

Choice of Ukraine's Foreign Policy

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ABSTRACT : Historically, Ukraine has often found itself in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the Russian Federation, a narrative perpetuated by Vladimir Putin, who contends that Ukraine's prosperity hinges upon its relationship with Russia. Additionally, he asserts that Ukraine lacks the capacity to assert its sovereignty and diminishes the significance of the Ukrainian language as merely a dialect. The pivotal juncture of the Orange Revolution unequivocally delineated Ukraine's foreign policy trajectory. The commencement of hostilities between Ukraine and the Russian Federation stemmed from Ukraine's embrace of pro-Western foreign policy orientation. Presently, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine stands as a paramount global challenge, catalyzing profound geopolitical shifts. Despite concerted European Union sanctions, the trajectory of this conflict remains unaltered. In the realm of international relations, national interests have taken precedence, underscoring the imperative for Ukraine to forge unity across all fronts. Despite the annexation of Crimea and the relinquishment of Donbass territories, Ukraine steadfastly adhered to its pro-Western foreign policy orientation, precipitating one of the most significant confrontations with Russia in recent history. The outcomes of this conflict are poised to shape the global political landscape for decades to come.

KEYWORDS—*annexation, conflict, foreign policy, outcomes, Ukraine*

I. INTRODUCTION

Today, Ukraine is in the center of the world's attention. Our goal is to analyze Ukraine's choice of foreign policy strategy and outline the main orientations that led the country to this crisis. Reasserting its pro-Western stance, Ukraine reaffirmed its commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration as the cornerstone of its foreign policy. Central to this strategy is the imperative of countering Russian aggression, which is identified as the primary focus. Prioritizing the repudiation of aggression and the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity, the strategy outlines a comprehensive array of measures aimed at resisting Russian expansionism.

Despite facing the challenges of large-scale armed Russian intervention, which have resulted in significant human casualties and economic losses, Ukraine has obtained the status of a candidate for European Union membership. The main obstacle to integration into the European Union is the reforms implemented in Ukraine at an insufficient pace, the unsatisfactory fight against corruption, the socio-economic crisis in the country. Ukraine is a complex issue for the whole world and therefore all countries whose values are democracy and freedom are involved in resolving this issue. An Ukraine made a choice back in 1991, although it is assessed as changeable. Consideration of this issue will open a broader vision of the problem, outline the complexity of the crisis and help see today's reality.

II. A New Foreign Policy Paradigm

The color revolutions ushered in a transformative phase in the advancement of democratic norms, particularly evident in Georgia and Ukraine. Rooted in the principles of "social constructionism" espoused by postmodernist thinkers like F. Fukuyama, E. Topler, Z. Brzezinski, and S. Huntington, these movements represent a departure from traditional political paradigms. The hallmark of postmodernist theories lies in their

rejection of antiquated stereotypes in political processes. Embodied in joint declarations by leaders such as V. Yushenko and M. Saakashvili, the political objectives are framed as part of the “fourth wave of democratization”. This signals a significant shift, positioning Ukraine, a major player in both Europe and the post-Soviet realm, on a trajectory toward integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. Reflecting on this paradigm shift, Francis Fukuyama emphasized in a 2019 interview, “Georgia and Ukraine are at the forefront of the struggle for democracy, and I am committed to supporting their journey in every possible way”.¹

The standing of a nation on the global stage is significantly influenced by the outcomes of its foreign policy endeavors. A well-calibrated, pragmatic, rational, and forward-thinking foreign policy sets the stage for accelerated political, economic, and social progress within a country. Ukraine’s pursuit of a multi-dimensional and equitable foreign policy trajectory is imperative for fostering stable and harmonious development.

In today’s interconnected world, no modern state aiming for progress can afford to isolate itself and pursue development in isolation. Close collaboration and robust connections with other nations are essential for advancement. Ukraine, like any other nation, occupies a distinct place within the global community and international relations.

