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The Difficult and Long Way of Ukraine to NATO[*]

Key words: Ukraine – NATO relations, Ukraine – Russia relations, referendum, Partnership for Peace

Introduction

This article aims to present the current chances of Ukraine for joining the Euro – Atlantic structures, more precisely the NATO. What factors used to and still influence this integration? Is it possible to happen soon? It is also worth paying attention on how much effort has been involved in this integration since Ukraine regained its independence after the collapse of the USSR.

In 1991 Ukraine had become a legitimate subject of the whole system of international affairs. The new state had to set its own political course, which would not be in contradiction to the concept of the national security of Ukraine and at the same time would be in tune with the fixed system of relationship on the international scene, and would favor the stabilization of the European security. In this context, the most important relations for Ukraine were the ones with the neighboring countries, members of NATO and the European Union, as well as, the members of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), led by Russia[1].

At the very beginning of the CIS existence, one of the members of which was Ukraine, it was assumed that the joint command of states would be established, modeled on NATO. The project included the creation of the rules of the collective system of security for Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldavia and the countries of the Middle Europe[2].

In the declaration of independence of the state from 16th July 1990[3] a point was included on resigning from nuclear weapons by Ukraine. Regulation of the nuclear weapons issue, signing the Lisbon Protocol[4], and recognizing Russia as the successor of the nuclear weapons belonging to the USSR, made the cooperation with NATO possible. It was already the first president of independent Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, who demanded

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[1] S. Trojan, *Україна в сучасних эвроінтеграцийных* процесах: центральноэвропейсь- кий вимір [in:] *Zjednoczona Europa a Polska, Litwa i Ukraina*, ed. L. Gawor, Lublin 2003, pp.134–135.

[2] J. Darski, *Ukraina. Historia, współczesność, konflikty narodowe*, Warszawa 1993, pp. 44–45.

[3] *Декларация про державний суверенітет України*, http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show-/55–12.

[4] *The Protocol to the Agreement between the USA and the USSR on reduction and limiting strategic offensive weapons* (*The Lisbon protocol from the 28th May 1992*), http://libr.sejm.gov.pl/tek01/txt-/nato/z5s14-1.html.

including Ukraine in aid programs for its participation in initiatives guaranteeing the safety on the continent[5].

During the presidency of Leonid Kuchma (1994––2004), who kept close relations with the USA, Ukraine was the first member state of CIS to make the agreement on cooperation with NATO and sign the program Partnership for Peace. The outline of the document was signed on the 8th February 1994, and on the 4th September 1995 the individual program of partnership and the one on the dialogue between NATO – Kiev were signed. The cooperation was expanded on the 7th July 1997 by signing "the charter on contented partnership"[6].
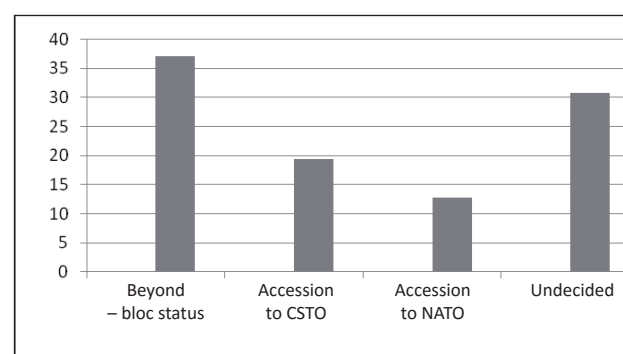
The years between 1997 and 2002 were the time of a particular partnership. A commission NATO – Ukraine was established, and NATO liaison bureau started to work in Kiev, as well as the decision was made on establishing joint cooperation teams. On the other hand, the Ukrainians were more and more directly expressing their veto towards the potential membership of their state in the Pact. Since 2002 the intensification of actions had started. In July 2002 the plan of action NATO – Ukraine was accepted. The bill on the foundations of national security of Ukraine from the 19th June 2003 mentioned aiming at the full integration with NATO, however on the 15th July 2004 amendments were introduced and the notation on initiating the preparation for joining the European Union and NATO was abandoned, and only the ones on deepening the cooperation were left. It does not change the fact that Ukraine was one of the most active partners within NATO, took part in 80 trainings within the Partnership for Peace, in peace and stabilization missions, was included in SFOR, KFOR, and served in Polish – Ukrainian Battalion[7].

