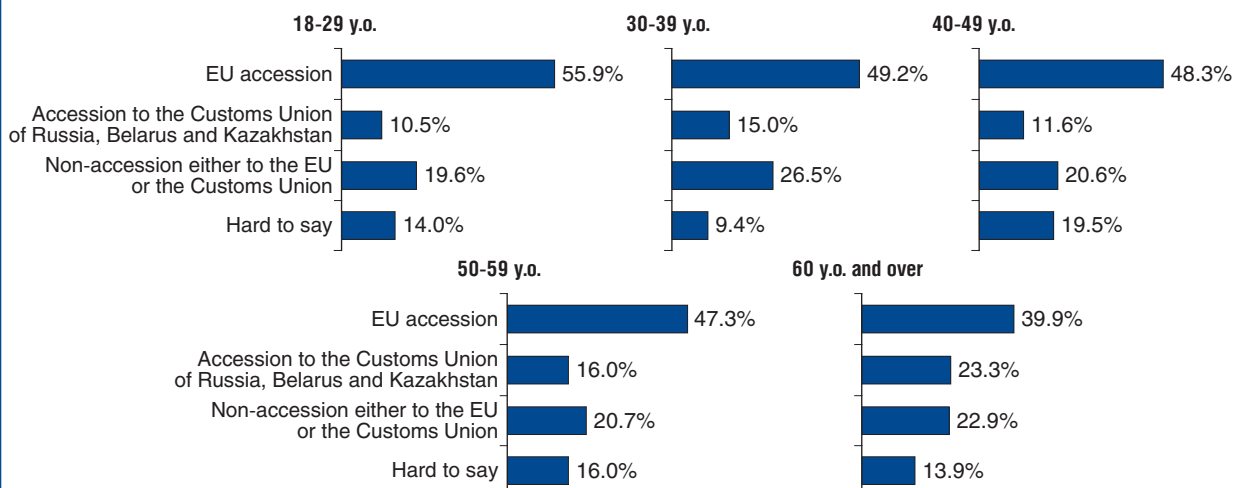
## Which integration direction should Ukraine take? % of respondents



## REGIONS (September 2015)



## AGE (September 2015)



# THE DEEP DRIVERS OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT



**Matthew ROJANSKY,**  
*Director, Kennan Institute*

**A**t present, the prospects for resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict are poor, and they seem to get worse with each passing month. In the West, the conflict is thought of in largely geopolitical terms, with its origins in the 2013-14 Revolution on the Maidan, the fall of the Yanukovych regime, and Russia's subsequent annexation of Crimea and armed invasion of Eastern Ukraine. As a consequence, most Western analysis of the conflict and recommendations engagement in conflict resolution and in relations with both sides tends to focus on geopolitics.

**What is less widely understood and appreciated in the West is the degree to which Russia-Ukraine tensions derive from deeper and longer standing factors, including mutually exclusive views of sovereignty and regional integration, shared post-Soviet economic and social vulnerability, and a “culture war” between Russian and Ukrainian elites.** Factors such as these constrain efforts by Ukraine and the West to resolve the current conflict with Russia and to restore productive cooperation on a wide agenda of potential shared interests in Ukraine and its neighborhood.

Ukrainians who came to the Maidan by the thousands in the Fall and Winter of 2013-14 deserve the respect and appreciation of the West for their commitment to European values and Ukraine's planned adoption of the EU Association Agreement. Unfortunately, the European future that many Ukrainians believed they were supporting was very far from the reality on offer from Brussels at any time before, during or after the Maidan protests. At best, Ukraine's EU Association was intended by Europe as a placeholder response to Ukrainians' aspiration for EU membership – some combination of a consolation prize and a qualifying exam for future deeper engagement.

**Yet it was clear from the beginning of EU-Ukraine negotiations in the framework of the Eastern Partnership that Europe lacked the political will and institutional capacity to integrate an enormous, diverse and institutionally decrepit state like Ukraine.** The government of then-President Yanukovych dragged its feet, but the Ukrainian people clung to the dream of European integration as an alternative to their own leaders' fecklessness and incompetence, and Russian pressure to commit to a Eurasian path.

Despite Yanukovych's waffling in October and November 2013, Ukrainians understood that the European and Russian integration offers were mutually exclusive, though for opposite reasons. For its part,

Russia took a *realpolitik* approach to Eurasian integration, judging its smaller and less powerful post-Soviet neighbors, including Ukraine, to be less than fully sovereign. Eurasian integration would have meant the institutionalization of Ukrainian dependency on Russia, a veto over Ukraine's sovereignty that no leader in Kyiv – including Yanukovych himself – was willing to concede. Meanwhile, Europe viewed the expansion of its free trade and travel zone as desirable for all sides, including for Moscow, which the EU sought to engage and integrate through a formal “partnership for modernization” from 2012. Yet Brussels was practically unwilling to make any concessions to adapt to the difficult reality of Russia and Ukraine's economic interdependence and complex history, so it lost any chance of Russian acquiescence to Ukraine's EU Association deal, while forcing zero sum choices on Ukrainian industries that relied heavily on trade with Russia. **In this way, both Europe and Russia have presented Ukraine with a geopolitical and economic dilemma that persists to this day: Ukraine can integrate with its Eastern or Western neighbors, but only by sacrificing trade, sovereignty or both.**

The Russia-Ukraine conflict is most visible on the frontlines in Donbas, in the Russian occupation of Crimea, and in the international forums in which Ukraine and its Western supporters seek to sanction, isolate and punish Russia. However, the conflict's deeper origins are on display within Russian and Ukrainian societies themselves. It has become a truism that the Russian people overwhelmingly support President Putin and his approach to the conflict with Ukraine, and that a large number of Russians would like to see even more active Russian military intervention than has happened so far. This despite Russians' professed feelings of brotherly love for their Ukrainian neighbors. Ironically, continuing popular support in Russia for the war with Ukraine can be explained by the same legacies of



the shared Soviet experience that lie at the roots of Ukraine's own internal dysfunction.

The Soviet system of social control established by Lenin and honed to a razor's edge by Stalin and his successors infected both Russian and Ukrainian society with attitudes and practices that are still poisoning both. For example, Soviet authorities intentionally broke down trust in normal state institutions, rule of law, and fellow citizens in favor of blind faith in, and loyalty to, the Communist Party – an important tool for social control. Though many Soviet citizens rejected the Party's oppressive embrace, they nonetheless withdrew from what most in the West would consider normal patterns of social behavior. Soviet citizens could not trust most of the people around them, and so they evinced little compassion towards strangers. Likewise, being often forced to take extreme measures simply to survive hardships imposed by their own government, many Soviet citizens became inured to what Westerners might consider ruthless methods of competition and coercion (one of the sad ironies of the “socialist paradise”).

The weakness and dysfunction of most non-Communist Party social institutions in the Soviet system robbed individuals of avenues for channeling normal conflict, as between neighbors, coworkers, or ethnic groups, into non-violent conflict resolution processes like mediation, civil litigation, or therapy. Thus the extreme stakes and absolutism that characterized the top tier of Soviet power for much of its history extended downward into society as a whole, where what mattered most was not social harmony, stability or predictability, but simply proximity to those with coercive power. Even economic infrastructure was often built not primarily to generate value, but for purposes of political and social control. If control was threatened, little incentive remained to preserve the value of infrastructure that might accrue to another's benefit.

**The tragic legacy of the Soviet system's great experiment on the people of Russia and Ukraine is visible in the deep drivers of the conflict between those two societies today.** The lack of trust in state institutions, laws, and fellow citizens is reflected in the intense personalization of politics on both sides. Instead of using the partisan political and electoral processes to raise, debate and resolve controversial policy questions, both societies recognize politics as primarily an avenue for acquisition of power, and the wealth that goes with it. In the absence of developed conflict resolution mechanisms and the practice of nonviolent conflict resolution, citizens see little choice but to accept or even support the use of force by governments or private groups purporting to represent their interests. Finally, given the longstanding Soviet approach to economic infrastructure as a tool of political control, it is no surprise that the warring parties have exercised little restraint in protecting critical economic infrastructure in the conflict zone.

Efforts by Ukrainians and the West to resolve the conflict and to engage effectively with Russia are complicated by symptoms of a deep “culture war” between Western-oriented Ukrainians and their Russian-oriented counterparts both in Ukraine and Russia. While this culture war might also be considered an extended reaction to the Soviet legacy of suppressing and manipulating ethnic and cultural identities, it has taken on a more acute destructive dimension in the context of the current conflict. The issue goes beyond the dispute between European or Western political values on the one hand, and Russian or Eurasian values on the other, to encompass

almost any and all manifestations of Ukrainian versus Russian identity.

In Soviet times, the authorities imposed an artificial ideology of brotherhood upon both Russians and Ukrainians, but with often explicit or implicit recognition of Russian superiority. The concept of “Great Russia” embracing, civilizing and defending its neighbors was even enshrined in the lyrics of the Soviet national anthem. Despite nominal recognition of the republics' sovereignty and occasional concessions to their distinctive identities to demonstrate the Soviet Union's allegedly harmonious pluralism, in most practical terms Soviet minorities, including Ukrainians, were subordinated to the Russian majority. Yet given extensive and mostly peaceful mixing of ethnic Russians and Ukrainians in Ukraine for decades, there was no reason to expect that Russian and Ukrainian identity could not coexist after Ukrainian independence. All of this changed with Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of Donbas in 2014, which unleashed deep anti-Russian feeling in Ukraine, and empowered those advocating an exclusionary vision of Ukrainian identity.

Now, the dispute over Ukraine's political future – with Russia or the West – has expanded into a broad-based rejection of Russia and all things Russian throughout Ukrainian society. Politics, culture and patriotism all blend to justify the elevation of a quasi-official new Ukrainian identity that is largely exclusive of Russian language, culture, and historical memory. The problem is that there are still millions of people in Ukraine who cherish this very identity while calling themselves Ukrainians and believing fervently in a new, Western-oriented democratic Ukraine, not to mention the 145 million Russians living next door, with whom Ukrainians will eventually have to reconcile in order to live at peace.

Few Western political leaders grasp the complexity of Ukraine's own history and identity, much less of centuries-long Russian-Ukrainian relations. As a result, they often blunder into interactions with Ukrainians and Russians that merely reinforce the zero-sum approach to relations between the two societies. While Ukrainians rightly insist that they are fighting to preserve and advance Western values, and while the West should support Ukraine's struggle, that support must not become an endorsement of exclusionary Ukrainian identity, or a joint attack on Russian identity and culture. The West's goal must be thought of in terms of embracing Ukraine's own reconstruction as a genuine democracy and a transparent free market, not merely wrenching Ukrainians away from Russia and Russians.

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has entered an acute, violent and destructive phase thanks to Russia's armed invasion and the ongoing dispute over the future of Donbas and Crimea. Yet these immediate challenges are far from the sum total of Russia-Ukraine conflict, and resolving them, though urgent and important, would represent only a temporary accommodation on the relatively superficial level of geopolitics and security.

**At a far deeper level, until Russians, Ukrainians and the West come to grips with their contradictory and mutually exclusive concepts of regional integration and sovereignty, begin to roll back the damaging legacies of more than half a century of Soviet social engineering, and redefine the struggle for modernization and reform as something Russians and Ukrainians can embrace together, the deep drivers of Russia-Ukraine conflict will remain.** ■

# THE IMPACT OF PROPAGANDA<sup>1</sup>



**Lev GUDKOV,**  
Director of Levada-Centre (Russia)

A real information and propaganda war has unfolded around events in Ukraine since January 2014, in which, in the eyes of the regular Russian, Vladimir Putin has emerged the undisputed winner.

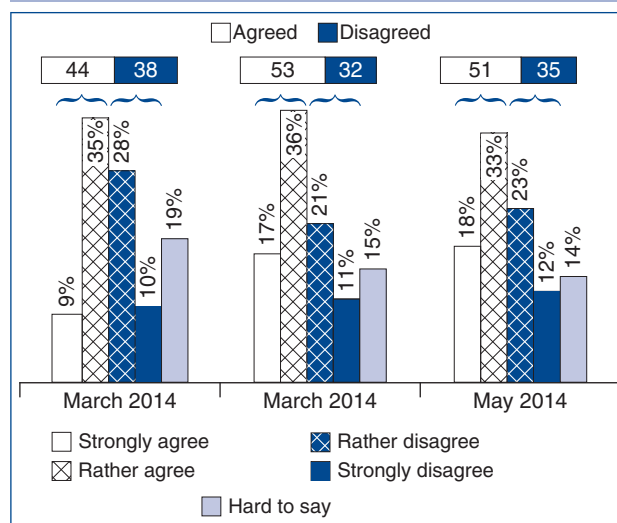
Kremlin propaganda has been aimed at solving two problems, posing the most serious threat to Putin's regime.

One is connected with the fact that Ukraine, the second largest country in the post-Soviet space after Russia, has left the Eurasian Union. Such a development scenario meant a serious dent in Vladimir Putin's reputation, signaling the unattractive status of Russia as a consolidation center for newly formed states. Even without particularly emphasizing these moments, the shift in the political course of Ukraine made the repellent sides of the Russian regime obvious: its ambitious nature (insisting on its special global role, the status of a unique civilization equal to that of the West), its repressive and anti-democratic nature, inefficiency of state, privatized by corrupt bureaucracy and Putin's oligarch associates. The prospect of Ukraine's integration into the EU, long-term though it is, has unveiled the essence of Putin's project, namely: establishment of a union of oppressive regimes under Russian auspices, a sort of mini-USSR, facilitating their isolation from the world community, creation of a buffer zone of dependent countries at the borders between Russia and Europe.