In 2021, Ukraine unveiled a new foreign policy strategy, building upon earlier constitutional amendments made in 2019. Reasserting its pro-Western stance, Ukraine reaffirmed its commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration as the cornerstone of its foreign policy. The country’s foreign policy priorities can be outlined as follows:

- Pursuing full-fledged membership in the European Union and NATO;
- Endeavoring to restore peace and territorial integrity;
- Vigorously resisting aggression from neighboring countries.
- Ensuring socio-economic development.²

The new foreign policy strategy of Ukraine highlights five key countries with whom relations are deemed pivotal and strategic: the USA, the UK, Canada, Germany, and France. The development of ties with these nations aligns with Ukraine’s foreign policy priorities, reflecting the depth and nature of cooperation while being anchored in national interests. Emphasis is placed on collaboration in political, security, and military realms, notably in countering Russian aggression. This selection underscores a geopolitical rationale and practical necessity for a nation grappling with sustained hybrid warfare. However, Ukraine’s strategic partnerships extend beyond these core allies. The strategy identifies Poland, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Lithuania, Romania, China, and Brazil as additional strategic partners, underscoring a broad-based approach to international relations. Furthermore, fostering global partnerships with Japan and India holds significance. This strategic alignment, rooted in national interests, is both justified and pragmatic, avoiding the dilution of strategic cooperation inherent in engaging with too many (200) partners simultaneously. Key provisions of the strategy delineate the foundational principles guiding Ukraine’s foreign policy endeavors.

The new foreign policy strategy of Ukraine prominently features a clearly articulated commitment to European and Euro-Atlantic integration, which permeates various sections of the document with substantive content. Central to this strategy is the imperative of countering Russian aggression, which is identified as the primary focus. Prioritizing the repudiation of aggression and the restoration of Ukraine’s territorial integrity, the strategy outlines a comprehensive array of measures aimed at resisting Russian expansionism. These measures include efforts to expand the coalition of states supporting Ukraine, raise awareness of Russian atrocities within the international community, leverage international mechanisms to confront the aggressor, and bolster collective

¹Francis Fukuyama – Georgia and Ukraine <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a>

²Про "Основні напрямки зовнішньої політики України". Постанова Верховної Ради України // Голос України. - 24 липня 1993 р. - № 139. - С. 3.

Western sanctions against Russia. Moreover, the strategy underscores the importance of holding the Russian Federation accountable under international law for its actions.³

Additionally, the strategy underscores the economic component of foreign policy activities as a key priority. This entails safeguarding and advancing the interests of domestic producers, particularly within multilateral contractual frameworks and international projects. Furthermore, the strategy aims to enhance the standing of Ukrainian exporters in global markets, attract foreign investments into the national economy, and offer financial backing for domestic reform initiatives. Critical areas of focus include the expansion of scientific and technical collaboration and fostering international partnerships in high-tech industries.

Simultaneously, there has been a noticeable uptick in the significance of the Council of Exporters and Investors under the purview of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, serving as a vital platform for fostering collaboration between Ukrainian and foreign enterprises. This underscores the escalating emphasis on economic diplomacy within Ukraine's foreign policy landscape. Economic diplomacy, at its core, seeks to cultivate conducive external environments to bolster the sustainable advancement of the national economy and enhance the well-being of Ukrainian citizens.

It is evident that the delineated areas of foreign policy engagement are by no means exhaustive. The strategy encompasses a diverse array of global regions, emphasizing the cultivation of partnerships with nations across Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. Additionally, multilateral collaboration within global and regional frameworks constitutes a distinct focal point. Conversely, significant emphasis is placed on public diplomacy initiatives, safeguarding the rights of Ukrainian nationals abroad, addressing labor migration concerns, and other pertinent issues.⁴

It can be asserted that the strategy presents itself as a conceptually coherent and well-balanced document, encompassing clearly delineated strategic objectives alongside practical measures for their execution. Nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge several noteworthy considerations. Firstly, it is essential to recognize that a strategy is not immutable; the geopolitical landscape is marked by turbulence, rapidity, and unpredictability, necessitating ongoing adjustments, shifts in emphasis, and supplementary additions. Such adaptations are inherent to the dynamic nature of international affairs. Furthermore, the document's designation as a "medium-term planning document" underscores the recognition of its provisional nature.

The strategy primarily serves as a framework, necessitating clear, balanced, and coordinated delineation of its components within the priority spheres of foreign relations. Effective implementation hinges upon the concentration of political and diplomatic resources on the most pivotal foreign fronts for the nation. This does not imply neglecting other regions, but rather underscores the imperative of substantial financial and economic engagement, in addition to joint declarations and high-level visits, to foster partnership, cooperation, solidarity, and support from other nations. In a world characterized by pragmatism, it is evident that Kiev occupies a distinct weight class in terms of global diplomatic and political influence compared to Washington and Beijing. Consequently, Ukraine adopts a pragmatic approach on the international stage, leveraging its inherent resources and capabilities.