After the Orange Revolution, during the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko, the attempts were made to be granted the plan of action (MAP), as well as the cooperation with the Treaty was continued within the intensified dialogue. In 2006 prime minister Viktor Yanukovych declared that Ukraine withheld attempts to be granted MAP. The attempts were resumed after the elections of 2007 when president Yushchenko, prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko, and the leader of

the parliament Arseniy Yacenyuk forwarded a letter to the Secretary General of the Treaty with the request to include Ukraine in MAP. However, at the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008 the Treaty did not offer Ukraine the plan of action towards the accession due to the veto of France and Germany. The NATO states agreed though on the future membership of Ukraine in the organization not stating exactly when it would happen[8].

The results of the survey from the time when Ukraine was making attempts to join NATO are available, which clearly state that the majority of Ukrainian citizens were against joining the Treaty. In one of the surveys the question, "Which model of securing the national defense of Ukraine is the most optimal?" most citizens (37.1%) chose the beyond – bloc status, 19.3% the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and only 12.8% NATO.

Drawing 1. The Ukrainian society towards the choice of the national defense model of the state (February 2008).

Source: *Яка модель забезпечення національної безпеки є найбільш оптимальною для України?*, http://www.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/poll.php?poll_id=698.

Viktor Yanukovych, the leader of the Party of Regions, who won the elections in 2010, decided to break with the policy of his predecessors and stop the further rapprochement with NATO. At that time the Ukrainian parliament passed the bill on the rules of internal and external policy, in which art. 11 describes Ukraine as a beyond – block state avoiding dependence on particular states, group of states or international organizations[9]. Ukraine, however, was still cooperating with the Treaty, and conducted with NATO joint military exer-

[5] A. Sawicz, *Ukraina wobec Paktu Północnoatlantyckiego* [in:] *Białoruś, Mołdawia, Ukraina wobec wyzwań współczesnego świata*, ed. T. Kapuśniak, K. Fedorowicz, M. Gołoś, Lublin 2009, p. 107.

[6] S. Yekelchyk, *Narodziny nowoczesnego narodu*, Kraków 2009, p. 293.

[7] A. Sawicz, op. cit., pp. 108–109.

[8] F.S. Larrabee, *Ukraine and Transatlantic Integration* [in:] *Open Ukraine. Changing Course towards a European Future*, ed. T. Kuzio, D. Hamilton, Washington DC 2011, pp. 136–137.

[9] *Закон України про засади внутрішньої і зовнішньої політики*, http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2411-17.

cises[10]. In October 2013 Ukraine had finally decided to abandon its long – lasting attempts to join NATO.

Throughout the long period of cooperation with NATO Ukraine did not manage to get the status of a member state. Professor Hickman has enumerated factors making the integration impossible. According to him, one of them was the fact that NATO had not been created in order to realize the revenge territorial claims of member states, and in the case of Ukraine the conflict with Russia over Crimea was easy to predict. Political instability of Ukraine diminished also the chance of membership of democratically stable states. What is more, the Ukrainian membership would make the Treaty less safe, at the same time increasing the threat for Russia. The last issue was the expansion of NATO into Euro – Asia, which is beyond the interests of the USA, one of the most important states of the Treaty[11].

Current situation

The end of 2013 marked the difficult situation of the Ukrainian state. The resignation from signing the Association Agreement with the EU made in November 2013 by president Yanukovych resulted in demonstrations of the supporters of the integration that had lasted for many weeks, and in consequence led to overthrowing the rules of the president in February 2014.

The following events led to the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russians and the current conflict with pro-Russian rebels in the east of the country. Petro Poroshenko, the president of Ukraine elected in the early elections on the 25th May 2014, is dealing with the current situation.