The other problem, which is even more serious, was that people's uprising against the corrupt regime of Viktor Yanukovich (that is how those events were first perceived by Russian public opinion (diagram "Do you agree or disagree with the opinion that there was a people's uprising at the Maidan against the corrupt regime of Viktor Yanukovich from December 2013 to February 2014?"); this point of view was supported by the Kremlin administration itself, according to the first statements of senior officials), confrontation at the Maidan in Kyiv, declaration of a new political course for Ukraine – the formation of a constitutional, democratic state, served as a pattern for the actions of the Russian opposition. Euromaidan could have appeared to the majority in Russia as a wholly acceptable

model for breaking down Putin's plutocratic system of rule against the backdrop of increasing weakening of the regime<sup>2</sup> and growth of social discontent. The fear of the Kremlin administration faced with uncontrollable streets might have appeared as quite justified, given the scale of mass protests that swept over major Russian cities in 2011-2012, and, accordingly, the subsequent disillusionment about the ability to achieve a shift of unpopular power by legal means through democratic procedures.

**Do you agree or disagree with the opinion that there was a people's uprising at the Maidan against the corrupt regime of Viktor Yanukovich from December 2013 to February 2014?\***  
% of respondents



\* 1600 respondents were surveyed during each study.

<sup>1</sup> The article refers to the results of sociological research, which are outlined in more detail on the website of Levada-Center, the Analytical Center of Yuriy Levada: <http://www.levada.ru/old/issledovaniya>. – Ed.

<sup>2</sup> Index of approval of Putin's activity (the difference between positive and negative evaluations) fell from the point of 78 % (September 2008, the peak of support) to the 24 % (November 2013, the minimum for the entire period of measurements). The details of regular nationwide public opinion surveys conducted by Levada Center of Yuriy Levada are given hereinafter. I take this opportunity to thank N.A. Zorkaya for her assistance in preparing this article.

The entire purpose of Putin's policy for destabilizing the situation in Ukraine is to discredit the forces of the democratic national consolidation and use all means possible to shift the grievances of the Russian people from corrupt bureaucracy to those siding with the law, democracy and Europeanization.

The challenge for the Kremlin political technologists is not only to block the "expansion" or "export" of democracy and European values into Russia, but also to present them as being profoundly alien to "Russian traditions and morals", to present the masses a frightening example of destabilization, inevitable after the overthrow of an autocratic and kleptocratic regime (and there are few who doubt that the Russian regime is precisely this). Such a ploy of social demagoguery proved to be the truest route: it is the threat of social disorganization that above all frightens the Russian population, who was deeply frustrated by the collapse of institutions and the fall in living standards in the 1990s.

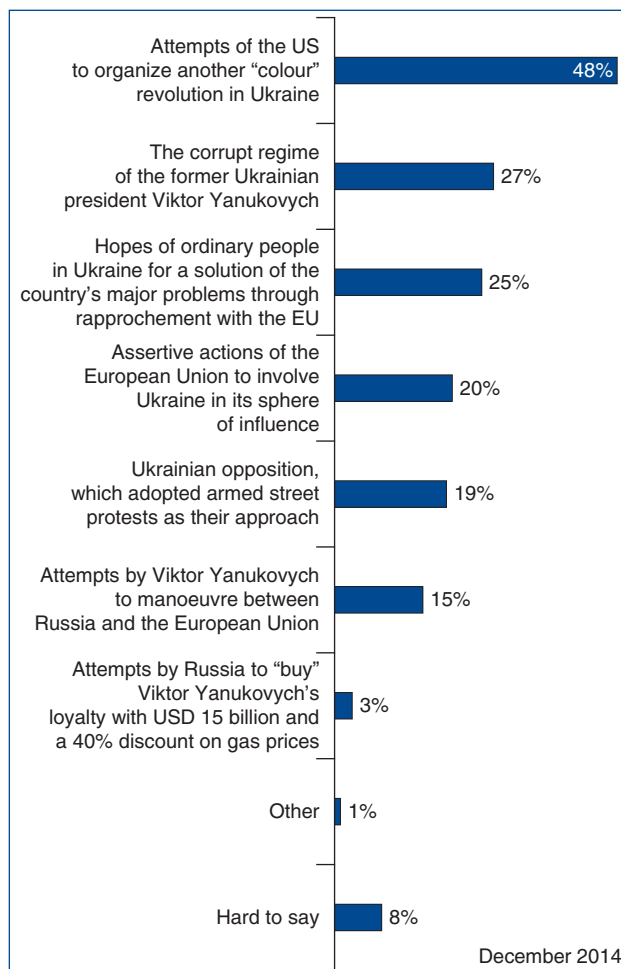
In the course of this campaign we can see four stages, outlined pursuant to the sequentially presented program ideas.

**First stage: December 2013 – January 2014.** The pivotal motive gradually increasing in coverage of Kyiv events is that Euromaidan is a link or a part of USA-managed mass unrest and social-political disorder, prepared with the help of the Internet and social networks, the support and activity of foreign foundations, and non-government organizations. The essence of the revolutions that swept across the world, beginning from the Rose Revolution in Tbilisi in 2003 or the Orange Revolution in Kyiv and ending with the events in North Africa, the uprising in Tahrir Square in Egypt or Istanbul, right up to Syria, has remained the same: the establishment of so-called democratic regimes, all dependent on the West. This simple idea proved compelling – from the point of view of the Russian population – grounds for universal explanation of current events. It could be simply embedded into traditional Russian anti-West position, Soviet anti-capitalistic ideology, paranoid fears of world war threat and isolationism. This idea, which had no particular substantiation, was easily accepted as the framework explanation for Ukrainian events. 83% of the respondents (among those who had, if any, even the vaguest understanding of events in Kyiv) agreed with the idea that mass meetings and demonstrations in Ukraine were managed and organized (paid for) by the West.

However, the declared course for integration with the European Union was perceived by Russians as wholly well-founded (particularly, if we remember those illusions of the beginning of the 1990s, which were cherished by the Russians themselves, who purported that rejection of communism was itself a way to consumer wealth and increased living standards for the people). Even after attempts to forcefully break up a rally at the Maidan, in December 2013, only a quarter of Russians closely monitored those events. But the situation has been changing fast and, by as early as February, more than a half of those polled had been riveted by reports from Kyiv.

**The second stage: February – March 2014:** Confrontation at the Maidan and the flight of Viktor Yanukovich, who had been pushed by Vladimir Putin to forcefully suppress the opposition, to Russia led to an intensification and a considerably more widespread,

**What, in your opinion, caused the crisis in Ukraine at the end of last year?\***  
% of respondents



\* Respondents were given the opportunity to select several possible answers.

blanket campaign of disinformation of the Russian population. Shots of clashes of demonstrators with the internal military forces in Kyiv, fires and casualties have been broadcast continuously on all TV channels, imposing an opinion that the protesting nationalists, their aggression and cruelty towards those in authority, the police and supporters of Viktor Yanukovich. Simultaneously, there was an intense purge of the informational space in Russia: independent informational channels have been forced to close; their editorial line-up has been changed, as well as the owners and directors of media holdings. Censorship and political control have become more and more strict; besides, a series of new laws have come into force, allowing the closure without court ruling of undesirable, "extremist" Internet resources and websites.

Two fundamentally new ideas have been put forward: (b) there was a coup d'état, a putsch in Ukraine, as a result of which radical nationalists and Banderites (= fascists, Nazis, anti-Semites) took over the government, launching a policy of discrimination against the Russians; the country was plunged into chaos and a power vacuum, bands of robbers rampage through the country, and the state is on the verge of complete collapse; (b) that is why the evolving "danger to the Russian population" in the east and south of Ukraine requires extraordinary protective and supporting measu-



res to be taken, pushing to the back any considerations of a need to adhere to international treaties, legal guarantees and so on.

Using the language of national war (such hackneyed phrases as “mass executions”, Ukrainian “fascists”, “Kyiv punishers”, genocide, and the like in news broadcasts), propaganda made it impossible to identify the Russian inhabitant with “non-humans” (fascists are not humans), destroyed the possibility of a preunderstanding, and therefore, formed an aprioristic hostile attitude, which blocked any further communication. This “us-and-them” barrier is even more important in the social aspect, rather than ideological or party-related views and disagreements in themselves, engaging no more than 35-40% of the population. On the contrary, “patriotic” mobilization (indignation and resistance to “Ukrainian fascism”) has engulfed almost the entire population, which constitutes extreme scales of integration for such an effect.

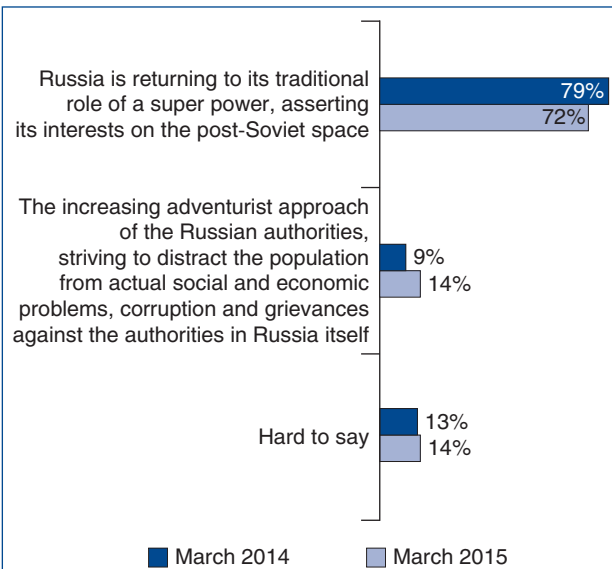
All those arguments were used as a cover for annexation of Crimea, which caused a boom of nationalist euphoria; these actions were supported by 84-86% of the population. “Crimea is ours” slogan became an expression for the new situation and solidarity with authority. It reflected the most serious national inferiority complex related to the breakup of the USSR and the loss of previous identity, which meant recognizing oneself as the subject of a “super power”. It was this level of collective notion and pride in being part of the frightening power of the state, an empire that made up for that constant feeling of routine abjection, poverty and dependency on the arbitrary behavior on the part of local bureaucracy. A year later, these figures are still comparable, although the imperial position of return of “ancestral” territories made even more significant the contribution to the bank of “positive” explanations of Russian policy (“the protection of our own”, “rectification of an injustice”, etc.), whereas the ideologeme “protection of the Russian population” became some

what weaker. All this set of “positive” feelings and complexes replaces the vague sense of discomfort towards Ukrainians.

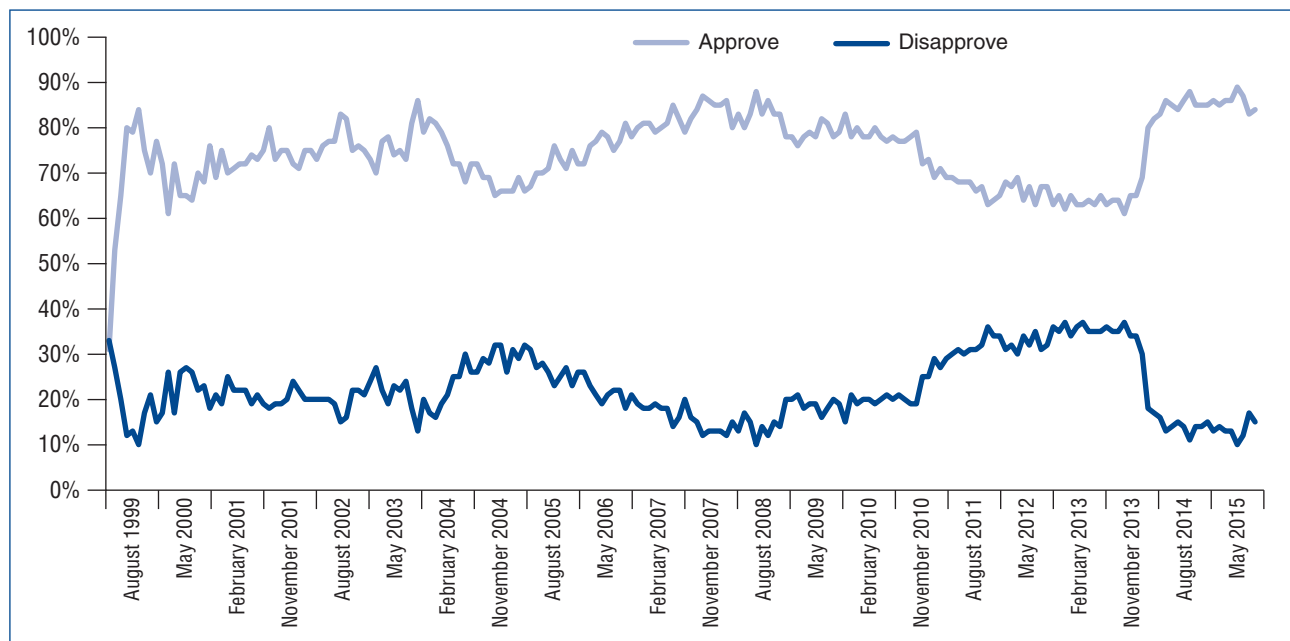
After annexation of Crimea Vladimir Putin’s rating, which had been falling for the last 5 years after the economic crisis of 2008-2009, recovered and rose sharply to reach its peak values (see the diagram, “Do you generally approve or disapprove of the actions of Vladimir Putin?”).