Russia-Ukraine Conflict: A Fresh Historical Outlook

Currently, Ukraine is engulfed in a war whose outcomes possess the potential to profoundly reshape the global political landscape.

Amidst the endeavors of global leaders and the backdrop of diplomatic deliberations and covert negotiations, a crisis the implications of which are profoundly challenging to foresee has emerged. The world stands on the precipice of disaster, reminiscent of the pre-World War II era, bereft of the United Nations, NATO, or any comparable international mechanism capable of averting the escalation of catastrophic events.

³Стратегія зовнішньополітичної діяльності України <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/448/2021#Text>

⁴Аналіз стратегії зовнішньополітичної діяльності України

<https://ussd.org.ua/2021/10/05/analiz-strategiyi-zovnishnopolitychnoyi-diyalnosti-ukrayiny/>

Examining historical facts reveals the profound suffering endured by Ukraine and Belarus during the Second World War, events that ultimately shaped their status within the United Nations. However, in a tragic turn of events, Belarus, alongside Russia, is now embroiled in an aggressive conflict against Ukraine. Following its UN accession, Ukraine initially harbored hopes for a secure future. Yet, the year 1994 brought the Budapest Memorandum, wherein the United States, United Kingdom, and Russia guaranteed Ukraine's territorial integrity in exchange for relinquishing its nuclear arsenal. Regrettably, these assurances were shattered by the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

A third ray of hope emerged through NATO, yet Ukraine's arduous path to membership has left it vulnerable to the onslaught of today's most formidable aggressor, without nuclear deterrents or NATO protection. Meanwhile, Russia's aspirations lie in resurrecting a new Soviet Union, a vision where human rights are disregarded, freedoms curtailed, and prospects for societal progress stifled for the common populace.

Relations between Ukraine and Russia post-Soviet Union dissolution have been marked by tension and complexity. Russia perceives the post-Soviet sphere as its own domain and endeavors to extend its influence over these countries, aspiring to recreate a grand empire reminiscent of the Soviet Union and restore its former prestige. Despite substantial pressure from the Kremlin, Ukraine has steadfastly maintained a pro-Western trajectory and remains resolute in its aspiration to integrate into Euro-Atlantic institutions. Once the Russian political elite grasped that Kiev remained unwavering in its foreign policy orientation, it swiftly initiated an aggressive campaign against the sovereign nation. Through military intervention, Russia succeeded in annexing Crimea and occupying four Ukrainian districts. "Russia's disinterest in fostering democracy on its borders stems from the fear of setting an undesirable precedent for its populace. Hence, it seemingly prefers the company of authoritarian neighbors, actively engaging in alliances with other dictatorships to forge a unified trade and economic zone through energy and transport policies," articulated Francis Fukuyama.⁵

February 24, 2022, will be etched as the onset of one of the most arduous chapters of the 21st century in global history. A conflict between two neighboring nations in the contemporary industrial world hinges on a myriad of factors, with Ukraine's Atlantic integration chief among them. Ukraine's transition from being perceived by Russia as a "neutral" entity ceased, serving as the catalyst for the commencement of hostilities. Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger weighed in on this discourse, asserting to German media, "While not justifying war, I have maintained then and now that alongside the accession of former Eastern Bloc members to NATO, extending an invitation to Ukraine was unwise." However, by January 2023, he conceded, "Prior to this conflict, I opposed Ukraine's NATO membership out of concern for the present predicament. In light of the current situation, the notion of a neutral Ukraine has become obsolete".⁶

This exemplifies the shifting stance of Ukraine, which valiantly contends to safeguard its territories and sovereign status.