According to a politician Vadim Karasiow, in the current situation Ukraine ought to find a replacement for NATO, sign an agreement on joint membership with the North – Atlantic block or with the joint system of national security. The political scientist also claims that Ukraine will not join NATO in the foreseeable future unless the Treaty guarantees the realization of article 5 of the treaty signed in Washington DC[12]. According to the article of this treaty, on the basis of

which NATO was established, "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self – defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area. Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security"[13].

It needs to be pointed out that the majority of politicians taking part in the presidential elections held this year in Ukraine included the problem of Ukraine joining NATO in their election programs.

Yulia Tymoshenko declared conducing a referendum concerning this issue. Political fraction Bat'kwiszczyna, led by Yulia Tymoshenko, declared forwarding the draft of a resolution on conducting on the 15th June the referendum concerning the Ukraine joining NATO. The deputy Serhij Vlasenko stated that NATO is able to guarantee the defense against the external aggression[14].

Oleh Lashenko, running for the president, considered joining NATO the priority issue of Ukraine. He also underlined that the Ukrainian state has neither time nor financial means to establish its own program of effective defense, therefore should take advantage of the joint system of defense. What is more, he claimed that if Ukraine were the member of NATO, Vladimir Putin would not have invaded Crimea, since he would have been afraid of the treaty, which is based on the rule of collective responsibility. Apart from that, it appeared that the guarantees received by Ukraine in Budapest Treaty are of no value and there is no real defense mechanism[15].

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[10] A. Szeptycki, *Ukraina wobec Rosji. Studium zależności*, Warszawa 2013, p. 403.

[11] J. Hickman, *Ukraine in NATO? The Case Against* [in:] *Nowa Ukraina. Zeszyty historyczno-politologiczne*, nr 11/2011, Kraków–Przemyśl–Rzeszów 2011, pp. 125–129.

[12] http://www.ukrinform.ua/ukr/news/ukraiini_potribno_znayti_zaminnik_nato_politolog_1942985.

[13] *The North Atlantic Treaty signed in Washington on the 4th April 1949*, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm.

[14] http://www.ukrinform.ua/ukr/news/vstupom_do_nato_u_timoshenko_zaymutsya_vge-_u_ponedilok_1941901.

[15] http://www.ukrinform.ua/ukr/news/lyashko_vvagae_chlenstvo_v_nato_zavdannyam_n omer_odin_dlya_ukraiini_1939669.

Oleh Tiahnybok, the leader of Svoboda party and the candidate for the post of president, assumed the immediate forwarding of the application on joining NATO and demanding from other member states detailed rules and conditions concerning possible accession. Thiahnybok called also for signing bilateral agreements with the USA and Great Britain, the guarantors of Budapest Memorandum[16], concerning the real and not merely declared military and economic support for Ukraine[17].

In his presidential campaign president Petro Poroshenko drew attention to the fact that Ukraine could not become the NATO member since its internal procedures forbid accepting the states that are an object of arguments or aggression. Petro Poroshenko did not express the explicit opinion on joining the Treaty during the campaign, which resulted from his will not to deepen further divisions of the society, as well as the standpoint of some NATO states (e.g. the head of the German diplomacy Frank-Walter Steinmeier had excluded the possibility of Ukraine integration with the Treaty)[18]. Currently, having social support, Petro Poroshenko presents the pursuit towards the strengthening the relations with the USA and NATO.
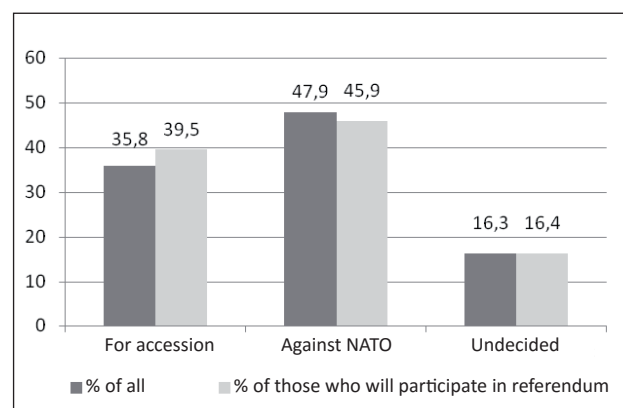
Along with the declarations of politicians on joining NATO, also the attitude of the Ukrainian society concerning this issue has changed positively, which is proved by sociological research. If in February 2012 only 20% percent of the respondents were in favour of joining NATO, on the turn of March and April 2014 the number increased to 39.5%.