Propaganda attempted to enshrine Vladimir Putin’s success in Crimea, which was a sort of protection of “our own” by all means available, in the following ideas, which outlined the further course of the Kremlin’s Ukrainian policy.

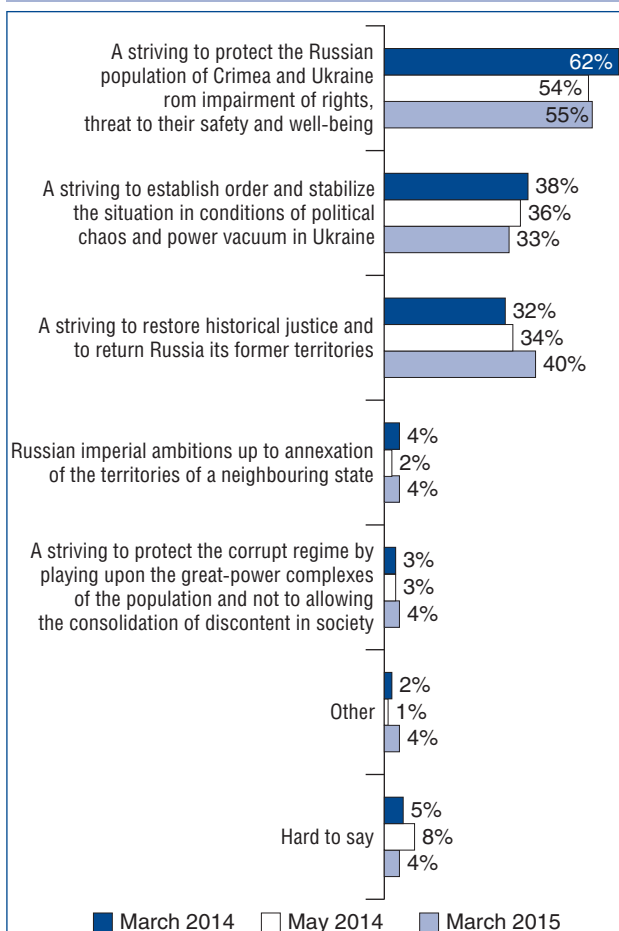
**What, in your opinion, serve as an explanation for Russia’s accession of Crimea?**  
% of respondents



**Do you generally approve or disapprove of the actions of Vladimir Putin?**  
% of respondents



**What do you think is the pivotal motive of the actions of Russian leadership towards Crimea and Ukraine?\***  
% of respondents

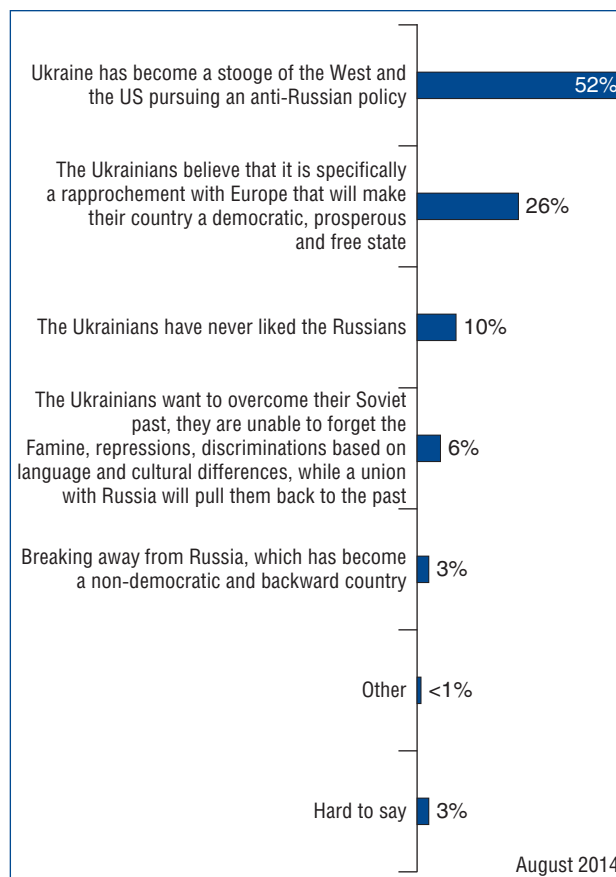


\* Respondents were given the opportunity to select several possible answers.

**The third stage: March-May 2014:** Besides the gradually increasing anti-Ukrainian rhetoric (“...Kyiv junta, Ukrainian punishers” execute real genocide of the its/the Russian population”) and justification for financial, organizational and military support for separatists, “independent states” in Donetsk and Luhansk, created by Moscow, the idea that Russia not only “protects the Russians” in Ukraine, but that it returned to its traditional role of a great power, has appeared to gain more prominence in the propaganda. It now returns its ancestral lands and territories, which were lost due to treachery, arbitrary behavior, and tyranny of particular leaders not so long ago.

Having returned Crimea and showed its might to the world, the Russian state compelled others to respect its interests throughout the post-Soviet space, the zone of Russian priorities. In this new context, propaganda treated criticism and rejection by the West of Russia’s actions as evidence of recognition of the nation’s increased power and resistance to this fact on the part of the Western countries, primarily the USA, who are afraid of the new Russia. Concurrently, the original versions of Maidan events and motives of Ukraine’s integration into the EU have been slightly changed as well.

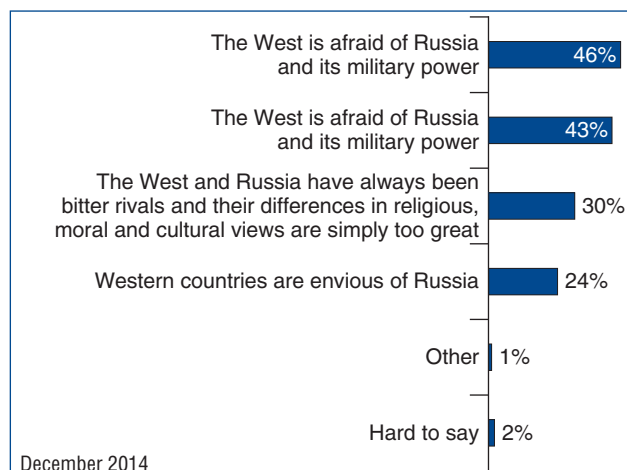
**What would you consider as the main reason for the pursuit by current Ukrainian leaders of ways of rapprochement with Europe and restoring Ukrainian independence from Russia?**  
% of respondents



August 2014

Therefore, the Kremlin administration places the whole onus of civil war in Ukraine on the Western countries, which provoked the collapse of Ukrainian sovereignty by systematically weakening Russia and trying to drive it out from the traditional spheres of its influence and interests.

**What do you think is the reason for the West pursuing such a hostile policy towards Russia?\***  
% of respondents, who consider that Western countries are hostile towards Russia

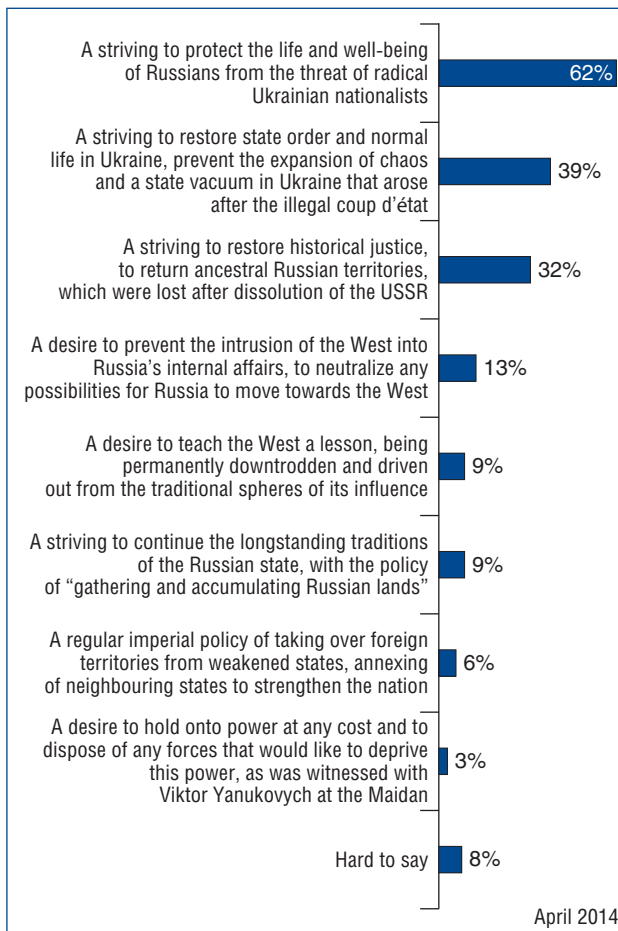


December 2014

\* Respondents were given the opportunity to select several possible answers.



**What do you think is the motive for the actions of the present Russian authorities towards Ukraine?\***  
% of respondents



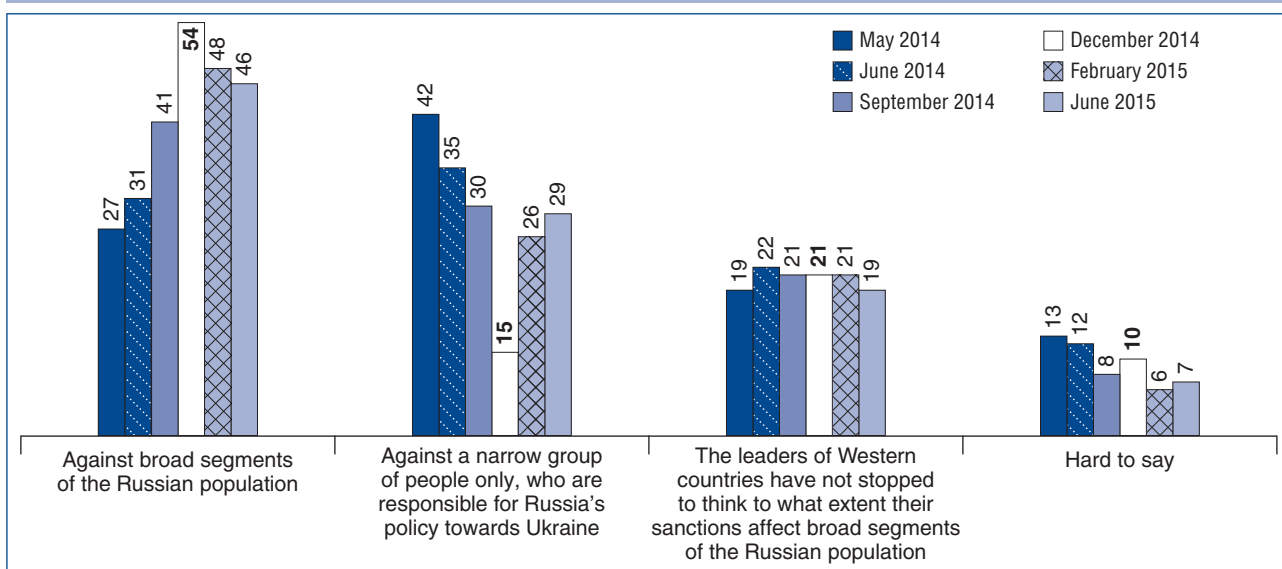
\* Respondents were given the opportunity to select several possible answers. 800 respondents were surveyed.

*The fourth stage of the Ukrainian conflict development – summer 2014 – summer 2015.* It is characterized by fierce fighting between the vulnerable Ukrainian army with separatists, sponsored by Moscow, by attempts to cut them off from the Russian border, through which Moscow supplies them with weapons, military equipment and ammunition, by increasing waves of refugees from the area of clashes and attacks, and finally by the shooting down of the Malaysian airliner, which caused outrage in the world and a new wave of sanctions against the Russian leaders.

The response of Western countries, notwithstanding all their tardiness and problems in coordinating mutual actions, proved to be unexpected for the Putin regime. The reckoning of the collective "Putin" that the West would one way or another "swallow" the Kremlin's new policy, as had earlier happened with the capture of Georgian territories (Abkhazia, South Ossetia) and their consequent absorption by Russia,<sup>3</sup> was proved wrong. This did not happen, and the Russian population came to feel for itself the consequences of this policy as early as six months later, starting from October 2014: sanctions accelerated the economic recession, which began in 2012, with its downward movement towards stagflation with further transition into crisis.

After introduction of the third wave of sanctions the political class in Russia started, albeit with difficulty, to realize the threat of international isolation, as well as prospective persecution and restrictions in rights and property for representatives of Putin's nomenclature. In turn, this led to a new wave of anti-West, particularly anti-American propaganda, which somehow meant a shift of hostility from Ukraine to the USA and, to a lesser extent, to such leading Western countries as Germany, Great Britain and Poland. At the same time this political play helped to retain a high level of approval of authority among the population.