Transformative Phases of the Conflict

In late 2023, Valerii Zaluzhnyi, the former Commander-in-Chief of Ukraine, addressed the Ukrainian people for the first time since the onset of the war, highlighting significant challenges in terms of human resources, inadequate military equipment, and insufficient financial support. As a result, 2024 is anticipated to be an exceptionally arduous year for Ukraine. In response, a new mobilization effort was announced, with the age limit reduced to 25 years. The situation on the Ukrainian front could rapidly deteriorate without adequate financial, material, and military assistance from Western allies. Should the West remain passive, Russian troops may launch a comprehensive offensive to gain full control over Donbas. Ukraine's military would face considerable difficulty in countering a strong and aggressive Russia without full support from the West.⁷

⁵ ფ. ფუკუიამა დემოკრატიზაციის შესახებ აღმოსავლეთ ევროპაში <https://for.ge/view/25445/frensis-fukuiama-demokratizacii-Sesaxeb-aRmosavlT-evropaSi.html>

⁶ კისინჯერი [HTTPS://1TV.GE/NEWS/HENRI-KISINJERI-AR-VFIQROB-ROM-ES-OMI-MKHOLOD-PUTINIS-BRALIA-UKRAINIS-ALIANSHI-MIPATIDJEB-AR-IYO-GONIVRULI](https://1TV.GE/NEWS/HENRI-KISINJERI-AR-VFIQROB-ROM-ES-OMI-MKHOLOD-PUTINIS-BRALIA-UKRAINIS-ALIANSHI-MIPATIDJEB-AR-IYO-GONIVRULI)

⁷ В.Залужний про своє бачення стратегії війни у 2024 році. <https://suspilne.media/675028-zaluznij-rozpoviv-pro-svoe-bacenna-strategii-vijni-u-2024-roci/>

2024 is poised to be a pivotal juncture in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The Russian military is gearing up for a strategic offensive, banking on the hope that Western support for Ukraine will wane. However, Ukraine urgently requires ongoing financial and military backing from the West to sustain its defense efforts and mount future offensives.

In the era of industrial warfare, significant portions, and sometimes entire economies, are compelled to prioritize the production of military materials. Russia has significantly bolstered its defense budget, which has tripled since 2021 and now constitutes 30% of state expenditure. Meanwhile, Ukraine has received substantial international aid since 2022, amounting to \$230 billion, with 70% of the total share provided by the USA and the European Union.⁸

In the United States, attitudes toward providing aid to Ukraine are notably mixed. Republicans, in particular, have voiced opposition to such assistance, citing concerns about the influx of migrants permitted by the Joseph Biden administration. They attribute this situation to Biden's policies and prioritize safeguarding American interests over aiding Ukraine. Notably, many Republicans hold sympathetic views toward Russia, with former President Donald Trump openly expressing admiration for President Vladimir Putin. The prevailing negative sentiment among Republicans toward Ukraine presents a significant challenge for Kyiv, posing threats in both the short and long term.

The support from the West, while crucial, cannot be indefinite as the countries of the European Union prioritize their own defense and security concerns over aid to Ukraine.

In terms of casualties, according to US data, Ukraine has suffered approximately 70,000 fatalities with another 120,000 soldiers wounded, while the Russian Federation has reported around 120,000 killed and 180,000 wounded soldiers. However, Ukraine's population is only 30% of Russia's, giving the Kremlin an advantage in this conflict.⁹ Russia's advantage extends beyond its demographic potential; it also holds a significant edge in the production sector. Moscow has successfully transitioned its economy toward military-focused production, allowing it to manufacture substantial quantities of military equipment and weapons.

Over nearly three decades of striving for European Union integration, Ukraine has undergone numerous dramatic events. Concurrently, the nation has grappled with intricate and conflicting processes as it endeavors to assimilate into European society. However, this journey has been hampered and delayed by a myriad of internal and external factors, including post-Soviet mentality, regional disparities, and Russian imperial influences, which ultimately escalated into large-scale military aggression. According to sociological surveys conducted between 2005 and 2021, 49% of Ukrainians initially did not perceive their country as part of European civilization, with only 41% identifying as European. However, by September 2022, this perception saw a significant shift, with 63% now aligning themselves with Europe, while 27% held an opposing view.¹⁰

What are the reasons and motives for such changes?

The reasons and motives behind such changes can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, it is the tangible achievements of European integration and the genuine prospects of attaining member status. Secondly, the political solidarity demonstrated by the European Union through its support and assistance to Ukraine has been pivotal. Thirdly, there is a sense of responsibility among Ukrainians for their European-oriented choices. These elements have significantly contributed to societal unity and the embracement of a pro-Western trajectory as a viable alternative.