Even though the research conducted in 2014 showed the increase in the number of supporters of the Treaty, the standpoint of Ukrainian citizens referring to this issue is ambiguous. The majority of Ukrainians is still against joining NATO.

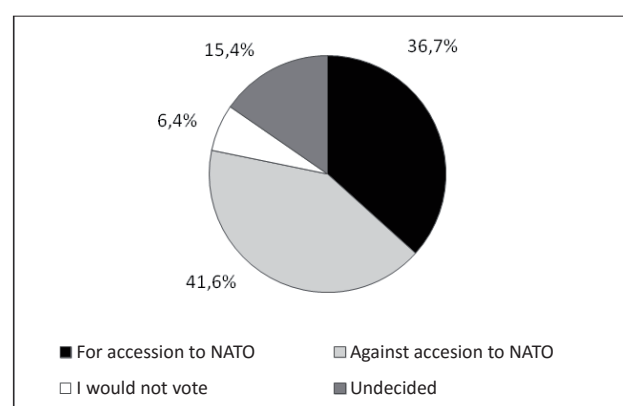The subsequent results of the research by the Centre of Razumkow from the end of April also confirm that there are more opponents of the accession than supporters. The question, "If next week there would be a referendum on joining NATO, how would you vote?" was answered in the following way: 36.7% of the respondents would vote for, whereas 41.6% against the accession.

Drawing 2. The Ukrainian society towards the perspective of accession to NATO (28th March–2nd April 2014).

Source: *Опитування, Ситуація в країні, Мова, Державний устрій*, http://www.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/news.php?news_id=466.

Drawing 3. The Ukrainian society towards the perspective of accession to NATO (25th–29th April 2014).

Source: *Зовнішньополітичні орієнтації громадян України*, http://www.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/news.php?news_id=477.
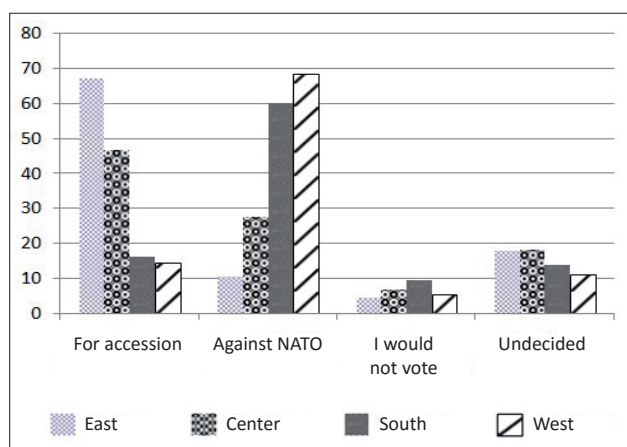
Taking into consideration the distribution of responses in the regions, most supporters of joining NATO are inhabitants of the western Ukraine (67.0%), whereas the fewest are the ones living in the eastern Ukraine (14.6%). The majority of respondents from the eastern and southern Ukraine are against joining NATO. In the south 60% would vote against it, whereas in the east 68.4%.

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[16] *The Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, https://www.msz.gov.pl/en/p/wiedenobwe_at_s_en/news/memorandum_on_security_assurances_in_connection_with_ukraine_s_accession_to_the_treaty_on_the_npt?printMode=true.

[17] http://www.ukrinform.ua/ukr/news/ukraiina_mae negayno_podati_zayavku_v_nato_tyagnibok_1937362.

[18] http://www.dw.com/pl/trójkąt-weimarski-bezradny-ws-krymu-steinmeier-jesteśmy-przeciwni-członkostwu-ukrainy-w-nato/a-17535465.

Drawing 3a. The Ukrainian society towards the perspective of accession to NATO (25th–29th April 2014).