**Whom do you think the current sanctions imposed by Western countries are directed against?**  
% of respondents

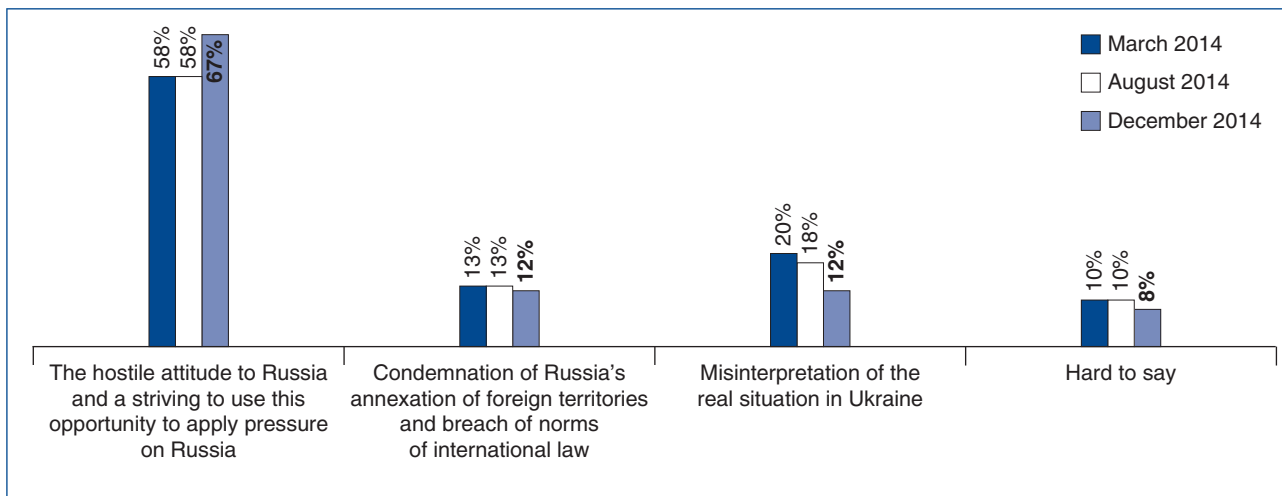


1600 respondents were surveyed during each study in May, June, September and December of 2014, and 800 respondents in February and June 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Such opportunistic behavior of the Western countries was in turn a motive for the Kremlin's current actions in Ukraine.



## What do you think is the main explanation of the Western response to events in Crimea and eastern Ukraine? % of respondents

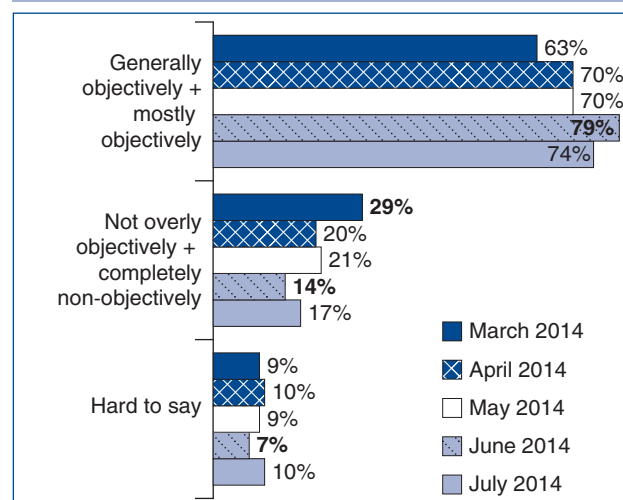


Throughout this time the vast majority of the population received information about the events in Ukraine almost exclusively from the federal TV channels (as reported by more than 80% of respondents). At the same time, the overwhelming majority (75-77%) of Russians have not gained a completely clear understanding of what is happening in Ukraine, which, however, failed to reduce the negative “aprioristic anti-Ukrainian attitude”. **Such an effect is a direct consequence of suggestive, continuous impact of television propaganda, not allowing a stunned recipient to recover and critically evaluate the nature of how informational materials are reported. The effectiveness of anti-Ukrainian propaganda should be explained not only by the particular intensity of its spread (with which nothing can compare in post-Soviet times), but also by why people heed it and are eager to listen to it.** It would seem that the Russians, who survived the collapse of the Soviet system and know from personal experience the price of lies and disinformation coming from the state, might have developed an antidote or mistrust in relation to the propaganda.

Nevertheless, there is something that has allowed them to overcome or, to be more precise, to “place into brackets” a habitual distrust of governmental demagoguery. According to the results of mass surveys of public opinion, a considerable part of Russians are aware of the interest of the authorities in such biased coverage of events in Ukraine, in one-sided reporting of information, but they believe that the government is doing the right thing, as they must act and speak in such situations.

What is of equal importance here is the fact of continuous pressure of “public opinion”, formed by semi-official newspapers, on the amorphous and the passive conscience of inhabitants, who have no alternative means of communication or any independent personal interpretation of current events, as well as the fact that TV, by virtue of its monopolistic status, appears to be not only a powerful media, but the most authoritative, in comparison to which all other informational channels are treated as secondary.

## How objectively do you think the events in Ukraine and Crimea are covered by the Russian federal mass media? % of respondents



The number of those who were uncertain has decreased rapidly, influenced by the collective opinion of the “majority” (recognizing oneself as “this is us”), which has been intensifying and becoming more aggressive, with those left forming a confused and marginalized minority. Resorting to alternative sources on the Internet or independent publications may be primarily limited only to the population of the largest cities (these sources do not appear in villages or small towns, where approximately 2/3 of the population lives). Critical perception of officialdom has been slowly on the decrease, and differences in the understanding of what is happening, which had still been deemed considerable in 2013, between the population of the big cities, focused on modernization of the country, and, for instance, small cities with rather conservative representatives, have become blurred. Differences in the evaluation and interpretation of events, the attitude to authority between social groups (different in social capital, cultural and economic resources) have been almost erased due to the impact of television; unanimity has been established, and the social consensus in relation to the government and its opponents has been restored.

**Do you agree with the opinion that the Russian Federal mass media has been waging an informational war against Ukraine in the last months and, if you agree, what do you think of this?**  
% of respondents



1600 respondents were surveyed both in July and August in 2014, 800 respondents – in November 2014.

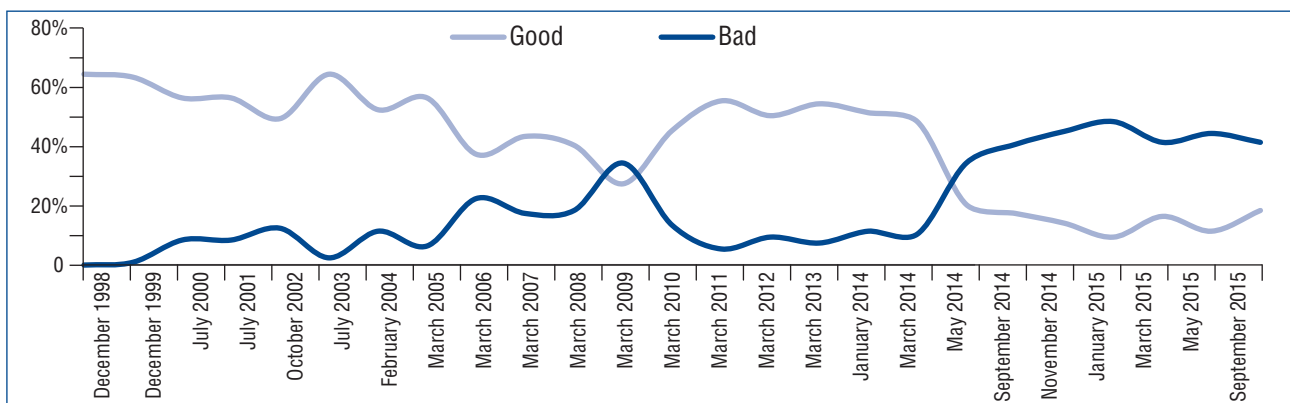
The majority of the Russian population (from 64% to 77%) treated the intra-war escalation in the South-Eastern part of Ukraine as the result of the increasing intrusion of the West. The population found it hard and was unwillingly to believe in the participation of Russia in the war in Donbas, including the direct actions of Russian military forces, but was still seen more positively than negatively. Thus, more than a half (55%) of respondents considered it essential to provide

assistance to the pro-Russian forces in this region of Ukraine. We note a distinct confusion of the mass conscience in cases when it is faced with clear conflict of information.

Recognition of the obvious facts (for example, participation of Russian troops or use of heavy military equipment – tanks, armored vehicles and anti-aircraft missile complexes – in fighting with separatists in the east of Ukraine) contradicts the generally accepted rules of morality and law, which require a rejection of the illegal use of force, recognition of the inviolability of the borders of another country, and enters into conflict with the desire to express symbolic support for the actions of the country and take satisfaction from the consciousness of strength and military superiority of Russia over the weak Ukrainian army. In such cases, public opinion becomes confused and begins to flounder, realizing that state lies are reasonable in terms of “national” or “public interests”.

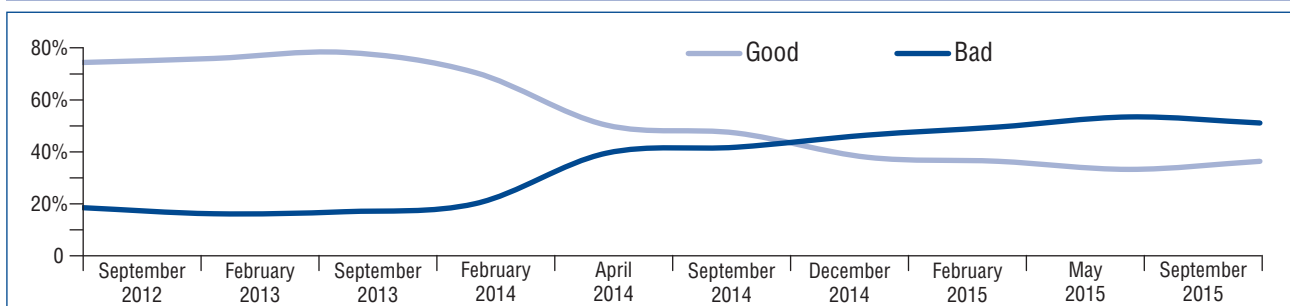
**The attitude of Russians to Ukrainians has become markedly unpleasant, if not downright hostile, in recent months. The attitude of Ukrainians to Russians is noticeably more favorable and positive.** Resentment (hidden, suppressed) against the behavior of the Ukrainians who “switched sides to Europe” is justified, on the one hand, by envy (it is not us moving towards Europe, although we also want to live by the same standards as in the West, but we cannot; we cannot even confess this to ourselves, although we clearly understand that we simply cannot be the same as people in the West) and, on the other hand, by the permission to display aggression towards them, justified by the fact that they are fascists, Nazis, punishers, junta, Banderites, ultra-nationalists, and all the rest.

**What is your general attitude to Ukraine?\***  
% of respondents



\* The “Hard to say” choice is not shown on the diagram.

**What is your current general attitude to Russia? (Data of KIIS)\***  
% of respondents



\* The “Hard to say” choice is not shown on the diagram.



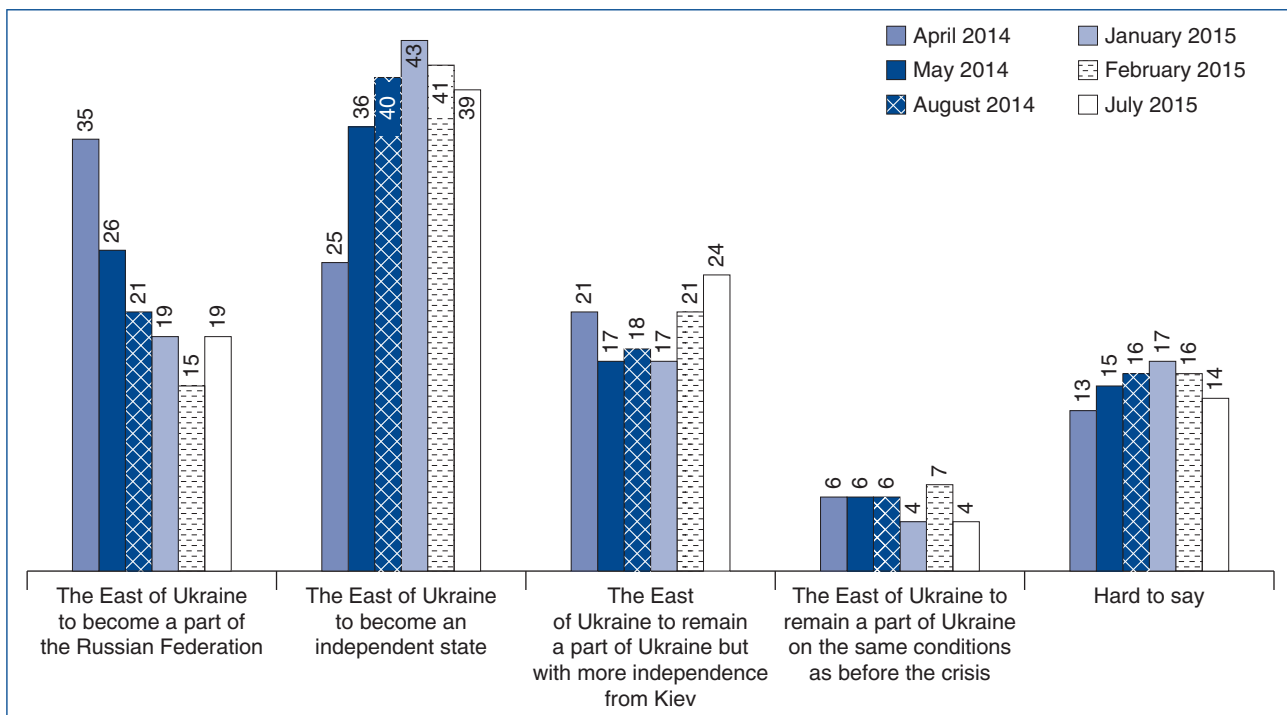
There is a repressed understanding of one's own incapacity, inferiority, immorality, that the Russians are not worthy of living like they do in the West, but this understanding cannot be explicated in any way, for there are no respected groups and voices in the moral and intellectual sense. So – the only “way out” – is to eliminate the source of irritation itself. Rancor and hatred, provoked by propaganda (sanctioned by the clout of power) towards the West, particularly towards the USA as a symbolic enemy, is not similar to hostility towards a particular country or countries (survey data may well illustrate this dichotomy). It is rather the ambivalent attitude (attraction to/hatred of) the virtual valuable image that is the embodiment of all things that a Russian inhabitant would like to have in his country, but cannot afford. **Realization of an impossibility to correspond to the desired image becomes a willingness to discredit, reduce the attractiveness of the holder of these benefits - the United States, the EU – and to humiliate Western countries. The Russian political class is wholly instrumental, that is it consciously and demagogically, exploits this mass resentment to strengthen its authority and legitimacy.** This may serve as an explanation for diligent searches and daily attempts of propaganda to report any little nasty thing in western life to the population (crimes, disasters, gossip, etc.). In this context, the support of the authorities and regime itself is not based on the surety in the “good” character of the Russian authorities (there are just no illusions there); it relies solely upon the understanding of the “correct” behavior of the powers that be, that is, in a manner that corresponds with the expectations, needs and habits of the common resident: they “dampen” the

West in the most direct and frankly hooligan way, demonstrating its audacity and courage. State paternalism in today's conditions require (for its preservation) an intense expression of anti-Western sentiments as a means of repressing the painful national inferiority complex, insuperable backwardness and sewerage of perceived rancor, hostility to the West, which makes us think so badly about ourselves.