⁸ გ.ნოდია. რუსეთ-უკრაინის ომი გავლენა საქართველოს პოლიტიკურ ვითარებაზე 09.22 https://cipdd.org/upload/files/ruseT-ukrainis-omis-gavlena_GEO.pdf

⁹ „ნიუიორკთაიმი“ - აშშ-ის ოფიციალური ბიზნეს განცხადება <https://1tv.ge/news/niu-iork-taimsi-ashsh-is-oficialuri-pirebis-ganckhadebit-ukrainis-omshi-daghupuli-an-dashavebuli-ukraineli-da-rusi-jariskacebis-saerto-raodenoba-500-000-mdea/>

¹⁰ Standard Eurobarometer 96, Winter 2021-2022. — Eurobarometer, European Union, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2553>.

Further evidence of this support for European integration is reflected in the hypothetical referendum on membership. If such a referendum were to take place in the near future, an overwhelming 92% of the population would vote in favor of joining the European Union. This resounding statistic unequivocally illustrates the definitive preference of Ukrainians for European integration.¹¹

The experience of Ukraine's European integration amidst conflict holds a distinct significance. Despite facing the challenges of large-scale armed Russian intervention, which have resulted in significant human casualties and economic losses, Ukraine has obtained the status of a candidate for European Union membership.

Kyiv has demonstrated readiness to adhere to the recommendations of the European Commission and progressively meet the criteria necessary for full integration into the European community in the future. Evaluating the current state of cooperation between Kyiv and Brussels amidst the ongoing conflict, it's essential to highlight the unwavering political and diplomatic solidarity displayed by the European Union towards Ukraine across military, financial, economic, and humanitarian domains. However, existing support mechanisms require refinement to be more effective.

Deepening economic ties between Ukraine and the European Union stands as a crucial element in the collective effort to counter Russian expansion. Nonetheless, the main hindrance to EU integration remains the slow pace of reforms in Ukraine, inadequate anti-corruption measures, and the socio-economic crisis gripping the nation. This crisis is rooted in both the ongoing conflict and the lingering effects of Ukraine's historical evolution, posing significant challenges to its European aspirations.

The escalating geopolitical tensions between Europe and the world present a significant challenge, compounded by the Kremlin's energy threats, nuclear coercion, and the looming specter of nuclear conflict. Renowned diplomat Henry Kissinger recently addressed this issue in an interview with CNN, articulating his stance with clarity: "Forging relations between Russia and the broader international community, including us, poses a formidable challenge due to Russia's historical imperial legacy and its deep-seated sense of identity rooted in past achievements".

Kissinger underscores the strategic complexities inherent in Russia's geographic proximity to China, which poses contiguous and strategic dilemmas. Furthermore, Russia's adjacency to Islam presents ideological tensions, while its border with Europe represents a historically unstable frontier. Throughout history, Russian leaders have sought to project significance on the international stage, complicating efforts to foster constructive engagement.

The key dilemma facing Putin lies in reconciling domestic imperatives with external perceptions, balancing the need to project strength while remaining open to compromise. Kissinger warns against precipitating a siege mentality within Russia, which could prompt aggressive displays of power. Instead, he advocates for a nuanced approach that acknowledges Russia's historical aspirations while fostering opportunities for constructive dialogue and cooperation".¹²

III. CONCLUSION

Ukraine's Soviet legacy looms large over its recent history, underscoring the formidable challenges faced during its transformation. Over time, efforts to instill Western values among Ukrainians have been met with resistance, reflecting the complexities of societal change. Yet, despite these hurdles, Ukraine has unwaveringly embraced its democratic principles, albeit at great cost. The unequivocal articulation of Ukraine's foreign policy priorities served as a pretext for Russia's invasion, further polarizing the global landscape. While current solidarity between Europe and the US prevails, shifting political dynamics, particularly with upcoming US elections, could alter this alignment. Discordant views on Ukraine among Republicans and Democrats may impact future support, potentially leading to negotiations amid the withdrawal of financial aid. In a broader context, the

¹¹ EU's response to the war in Ukraine. — Eurobarometer, European Union, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2772>

¹² სპეციალური, ინტერვიუდან ამონარიდი 24.02.2022 <http://saqinform.ge/news/17910/kisininheri>

weakening of Russia could bolster China's influence, ushering in a new era of global power dynamics fraught with uncertainty. As such, navigating this geopolitical landscape presents a formidable challenge, with the future trajectory of world development hanging in the balance. Ukraine has made its choice and there is no going back.

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