Source: *Зовнішньополітичні орієнтації громадян…*, op. cit.

Recently the activity in the cooperation between Ukraine and NATO has increased. In June a meeting of the Commission Ukraine – NATO at the level of the ministers of foreign affairs was held. It is planned that the President of the parliamentary NATO group will visit Ukraine. The Ukrainians have also invited the NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen. In September the Treaty summit took place, whose subjects included the current situation in Ukraine. The leader of the Ukrainian delegation at the Organization of the North Atlantic Treaty in Brussels emphasised that Ukraine had received and would still be receiving assistance and support from NATO[19].

The Treaty can also have consultations on Ukraine on the forum of the NATO – Ukraine Comity as well as its cooperation groups, and take the positive attitude towards the potential motions of the Ukrainian party concerning the intelligence information on the intentions and moves of Russian forces[20].

At the latest meeting of the Treaty, at the level of the ministers of foreign affairs, held on the 25th June the peace plan of the Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko acquired the support. The Secretary General of NATO referred to this plan as a good strategy aiming at solving the current crisis and a large step forwards in this matter[21].

The Treaty is also establishing a special help fund for the Ukrainian army. The money that will help to modernize the Ukrainian army will come from the NATO member states. Diplomats underline that the assistance granted by NATO to the army will be entirely of financial character, i.e. NATO will not supply any weapons to Ukraine, however its member states can do it individually[22].

Conclusion

According to a comment made by a Polish politician Stanisław Żelichowski, the crisis in Ukraine has proved that NATO membership is significant. "Individual state stays on its own in a difficult situation. This is what happened to Ukraine. Various politicians would go there, brandish their little sabers, spark the fuse, however when the fire started, everybody withdrew and escaped leaving the nation without any support"[23].

The ambiguous attitude of Ukraine's towards the issue of expanding the North Atlantic Treaty was characteristic for it. The lack of decision and attempts made to solve the problem were frequently visible in the actions taken by the politicians of this country. Similarly, the majority of the Ukrainian society was against joining the Treaty.

The last events, including aggressive action of the Russian president Vladimir Putin towards Ukraine, have increased the positive attitude of the Ukrainian society towards NATO, which is shown in the sociological research.

It is not hard to notice, having taken into consideration the occupation of Crimea by Russian troops and the conflict with pro-Russian rebels in the east of the country, that as a partner of NATO Ukraine does not enjoy the safety guarantees. In the situation of the prolonged conflict, Ukraine cannot become a member of NATO either, since the laws and internal procedures of the Treaty forbid accepting states that are objects of arguments or aggression. The Ukrainian procedures concerning joining NATO already exist and were established during the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko

[19] http://www.day.kiev.ua/uk/article/den-planeti/ukrayina-nato-pereosmislennya-pidhodivdo-bezpeki.

[20] Ł. Kulesa, M. Radziejowska, M. Terlikowski, *Działania Rosji na Krymie w kontekście bezpieczeństwa i prawa międzynarodowego* [in:] Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych. Biuletyn, nr 26, (1138) 6th March 2014, http://www.pism.pl/publikacje/biuletyn/nr-26-1138.

[21] http://nato.mfa.gov.ua/ua/press-center/news/2474-

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[22] http://www.dziennik.com/wiadomosci/artykul/nato-pomoze-ukrainie.

[23] E. Olczyk, *Jesteśmy narodem ponuraków* [in:] Rzeczpospolita, http://www.rp.pl/artykul/9160,1108543-Jestesmy-narodem-ponurakow.html?p=2.

by the government led by Yulia Tymoshenko for the summit in Bucharest in 2008, as professor Włodzimierz Mokry remarks. Being at that time in opposition, the Party of Regions with Viktor Yanukovych was blocking the possibility of the integration of Ukraine with NATO. Time has verified these actions and showed that Viktor Yanukovych was acting in favour of Russia[24].

Currently the Treaty is supporting Ukraine and considering long – term actions providing it with assistance. Not only are political meetings organized that concern the current situation, but also financial means are to be transferred, which among the others, will support the modernization of the Ukrainian army.

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