The Russians placed the political and military responsibility for crash of the Malaysian Boeing, the incident that shocked the whole world, solely on the Ukrainians. Only 1-2% of respondents accused the separatists, supported by Russia, of committing this crime. Such a perception of the event by the mass population cannot be explained by the exclusion of undesirable information from the Russian broadcasting channels or print media under strict censorship, or by its reporting in a manner that misinterpreted the essence of events. What is more important is that people were stubbornly reluctant to hear things they did not want to, maintaining a conscious resistance and the selection of incoming information.

However, the population have had strong fears that the confrontation could escalate into war between the former “brotherly nations and neighbors” for at least one and a half years since the beginning of the military conflict. Therefore, the original intent to approve the sending of Russian troops into Ukrainian territory has been replaced with a more cautious attitude, a tendency towards less blatant forms of annexation, for instance, to recognize these territories as a “new state” (on the model of Abkhazia or South Ossetia), but without their accession to Russia.

**What do you think about the political future of the eastern part of Ukraine (Donetsk, Lugansk regions)?**  
**Which of the following alternatives would you prefer?**  
% of respondents







Euphoria from the accession of Crimea to Russia has been gradually waning since August 2014. The consequences of the acquisition of Crimea by the Russian Federation are still perceived positively, but not to the same extent as at the beginning. Patriotic mobilization has been weakened due to the impact of some factors, including psychological fatigue from permanent propagandistic “infusion” and mobilization. While almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the Russian respondents were ready to applaud the direct intervention of the Russian army in Donbas in March-April of 2014, this figure has fallen by almost 1.5 – 2 times by November.

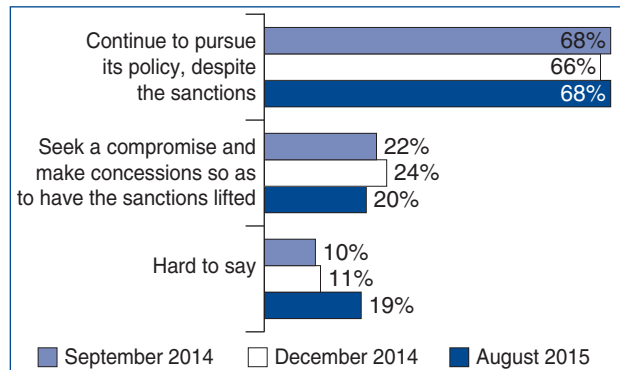
What is most important here is the sobering effect of the sanctions, which together with falling oil prices, has led to a rise in consumer goods prices, inflation and the disappearance of a number of products, for which the Russian government imposed an embargo in response to the European and US sanctions, as well as to a depreciation of savings for those who had savings in rubles. Only a small number of Russians initially exhibited a willingness to personally bear the responsibility and costs for accession of Crimea, even if taking into account the declarative nature of such responses.

Disintegration of thought or ambivalent thinking of paternalist, post-totalitarian conscience can be most fully traced in the response to sanctions: on the one hand, the population declares the need for the authorities to continue acting and they have been acting in Ukraine to date and, on the other hand – it complains about a deterioration in material status, declares its unwillingness to take responsibility for these actions of the country's leadership, resulting in a fierce response from other countries, which insist on compliance with norms of international law and international relations, and the recovery of the principles of a post-War world.

Such irrationalism of public opinion indicates the mechanisms for blocking the realization of current events

Accession of Crimea will require considerable contributions and investment from Russia, the burden of which may be thrust upon ordinary citizens in the form of restrictions on salary and pension increases, cutbacks in social programmes, price rises and so on.

**In what way do you think Russia should respond to the sanctions imposed by Western countries?**  
% of respondents

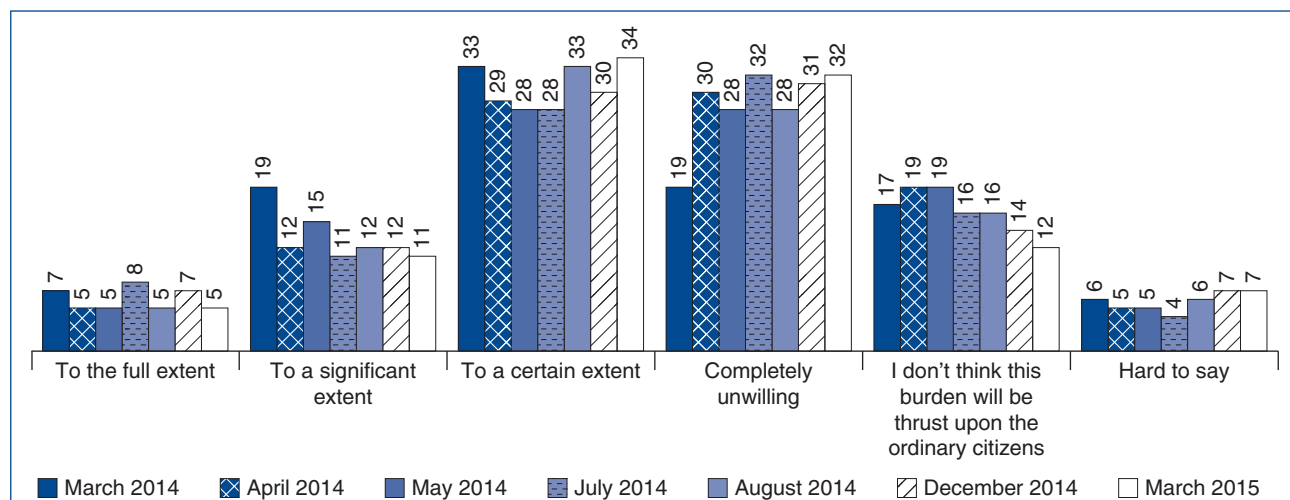


a lack of a developed system of public communication, which is what basically becomes the condition for the repression of evolutionary processes in post-Soviet Russia and the degeneration of Putin's autocratic regime into a rather imitational totalitarianism.

**The aggressiveness towards Ukraine in 2014-2015 meant the regression of the public to the former ideological stages of development, meaning a return to simpler institutional practices of superiority and government, and the repressive nature of relations between authority and society.**

The wave of nationalist excitation will pass, but the damage it caused to intellectual, legal and moral spheres of public life in Russia will not be recovered in the near future. Ideas about a peaceful transformation of Russian authority, the creation of a constitutional state, democracy, transparent elections and free media, etc. have left the public sphere having ceased to be a subject of public discussion and interest. Various alternatives of the Russian nationalism and confrontation with the West have occupied the ideological field.

**To what extent are you personally willing to pay such a price for the accession of Crimea?\***  
% of respondents



1600 respondents were surveyed during all researches, except for those in April 2014, and 800 respondents in April 2014.

# ENERGY ASPECTS OF UKRAINIAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RUSSIAN HYBRID AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE



*Mykhailo HONCHAR,  
Centre for Global Studies "Strategy XXI"*

High oil prices in 2000s gave a boost not only to economic development of the Russian Federation but also to revanchist ideas in the conscience of its political class that experienced the complex of the loser in the Cold War. The lust for revenge in the form of a multipolar world, where Russia would be the main pole, combined with the idea of "collection of lands", prompted search of ways and means for achievement of the desired goals. In the conditions of globalisation of the world economy, hydrocarbons, pipelines and propaganda can not only supplement the military arsenal but even surpass it, if we speak about a hybrid war.

In order to predict what Putin's Russia will do, one should grasp the Russian terms of reference, within which, strategic decisions are taken. "Russia is a self-sufficient country" – it is a meaningful statement by Vladimir Putin from his Valdai speech. "Russia is much stronger, and the West – much weaker than many can imagine. ... Our country is now regaining its place in the world", – such is the opinion of one of the leading Russian spin-doctors Sergey Kataganov, being one of the creators of the present day Putin's policy.

Analysis of the Kremlin's official documents and practical deeds prompts the conclusion that one of the main goals of Russia is to undermine trans-Atlantic partnership and solidarity, reposition Europe alongside with Russia for creation of a so-called common security space and trade from Lisbon to Vladivostok and from St. Petersburg to Colombo without the USA. The Kremlin has started the greatest wave of geopolitical expansion, resting on the semblant power of Russia and real weakness of the West. The Kremlin ventured to do this not because Russia is so strong but because the West is weak as never before, despite the GDP figures, and against the backdrop of its global weakness, Russia looks quite a power, especially given the EU dependence on Russian energy supply.

Russia's energy strategy aims to achieve an ambitious geopolitical goal. Energy resources and the infrastructure for their delivery remain a tool of the Russian policy. Even now, few people pay attention to the fact that the official document "Energy strategy the Russian Federation

to 2020" begins with the statement that **"Russia possesses significant reserves of energy resources and a powerful fuel and energy sector, presenting the basis for economy development, a tool of pursuance of the home and foreign policy"**.<sup>1</sup> That document was signed by the Russian president Vladimir Putin in August, 2003. After that, two large-scale gas crises took place in the Russian-Ukrainian relations – in 2006 and 2009. They were also felt by the EU countries, since Russia stopped gas transit via Ukraine to Europe.

Now, when the key provisions of the Energy Strategy through 2035 are being formulated in Russia, they do not conceal the new dimension of the foreign energy policy: **"Russia as a responsible state views foreign energy policy not from the narrow viewpoint of an exporter maximising short-term revenues but as a means of solution of not only national but also global problems"**.<sup>2</sup>

It should be noted that use of energy resources for attainment of Russia's geopolitical and geo-economic

<sup>1</sup> Russia's Energy Strategy through 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Russia's Energy Strategy through 2035 (key provisions). – <http://www.energystrategy.ru/>.



interests is not just political rhetoric but practice. One will easily recall incidents in Russia's relations with other countries, where energy resources were used as a tool of influence:

- unilateral suspension of transit of Russian oil via Latvia by *Transneft* JSC in 2003;
- limitation of *Gazprom* gas deliveries to Belarus in the winter of 2004 and 2006;
- suspension of gas and electricity deliveries to Georgia in winter 2006;
- blockade of transit of Kazakh oil to Lithuania via the Russian Federation by *Transneft* JSC, and later – total stoppage of pipeline oil deliveries there in 2006;
- sharp reduction of oil supply to the Czech Republic in the summer of 2008, after it signed an agreement of deployment of a US TMD system radar on its territory.

The Strategy of National Security of the Russian Federation through 2020 and the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation reject the process of NATO enlargement and its global reach, and on that basis formulate the task of deterrence through “neutralization of possible war dangers and military threats by political, diplomatic and **other non-military means**”. This raises the probability of employment – as non-military means of deterrence – of the energy and infrastructure potential of the Russian Federation in case of aggravation of relations with separate countries and NATO as a whole.

A special role here is assigned to state monopolist companies that own and operate the energy infrastructure and at the same time supply energy resources to world markets, such as *Gazprom*. In fact, the Kremlin *weaponizes* energy resources and infrastructure through them.

*“The development of Gazprom, its transformation into a state-building, empire-building entity is a great achievement of Putin, using which, he, having spread pipes throughout Eurasia, connected them with Europe, Belorussia, Ukraine, republics of Central Asia. And this space, bound by steel pipes, has become the first prototype of the future great state. Gazprom is a civilisational achievement of Putin's Russia... Gazprom ... saved the country, laid down the basis for the future Eurasian statehood. Gazprom is a steel bud ready to bloom with the flower of the fifth Russian empire”*<sup>3</sup> – pro-Putin intellectuals of the Izborsk club describe Gazprom in this way.

Also noteworthy, growth of profitability of the Russian pipeline infrastructure poses a potential threat for markets, especially those that have no diversified sources of energy supply. The Russian energy strategy provides for the growth of profitability of pipeline capacities due to construction of new pipelines. This means that traditional flows of energy resources may prove unstable. It may be concluded that creation of a diversified system of Russian gas export is intended to vary volumes, directions and prices of export deliveries to the insufficiently internally integrated EU market with the purpose of maximisation of revenues and

pressure on one or another member country of the EU and NATO, threatening with restriction/suspension of deliveries, especially combined with a PR/psychological campaign and cyber attacks. Given that in 1973 the success of the oil embargo of the Arab countries against the West was secured by the oil supply reduction by meagre 9%, the substantial reserve of pipeline capacities for gas supply to the EU from the Russian Federation measured in dozens of BCM means a possibility of similar reduction of supply.

The EU assessed the Russian energy policy only from the business viewpoint. **Analysis of the Russian conduct in 2000s shows that it consistently moved towards the use of energy resources as an energy weapon, diligently disguising it as commercial disputes with consumers of Russian hydrocarbons in the post-Soviet space. The traditional business terms of reference (volumes – prices – contractual provisions – debts) are insufficient to grasp what is going on in gas relations of Ukraine and Russia. In the conditions of the Russian hybrid war against Ukraine, modified terms of reference are needed, with an additional military dimension, since the energy sector present a battlefield of the new generation war.**

Acts of Russian “gas aggression” against Ukraine in 2006 and 2009 deserve particular notice. In Europe they are commonly referred to as “Ukraine-Russian gas crises”, which reflects the traditional desire of the European Commission to avoid calling spades spades. Suspension of gas supply to Ukraine and reduction of transit across Ukraine to the EU in 2006 was seen as “acts of retaliation” by the Russian Federation: to Ukraine – for the Orange Revolution of 2004, to Europe – for its support for Ukraine. But now, it may be concluded that it was employment of the energy weapon during the long stage of crypto war,<sup>4</sup> supposed to proceed to the stage of hybrid invasion.

The crisis of 2009 pursued far-reaching goals. It was supposed to act as a fuse to provoke a political conflict between the east and west of Ukraine. The concept was that in case of a complete cut of gas supply (for domestic consumption + transit to the EU), the Ukrainian government would fail to provide for gas supply from the main underground gas storages located in the west of the country to the key industrial centres in the east that would remain without heating. Therefore, it was supposed to provoke, according to the design of Russian strategists, “a social explosion in the East and South of Ukraine”. In 2009, the Russian Fund of Strategic Culture described the so-called “semirigid” scenario, providing for rapid deployment of military contingents with a “provisional government” to Ukraine, prompt formation of local administrations on the occupied territories relying on “supporting forces” prepared in advance – marginal groups, critical about the Kyiv government, creation of “independent” quasi-state entities. It was not accidental that on January 12, 2009, Russian media carried publications about “revision of borders” in the CIS and news reports relaying statements by Russian politicians: **“Member of the State Duma of the Russian Federation Konstantin Zatulin does not rule out that Russia “at the right time will give a sign” for the**

<sup>3</sup> Aleksandr Prokhanov: The choke stone of the Russian statehood. – Politikus.ru, 22 December 2013, <http://politikus.ru/articles/10111-aleksandr-prokhanov-zamkovyy-kamen-rossiyskoy-gosudarstvennosti.html> (in Russian).

<sup>4</sup> Crypto war is a covert form of gradual, regular and long-term infliction of damage to the enemy by non-military means with the purpose of utmost exhaustion of its potential until the moment, when a decision of classic or hybrid aggression is taken.





### south-eastern regions of Ukraine to accede to Russia”<sup>5</sup>

In 2009, that scenario did not work, since the Ukrainian gas transportation system (GTS) was reversed, and central, eastern and southern regions of Ukraine received gas from underground gas storages located in the country's west.

In 2014, they started implementing the upgraded scenario of the hybrid war, but it was prepared well in advance. Maximisation of economic losses for Ukraine was one of the goals of the active phase of the hybrid war. From June 16, gas deliveries to Ukraine were stopped under the pretext of gas debts of “Naftogaz Ukrainy”. The gas blockade of Ukraine lasted 180 days, or almost six months.

From July, 2014, power engineering and rail transport facilities were subjected to heavy bombardments. Some coal mines in Donbas were rendered inoperative, railways for coal delivery to other regions of the country and coking plants that used to support metallurgy were destroyed. I.e., everything was done exactly the way it was said by the Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces Valery Gerasimov in his infamous 2013 report: “a decrease of the military-economic potential of the state through destruction of critical facilities of its military and civilian infrastructure within short timeframes”.

Provision of Ukraine with gas has always been strongly dependent on deliveries from Russia or via Russia. And the gas sector has traditionally been an area of vulnerability for Ukraine in its relations with the Russian Federation. However, Ukraine has never depended on coal, extracting in sufficient quantities and even partially exporting it. The current deficit of coal reflects two realities. Firstly, when the separatist groupings of LPR and DPR, controlled by Russia, failed to seize the whole of Donbas, they, with support of the Russian troops, retreating, retained control of the areas producing anthracite coals, used by half (7 out of 14) of heat and power plants in Ukraine. Therefore, through military efforts, Ukraine's coal dependence was produced before the beginning of the heating season of 2014-2015. **Russia created a dilemma for Ukraine: the deficit of coal is covered either at the expense of imports from the Russian Federation, or buying it from Donbas, Russia-controlled “LPR” and “DPR”. However, the “coal tool” could not be efficient, because the occupied**

Crimea was 4/5 dependent on electricity supplied from the united energy system of Ukraine. Ukraine used it to contain the Russian advance in Donbas, showing by complete disconnection of the Crimea on December 25-26, 2014, what would happen in case of further advance of the aggressor. On December 30 commercial companies signed a package of agreements, whereby the Ukrainian party was promised coal, and Russian – uninterrupted supply of electricity to the Crimea. Hence, the parties kind of exchanged the tools of energy influence available to them.

The areas of Donbas occupied by Russia are not self-sufficient in terms of energy, despite even the excess of coal. So, Russia will try to expand the occupied territories by different, military or non-military means, to ensure their greater energy sustainability, which can simultaneously lead to destabilisation of operation of Ukraine's energy systems – the united energy system and the gas transportation system. The line of the resource balance/imbalance that can secure energy self-sufficiency of “DPR”/“LPR” and the annexed Crimea and may cause an energy collapse of Ukraine runs from Kharkiv to Zaporizhzhia and further down the Dnieper to Kherson (nuclear and thermal generation facilities in Enerhodar, Zaporizhzhia region, and the main flood gate of the North Crimean canal and the hydropower plant in Nova Kakhovka, Kherson region).

Noteworthy, Russia's use of the energy tool during the active phase of the hybrid war in 2014-2015 inflicted serious losses on Ukraine, but those losses were not fatal, mainly because the winter was warm, and “General Frost” did not ally with Russia. But the strategic miscalculation of the Kremlin was that it underestimated the energy sustainability of Ukraine and the ability of its government to take measures for reduction of energy consumption, coal imports, best use of nuclear generation capacities, and the dependence of the annexed Crimea on supply from mainland Ukraine.

**In the winter of 2015-2016, one cannot rule out a scenario of employment of the whole set of non-military methods of influence, including the use of energy resources as a tool of pressure, up to the cut of gas transit via Ukraine to the EU, all deliveries of coal (from Russia or from the occupied territories of Donbas), petroleum products and electricity (if any).**

Russia will continue to intimidate Europe with Ukraine's non-reliability, although all earlier “prophecies” of the Kremlin about an energy disaster in Ukraine without the Russian gas, as well as disruption of gas transit via Ukraine to the EU, proved nothing but Putin's propaganda. The scenario of a cut of gas supply to Ukraine and the EU will remain on the agenda in 2015-2016. More than that, the probability of that scenario greatly increased after September 4, 2015, when Gazprom and five European companies signed a shareholding agreement for *North Stream 2* project. That project runs contrary to the fundamental principle of safety of supply, being one of the cornerstones of the European energy policy – diversification of sources, routes and suppliers. The European Commission assessed that Russian project with a great deal of scepticism.

<sup>5</sup> Zatulin about Khmelnytskyi, Yushchenko and a sign at the right time. – UNIAN, 12 January 2009, <http://www.unian.net/world/179446-zatulin-o-hmelnytskiy-yuschenko-i-znake-v-nujnyiy-moment.html> (in Russian).



So, *Gazprom* will by all means try to unleash a large-scale gas crisis to cut gas transit to the EU across Ukraine, to make the European Commission to support *North Stream 2* because of “transit problems with Ukraine”. More than that, now, not only *Gazprom* but also its five European partners have an interest in such scenario.

The Ukrainian gas transportation system is especially important for both Ukraine and the EU. Its importance stems not only from by its transit role, that halved, compared to early 2000s. Underground gas storages with the total effective volume of 31 BCM are also important.<sup>3</sup> They make it possible to deliver gas to the EU in the winter period of peak gas consumption. No less important, especially in a war situation, is the high level of interconnection of main pipelines, securing uninterrupted gas supply in case of accidents or other emergencies. It is missing in other transportation routes, seen by *Gazprom* as alternatives to the Ukrainian gas pipelines: Yamal-Europe, *Blue Stream*, *North Stream* or other probable options. An accident at any of those routes will automatically lead to the cut of gas supply. In Ukraine, it is all different. Here are a few examples. In 2007, there were two serious technical incidents at the Ukrainian segment of the main gas pipeline Urengoi-Pomary-Uzhgorod. In both cases it took over two weeks to remedy the effects of the accidents. However, gas supply to the EU was not stopped even for a minute; instead of the damaged gas pipeline, parallel threads of two other pipelines were used – *Prohres* and *Soyuz*. The same happened in 2014, when there were acts of sabotage at the Urengoi-Pomary-Uzhgorod gas pipeline in May and June that led to stoppage of gas pumping by that pipeline but did not stop deliveries to the EU. **Noteworthy, to fully interrupt gas supply to the EU from the territory of Ukraine, GTS facilities must be simultaneously blown up in 29 places – a mission, impossible in the conditions of a hybrid war.**

### In lieu of conclusions and forecasts

With annexation of the Crimea and invasion in the east of Ukraine, Russia achieved one of its strategic goals – disruption of large-scale projects of development of natural gas deposits on the Black Sea shelf and unconventional gas in Ukraine, important for this country and for big Western companies. European and US companies have either left the country or frozen their projects indefinitely.

The Caspian region and the South Caucasus may become the next hotspot of military activities, since projects of gas extraction and transportation from those regions compete with Russian deliveries to Europe. Another region, actively “fuelled”, is Kurdistan, the territory of which is divided among four countries of the Middle East: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria.

Relying on the concept of an energy superpower, the Kremlin will try to preserve and strengthen its actually monopoly status of the hydrocarbon supplier to Europe from the East through:

- destabilisation of the regions beyond Russia that supply energy resources to the EU (the Caspian region, Central Asia, the Middle East);
- establishment of direct or indirect control of promising routes of hydrocarbon deliveries to the EU.

This means that the Russian Federation will try:

- to implement at any cost bypass projects (*Turkish stream*, *North Stream 2*) in order to bypass Ukraine and Slovakia as the basic segments of the traditional gas transportation corridor Siberia-Europe;
- to put under control or, if this proves impracticable, to destabilise Azerbaijan as a would-be supplier of gas to the EU;
- to disrupt construction of the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline for Turkmen gas supply to the EU;
- to maintain instability in Syria in order to bar implementation of any promising projects of gas transit from the Middle East to Europe via Syria;
- to secretly destabilise Algeria that has ambitious plans of development of new hydrocarbon deposits in Sahara;
- to destabilise Saudi Arabia as the biggest play-maker of the global oil market to resume price rise;
- to create conditions for annexation of Atyrau region in the north of Kazakhstan, where its main oil extraction projects involving international experts are concentrated – Tengiz, Kashagan, etc.;
- to establish zones of military control of the western sector of the Arctic region, not ruling out the option of occupation of the Spitsbergen archipelago under certain circumstances.

The USA and NATO should pay serious attention to the security of the Caspian region and the South Caucasus. Taking into account the above-mentioned features of the Russian policy, one cannot rule out a scenario of resumption of the Armenian-Azeri war, which will turn the South Caucasus and the Caspian region into a very risky area for projects of extraction and transportation of natural gas in Azerbaijan and transit of Turkmen gas via its territory. Such a scenario – following the Syrian one – could also divert attention from the Russian aggression in Ukraine.

NATO countries should enhance regional intelligence capabilities in the Caspian region, the South Caucasus, the Black and Baltic Seas, the Arctic region – everywhere, where there are energy resources and communications, viewed by Russia as competing.

Thorough monitoring of the Russian activities within NATO and the EU member countries is highly needed. Under the logic of a new generation war, Russia will act from inside rather than outside, in particular, using banking, lobbyist and corrupt mechanisms tested over the past decades of hydrocarbon deliveries to Europe.

Nonstandard asymmetric steps should be taken to coerce Russia into peace. For instance, Russian oil exports can be largely replaced with oil deliveries from other sources. Saudi Arabia has already begun deliveries to Poland. This means that Russia will face the need to reduce oil production against the background of twice lower export prices, which will lead to an even greater reduction of budget revenues. Crude oil and petroleum products are the main source of export proceeds for the Russian Federation – up to 55% of the yearly total. As long as this “hydrocarbon motor” powers the Kremlin financially, its aggressive actions, of the hybrid type against Ukraine or classic in Syria, cannot be stopped. ■

# DETERRING AND DEALING WITH AUTHORITARIAN RUSSIA: TOWARD A UNIFYING WESTERN STRATEGY<sup>1</sup>



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In united opposition to Russia's assault against Ukrainian statehood and its direct support of a protracted conflict in the Donbass, the U.S., EU and wider Western partners have committed to a policy of "strategic patience" centered on the outcome of the 2015 Minsk II ceasefire and ongoing negotiations through the Normandy Format.

However, this article seeks to untangle policy gridlock over the Ukraine crisis and reveal two critical points of weakness in what is actually a Western strategic deficit. Firstly, the West's lack of policy vision beyond Ukraine, and secondly, the fragility of Western partners' current unity, which relies on an interim set of tactics and political conditions. The pressing nature of these vulnerabilities has remained cloaked by the language of "strategic patience", and one of the central goals of this article is to emphasize the urgency and pre-eminence of a unifying Western strategy as an ingredient for Western victory in its political battle against Russia over the future of European security.

## A Strategic Deficit in the West's Russia Policy:

The whole of Western-Russian relations seems to have reached an insurmountable impasse over the conflict in Ukraine. On the one hand, Moscow will settle for nothing less than the destruction of Ukraine's national sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the West's recognition of its forcible annexation of Crimea. On the other hand, the West can never recognize Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, and waits for the Kremlin's complete withdrawal of foreign troops and cessation of support for separatists in Eastern Ukraine. All the while, the Ukrainian people continue to bear the consequences of the ongoing conflict. Mutual suspicion has reached endemic levels and the West finds itself slipping into a zero-sum scenario, where any accommodation of Russian aggression risks legitimizing the Kremlin's assault on European security and wider norms of international organization.

Western states have achieved a temporary unity in their combined effort to deter Russia, such as enacting multiple rounds of sanctions intended to weaken the

Kremlin's political-economic base of support, and implementing a "new blueprint"<sup>2</sup> for bolstered NATO forces across Europe's eastern periphery. In her remarks on the 2015 U.S. National Security Strategy, Susan Rice characterized current U.S. policy as one of "strategic patience,"<sup>3</sup> and reaffirmed the Obama administration's commitment to sanctions as an "effective tool" against "irresponsible actors."<sup>4</sup> For its part, the European Union – with Germany at the helm – vocally supports this policy of strategic patience toward Russia and has voted to extend broad economic sanctions until the end of January 2016, in the hope that the Kremlin will fully implement its side of February's Minsk II peace plan by the end of the 2015.

However, while the West waits and hopes for Putin to accommodate, the Kremlin shows no sign of de-escalation. Russian military personnel and heavy weapons remain in the eastern Donbas region;<sup>5</sup> the OSCE monitoring mission reports regular cease-fire violations and casualties;<sup>6</sup> Russia continues construction of several military bases near the Ukrainian

<sup>1</sup> Article is prepared during the internship at the Razumkov Centre.

<sup>2</sup> Geoff Dyer, "Nato shifts strategy in Europe to deal with Russia threat", *Financial Times*, June 23, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Susan Rice, "Susan Rice on 2015 National Security Strategy", *Brookings*, February 6, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> The White House, "U.S. National Security Strategy" February 2015, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Steven Pifer, "Contingency Planning Memorandum Update: Crisis Over Ukraine", *The Council on Foreign Relations*, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> OSCE "Daily Updates from the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine," 2015, <http://www.osce.org/ukraine-smm/reports>.





border<sup>7</sup> (likely in commitment to a much longer-term frozen conflict similar to that in Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia); and Russia has now provocatively intervened in Syria. In addition to air strikes, the Kremlin's growing Syria operation involves the re-deployment of special-ops forces and the recruitment of "foreign legionaries" (proxy fighters) from within Russia and the Donbass.

Putin's Russia continues to escalate military tensions and shows no concrete signs of accommodation in Ukraine, Syria, or with NATO. **In this scenario, the West's policy of strategic patience actually indicates a strategic deficit, which if left unaddressed will fail to provide the vision and resilience necessary to confront an entrenched authoritarian Russia over the long-term.**

### In Need of Strategic Vision

The U.S., EU and wider Western partners have achieved a temporary and crucial unity through joint imposition of sanctions against Russia. In particular, the tough third wave of sanctions – implemented in July 2014 following the shoot-down of the MH17 airliner over Ukraine – demonstrated a powerful collective response from the West, and from what had previously been a highly divided 28-member EU. Until the downing of the Malaysian Airlines flight, some EU member states had still been willing to "write off" Ukraine and the Eastern Neighborhood with a mind to preserving lucrative economic ties with Moscow.<sup>8</sup> However, over the span of the past two years the West has successfully shifted away from stale programs of partnership toward collective economic-political isolation of the Kremlin.

We can observe an especially impressive political shift in Germany, the leader of the Western diplomatic offensive and the fulcrum of European policy toward Russia. The change in chancellorship in 2008 from Schröder to Merkel marked a decline in Russia's importance for German leadership, and trust between the two countries experienced a gradual breakdown since Putin began his third term as president. Above all however, it was Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014 that decisively ended the post-Cold War era of German-Russian "strategic partnership," isolated the *Ostpolitik* proponents of a Russian union, and reframed the country's foreign policy orientation toward increasing deterrence of the Kremlin. Merkel's government enjoys high levels of public support for this tactical shift, with 65% of citizens supporting sanctions and 78% expressing distrust of Moscow as of March 2015.<sup>9</sup> Despite a drop in Germany's exports to Russia, the country's economic elites continue in their support of sanctions policy. For Germany and the West at large, a return to "business as usual" with Russia is now impossible, and EU foreign ministers unanimously voted in June to extend sanctions on Russia into January 2016.

Western partners remain rallied around the sanctions regime *for the time being*. However, this tactical unity will only prove temporary in the absence of greater strategic vision. **The first dilemma of the West's**

**strategic deficit involves a lack of clarity on policy goals.** Beyond the question of sanctions' relative effectiveness as a tool of policy, what are they actually supposed to achieve? Western powers have thus far linked the bulk of sanctions to the outcome of eastern Ukraine's ceasefire. At a press conference this past May in Sochi, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry stated, "If and when Minsk is fully implemented it is clear the U.S. and EU sanctions can begin to be rolled back."<sup>10</sup> However, the key points of the Minsk II protocol remain only vaguely defined, and they lack specific guidance on implementation. This has given different parties of the conflict a wide scope for interpretation, and many elements from Minsk's accords have proved relentless thorns in negotiation, such as "special status" for the Donbass, conduct of local elections, and amnesty laws.

**Beyond the Minsk ceasefire however, the larger trajectory and objectives of Western administrations' policies vis-à-vis Russia remain unclear.** In his 2015 National Security Strategy, President Obama confirmed the U.S. determination to "impose significant costs on Russia through sanctions and other means...deter Russian aggression, remain alert to its strategic capabilities, and help our allies and partners resist Russian coercion over the long term." Chief of EU foreign policy Federica Mogherini delivered a keynote address in London during early 2015 in which she affirmed a European response to Russia that mixes sanctions and "exhaustive" diplomacy (Normandy Format, OSCE Monitoring), aimed at the full implementation of the Minsk agreement and defense of Ukraine's territorial integrity in the interest of wider European security. Western governments express a general determination to restrain Russian aggression, but toward what endpoint will this struggle lead Western-Russian relations, and over what timeframe?

Western administrations are in need of more coherent vision of the trajectory of Western-Russian relations beyond the current crisis in Ukraine. This question of longer-term policy is already the object of intense scrutiny and debate across the international expert community, but no clear consensus has emerged on how to live with – or *outlive* – Putin's Russia. For example, a major 2015 report from the Royal Institute of International Affairs acknowledges Putin's strategic approach of rebuilding a "Fortress Russia" fundamentally at odds with the West. The UK study emphasizes the need to deter and constrain Russian coercion against European neighbors for as long as possible, until the Putin regime collapses or signs of "new thinking" appear in Moscow. At the same time, its experts argue that the West should simultaneously work to remove "dividing lines" and keep the door open for re-engagement with Moscow.<sup>11</sup>

Other voices from across the German and EU foreign policy establishments are similarly promoting a **dual strategy of containment and engagement** within the context of strategic patience (for example, expanding sanctions and strengthening NATO's eastern flank with a rapid response "spearhead" force of 4,000 to 6,000

<sup>7</sup> Oleksiy Melnyk, "The ceasefire in Donbas is unlikely to last long", *Razumkov Centre* (Expert Comment) September 7, 2015, [http://www.razumkov.org.ua/eng/expert.php?news\\_id=5765](http://www.razumkov.org.ua/eng/expert.php?news_id=5765).

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Rojansky and Michael Kofman, "Isolated Russia has little left to lose," *CNN*, July 16, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/07/16/opinions/rojan-sky-kofman-mh17-anniversary/>.

<sup>9</sup> Olaf Boehnke, "View from Berlin: Germany leads the EU on Russia sanctions", *European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR)*, March 9, 2015, [http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_germany\\_leads\\_the\\_eu\\_on\\_russia\\_sanctions311313](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_germany_leads_the_eu_on_russia_sanctions311313).

<sup>10</sup> Adam B. Lerner, "John Kerry dangles sanctions relief during trip to Russia", *Politico*, May 12, 2015, <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/05/john-kerry-sanctions-relief-russia-ukraine-ceasefire-minsk-117864>.

<sup>11</sup> Keir Giles et al, "The Russian Challenge," *The Royal Institute for International Affairs (Chatham House)* 2015, p. vi-viii.



soldiers<sup>12</sup> – while at the same time reviving the Partnership for Modernization<sup>13</sup> and signing a free trade agreement between the EU and Eurasian Economic union).

Yet it is unclear what particular blend of containment and engagement the West should, or even *can* pursue in light of Russia's increasing securitization, insularity, and hostility. The more that the political-economic stability (performance legitimacy) of Putin's regime declines under pressure by Western deterrence, the more the Kremlin is likely to compensate through an anti-Western orientation, seeking emotional-symbolic legitimacy through confrontation in external policy. Western states and Russia presumably still share critical areas of security cooperation such as the START treaties, nuclear security, the Arctic, and counterterrorism issues. But Russia continues to be in violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, according to a June 2015 report by the U.S. Department of State<sup>14</sup> – and in March of this year the Russian pulled out of a joint consultative group of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Force in Europe (CFE), just nearly leaving the agreement altogether.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, since March 2014 the European Leadership Network has logged a total of 3 'high risk' incidents, 13 'serious' incidents, and 50 'near-routine' incidents between Russian and NATO armed forces.<sup>16</sup>

Western leaders and experts remain frustrated by the Kremlin's belligerence and contempt for the European system, even as they hope for a radical political shift or regime change in Moscow that will allow for a return to pragmatic cooperation and normalcy. However, a tectonic shift has already taken place in Russia – a permanent tightening of authoritarian rule – and this shift has irrevocably altered Moscow's orientation to the West. **U.S. and European allies have not collectively registered the magnitude of political changes within Russia, and as a result their foreign policies have fallen into a state of drift, with an overly**

**narrow focus on Ukraine and individual tactics of deterrence instead of on a longer-term conception of relations with an authoritarian Russia.**

This drift in Western policy is especially visible in the sanctions regime, which has tended to act as a barometer of Russian behavior in Ukraine, shifting up and down according to escalations and de-escalations.<sup>17</sup> The Minsk negotiations also exhibit symptoms of policy drift. Ceasefire in the Donbass remains crucial, but there is a growing danger that Germany and the Normandy Format's diplomatic efforts could become too focused on *humanitarian* goals (achieving peace and stability in the region) at the expense of a larger, and longer term *political* victory over Russia regarding the principles of international security and validity of the Final Helsinki Act of 1975.<sup>18</sup>

### A Fragile Unity

In addition to formulating a longer-term perspective, the second major challenge of Western policy toward Russia will be to maintain unity and resilience among partners. Western tactical policy toward Russia (sanctions, NATO fortification, and negotiation) hinges on our ability to withstand Russian aggression while slowly bleeding the Kremlin's political-economic means of support – in other words, *outlasting* Russia. Yet in reality, Putin has managed to consolidate Russian domestic support for the medium term (turning sanctions into an anti-West propaganda victory) and it is the EU that faces serious and more immediate divisions across nearly all member states. Since Russia's incursion into Ukraine in 2014, Europeans have shed any illusions about a "Partnership for Modernization," yet at the same time no issue continues to generate more divisions and controversy among EU member-states than Russia.<sup>19</sup>

**We need to keep in mind that the West's current unity over the sanctions regime is highly tenuous because it rests on an interim composition of political leadership.** Firstly, today's European consensus is inseparable from Germany and the personality of Chancellor Merkel, who played the lead role in pushing the EU to adopt and maintain its phase three ('sectoral') sanctions. Secondly, other pivotal European allies might remove their support for sanctions during 2016. In September, French President Hollande renewed statements he made earlier this year that France hopes to see an end to sanctions in light of ceasefire progress and decentralization efforts in Ukraine.<sup>20</sup>

Even more threatening, radical shifts in administrations or the entrance of new parties into power may

<sup>12</sup> Beata Gorka-Winter "Strengthening NATO's Eastern Flank," European Leadership Network December 2, 2014, [http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/strengthening-natos-eastern-flank\\_2216.html](http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/strengthening-natos-eastern-flank_2216.html).

<sup>13</sup> Mentioned by German Vice-Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel (SDP) in an interview for the *Handelsblatt* daily, January 20, 2015, <http://www.bmwi.de/DE/Presse/reden,did=682552.html>.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of State "2015 Report on Adherence to and Compliance With Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments" June 5, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Kathrin Hille and Neil Buckley "Russia quits arms pact as estrangement with Nato grows," *Financial Times*, March 10, 2015, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/f6c814a6-c750-11e4-9e34-00144feab7de.html#axzz3q363vGF6>.

<sup>16</sup> Ian Kearns, Lukasz Kulesa, and Thomas Frear "Russia—Dangerous Brinkmanship Continues," European Leadership Network, March 12, 2015, [http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/russia--west-dangerous-brinkmanship-continues-\\_2529.html](http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/russia--west-dangerous-brinkmanship-continues-_2529.html).

<sup>17</sup> Kadri Liik "The limits and necessity of Europe's Russia sanctions," European Council on Foreign Relations, August 3, 2015, [http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_the\\_limits\\_and\\_necessity\\_of\\_europes\\_russia\\_sanctions3091](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_the_limits_and_necessity_of_europes_russia_sanctions3091).

<sup>18</sup> Anna Kwiatkowska-Drozdz and Kamil Frymark "Germany in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict: a political or a humanitarian mission?" Center for Eastern Studies (OSW) in Poland, February 18, 2015, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2015-02-18/germany-russian-ukrainian-conflict-a-political-or-a-ftn14>.

<sup>19</sup> Nicolas de Pedro and Elina Viilup "Misunderstandings and Tensions, a new Normality in EU-Russia Relations?" Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) May 2015.

<sup>20</sup> "Ukraine conflict: France hopes to end Russia sanctions," BBC September 7, 2015; and see also "France seeks end to Russia sanctions over Ukraine," BBC January 5, 2015.





pose serious threats to EU unity. On October 25<sup>th</sup> Poland saw the defeat of its ruling party Civic Platform and the ascent of Jaroslaw Kaczynski and the rightwing eurosceptic Law and Justice party, foreshadowing a less western European orientation for the country and likely a decline in Polish-German relations. If the victory of the Law and Justice party (or other potential shifts in the EU states toward eurosceptic parties such as Marine Le Pen's National Front in France) lead to a more divided Europe, than this will prove an indirect but powerful victory for Vladimir Putin.<sup>21</sup>

As the crisis in Ukraine has evolved, central and east European members of the EU have struggled in maintaining a common response to Russia. **During every period in which sanctions near their expiration, the region's simmering divisions risk a renewed spillover as member states discuss the broadening, extension or partial lifting of the West's retaliatory measures.** Estonia, Lithuania and Poland – among the first states to condemn violence against the EuroMaidan – have taken principled stands against Russian aggression, and maintained vocal positions on the implications of the Ukraine crisis for broader European security. Estonia is the smallest and arguably most exposed of all of Russia's European neighbors, and during 2015 President Toomas Hendrik Ilves urged NATO to permanently deploy at least a brigade of troops in the Baltic states, in addition to the “very high readiness” task force of 5,000 for emergency deployments organized at the Wales summit last year.<sup>22</sup>

Although Tallinn, Warsaw and Vilnius demand rapid and strongly punitive measures against Moscow, other southern capitals remain more subdued. Prague, Bratislava and Budapest still support the EU policy line, but have openly voiced doubts about the effectiveness of sanctions, and underscored the fallout for their own and other EU economies. For example, in the Czech Republic the subject of Ukraine has revealed deep cleavages across the country's public and foreign policy elite. Czech opinion polls show a nearly even split regarding the West's sanctions – with 41 percent in support of their imposition and 39 percent against, and the Czech political mainstream strongly oscillates between camps of “multilateralism” (emphasizing a unified EU approach) and “pragmatism” (looking more to economic interests).<sup>23</sup>

**A lack of a clear strategic policy line from Washington, Brussels and Berlin will only exacerbate policy cleavages and security vulnerabilities across the EU,** by extension encouraging opportunistic behavior in states that are highly resource dependent on Russia (Bulgaria, Hungary, and Latvia) and most vulnerable to the Kremlin's arm of influence.<sup>24</sup>

## Toward a Unifying Western Strategy

Putin's authoritarian Russia poses a *long-term* challenge to European security and post-Cold War principles of international organization, but this article has argued that Western partners currently lack the necessary strategic vision and unity to last the duration of these tensions. Today's Western-Russian relations should not be equated with those of the Cold War for important differences political, economic, ideological, and military. Nonetheless, we may draw powerful insight on the current juncture from George Kennan's famous “Long Telegram” of February 22<sup>nd</sup> 1946. He writes:

This is admittedly not a pleasant picture. Problem of how to cope with this force [Russia] is undoubtedly greatest task our diplomacy has ever faced and probably greatest it will ever have to face.... It should be approached with same thoroughness and care as solution of major strategic problem in war, and if necessary, with no smaller outlay in planning effort.<sup>25</sup>

Now over half a century later, Kennan's words still ring true as the West faces a deeply authoritarian Russia that – like its Soviet predecessor – is increasingly convinced there can be “no permanent *modus vivendi*”<sup>26</sup> with transatlantic powers. Kennan reminds us that we cannot afford to let the Russian challenge slip to the backburner.

In fact, **the U.S., EU and wider allies should now work to reincorporate military sensibilities into their foreign policy and diplomacy in order to cement current alliances around long-term political objectives.** Specifically, Western policy should take into account what classical military theory (Clausewitz) defines as the “strategic” and “tactical” levels of war. The first step will be to seek greater clarity of the “ends” (political objective) of Western-Russian relations, after which governments can seek appropriate “ways” and “means” to reach those ends.<sup>27</sup> The determination of these strategic “ends” will need to avoid wishful thinking or cold war stereotypes, originating instead from a sober analysis of Russia's internal political dynamics.

Russia's hostile orientation toward the West in its external policy is an outgrowth of its brittle political system domestically. Both James Sherr and Lev Gudkov have emphasized the pivotal role of the 2011-2012 *Bolotnaya* protests in fueling the Kremlin's policies of social conservatism, repression, “sterilization of politics,” and “war on civil society.”<sup>28</sup> However, the Russian authoritarian syndrome extends *beyond the Putin regime* to encompass larger forces of culture and identity that – although difficult to quantify – actually restrict the range of options

<sup>21</sup> Remi Adekoya, “A Law and Justice victory in Poland could be good news for Putin” *The Guardian*. October 24, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/24/law-and-justice-poland-putin-russia>.

<sup>22</sup> David Blair, “Sitting near a nuclear tripwire, Estonia's president urges Nato to send troops to defend his country,” *The Telegraph*. April 11, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/estonia/11530064/Sitting-near-a-nuclear-tripwire-Estonias-president-urges-Nato-to-send-troops-to-defend-his-country.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Joerg Forbrig, “A Region Disunited?” *The German Marshall Fund of the United States* (Europe Policy Paper 1/2015) February 2015, p. 3-4.

<sup>24</sup> For example: the most serious factor influencing decision-making in Bulgaria remains its considerable energy dependence on Russia, with over 90% of its gas imported from Gazprom, and with its Kozloduy nuclear power plant reliant on Russian fuel for its operations. In the case of Latvia, Gazprom owns 34% of the national gas company, Latvijas Gaze and Latvia is fully dependent on Russia for its natural gas supplies.

<sup>25</sup> Telegram, George Kennan to George Marshall [“Long Telegram”], February 22, 1946. Harry S. Truman Administration File, Elsey Papers.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Antulio J. Echevarria, II “Clausewitz: Toward a Theory of Applied Strategy,” *Defense Analysis*, Vol. II, No. 3, (1995): 229-240.

<sup>28</sup> James Sherr, “Reflections on the New East-West Discord,” *Razumkov Centre National Security & Defence* No. 5-6, 2014, p. 87; and Lev Gudkov “Resources of Putin's Conservatism,” in *Putin's Russia: How it Rose, How It is Maintained, and How it Might End*, American Enterprise Institute, May 2015, p. 70.



available to Russia's political leadership. Indeed, the very idea of "Westernism" is associated in the Russian elite-public consciousness with democratic values, making "all things West" anathema to the Kremlin's consolidation of authoritarian power.<sup>29</sup> This goes far in explaining the widespread intensification of a conservative-nationalist-civilizational discourse in the Russian officialdom, especially since Putin's return to the presidency in 2012. By Russia's next federal elections in 2018, an entire generation will have come of age born and raised under the umbrella of Putin's authoritarianism.

**Western policy must therefore develop "ends" that anticipate a lasting authoritarianism in Russia, which contrary to popular analysis is likely to extend beyond the Putin regime.** Unlike the period of "New Thinking" during Gorbachev's 1980s revolution in foreign and security affairs, today's Russia lacks a reformist leadership or the necessary "policy windows" through which liberal policy entrepreneurs might set the foundation for major political reform. Even more seriously, the whole of Russian society remains plagued by a pervasive system of informal governance that precludes institutional engines for liberal development. Western policy objectives should be very careful not to conflate a desire for more moderate foreign policy on the part of Russian leadership with unrealistic expectations regarding the broader liberalization of Russian society.

So what "ways" and "means" can the West incorporate into its foreign policy on a *tactical-operational* level? Firstly, there is the immediate need of **cementing current unity** among Western partners in order to ensure **resilience** for a long-term deterrence of Russian aggression, as well as **credibility** in the eyes of the Kremlin. In the immediate future therefore, the U.S., EU and wider partners should begin to formulate a collective **Western strategic doctrine on policy toward Russia**. This new doctrine could be formulated through the existing institutional framework of the 1990 EU-US "Transatlantic Doctrine," which includes "bi-annual" and "ad hoc" consultations at the presidential, ministerial and cabinet levels. In addition, with Germany set to chair the OSCE and a new NATO summit announced for July 8-9 in Warsaw, the year 2016 will provide a crucial window of opportunity for strengthening existing alliances.

A Western Strategic Doctrine on Russia might:

- Reaffirm Western powers' permanent commitment to the defense of Ukrainian statehood and territorial integrity.
- Attest to Western governments' and International Financial Institutions' (IMF, WB) determination to supply economic aid and non-lethal security assistance to Ukraine in order to facilitate 1) the country's defense against external aggressors and 2) long-term integration into Europe.
- Clarify policy goals, and shift the West away from reactionary tactics toward a *shared long-term perspective* of the challenge that Russia poses,

founded on clear values and common political-security objectives. **A Western political unity that is based on durable and collective ideas would be unsusceptible to alterations in tactics or shifting events on the ground.**

- Outline and commit Western states to a long-term, albeit difficult project on moving the EU toward energy independence from Russia. Such a plan could take place in several multi-year phases, threatening to cripple Russia by degrees at each stage.

In addition to cementing unity, a transatlantic strategic doctrine based on these guidelines would more effectively communicate Western credibility to the Russian leadership *in a format that the Kremlin can understand*, not unlike the Russian Federation's own "Foreign Policy Concept" designs (2000, 2008, 2013).

The Putin regime continues to grow more authoritarian. According to the economist Sergei Guriev, Russia is now facing a long-term *structural* economic crisis akin to the Brezhnevist era of *zastoi* ("stagnation"), in which institutional failure and rampant corruption have led to landslide deterioration in investment climate (further aggravated by sanctions and oil prices).<sup>30</sup> For the short-term Western allies should be focused on solidifying their own unity around a common strategic doctrine, without which they cannot deter Russian aggression. However, as Russia's economic slowdown inexorably drives down its domestic public opinion over the long-term, Moscow's leadership will grow in vulnerability and Western powers will need to be prepared to move toward a more complex blend of *containment and cooperation*.<sup>31</sup> This will require the channeling of tensions away from the military sphere back into an economic purview, where Russian international behavior can be placed back under some kind of minimal constraints or 'rules of the game.'

Among the ways that the West could simultaneously re-engage and place constraints on Russia is – ironically – support for Putin's Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Brussels' backing for the EEU would lend the Kremlin a powerful domestic propaganda victory in words, but developments since 2014 suggests that in reality, far from falling into Russia's shadow, the economic union's members have actually *pushed back* to a significant degree against Moscow's attempts at regional domination. For example, both Kazakhstan and Belarus have refused to recognize Russia's annexation of Crimea, and continue in their refusal to implement Russia's counter sanctions against Western food imports.<sup>32</sup>

Multilateral institutions such as the EEU that promote economic interdependence may in fact be "the best policy to resist Russia's suicidal isolationism,"<sup>33</sup> and eventually pave the way to a new period of détente with the West. If and when this future arrives, transatlantic partners may realize their greatest challenge is setting aside historic hopes for Russia's liberalization and instead focusing on modest re-engagement with an enduring authoritarian regime. ■

<sup>29</sup> Mark Urnov, "Defeating the authoritarian majority: An Uneasy Agenda," in *Democracy versus Modernization: a dilemma for Russia and for the world*, (New York: Routledge) 2012, p. 70.

<sup>30</sup> Sergei Guriev, "Political Origins and Implications of the Economic Crisis in Russia," in Leon Aron ed. *Putin's Russia: How it Rose, How it is Maintained, and How it Might End*. American Enterprise Institute, May 2015, p. 16-17.

<sup>31</sup> Stefan Mesiter, "Theses for a New German Policy toward Russia: Nine Recommendations for Reaching New Goals," German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) April 2015.

<sup>32</sup> Yauheni Preiherman, "A Split in the Eurasian Union: Belarus Refuses to Join Russia's Trade War With Ukraine," *Belarus Digest*. July 7, 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Ivan Krastev, "Dancing with the Bear. How the West Should Handle Its Relations with Russia," in Riccardo Alcaro ed. *West-Russia Relations in Light of the Ukraine Crisis*. Institute for International Affairs Research Papers (IAI, Rome) 2015, p. 30.