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Foreign Policy Insight

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Foreign Policy Strategies and Decisions

Ukrainian President's first North America tour



On September 17-19, working visits of Ukrainian President to Canada and the USA took place. From the protocol point of view, they are considered to be historic. Meetings with the leadership of both countries and the President's speeches in the parliaments were repeatedly punctuated by cheers and enthusiastic support of diaspora. However, the substance brings up vexed questions.

The substance of President's North America tour brings up questions

In Canada, the agreement on granting of CAD 200 million to Ukraine by the Canadian government was concluded, the resumption of negotiations on a free trade agreement was announced and the possibility of the visa regime facilitation was discussed. "The Ukrainian language is the third official language in Canada", Petro Poroshenko emphasized in his speech in the Canadian Parliament. "You will not find a better friend for Ukraine than Canada", Prime Minister Stephen Harper replied to him. Despite the euphoria that accompanied the visit, its rather symbolic results signal that a lot of

work for Ukrainian diplomacy is ahead, since the political success should consolidate practical results. Agriculture, energy, military-technical cooperation, investments are the most promising spheres for Ukraine. Nevertheless, to achieve progress in these fields, progress in the fight against corruption should be accelerated and a favourable business climate created, as Canadian officials emphasized.

The results of Poroshenko's negotiations with President Obama were bitterly disappointing. Cordial assurances of friendship, promises to encourage cooperation in many areas, including energy, finances, investment, military, security, etc. were offered, the prestigious "Global Citizen Award" by reputable non-governmental organization "Atlantic Council of the United States" was received, the applause was interrupted in the Congress and much more.

However, the Ukrainian society and most experts expected Ukraine to be given a status of the major non-NATO ally, or at least announcement of a deadline to address the issue. It did not happen. It is obvious that the U.S. were not ready to throw

a direct challenge to Vladimir Putin, confining to the protocol assurances to continue mobilizing the international community, respect for the territorial integrity of Ukraine and promises to allocate rather symbolic amounts for the provision of non-lethal weapons. The spiral of the situation in Donbas in recent days proves that the Russian side misinterpreted the US prudence. Since now, Vladimir Putin has a “free hand”.

Expectations of Ukraine to be granted U.S. special partner status have not been confounded

However, the most amazing part of the story is that President Poroshenko does his best to justify Obama's decisions, “working as a lawyer for the latter”. In particular, in his interview with selected Ukrainian journalists “a la Yanukovich”, he stressed: “...we have guns, tanks, multiple launch rocket systems, missiles, artillery and everything else to keep the front that long. Yet we got everything needed - intelligence, radar, observation and other defense equipment that will allow a tenfold increase in our weapon efficiency and upgrading”. It is unlikely that the claim matches the reality fully. A sentence at a press conference in Washington “I got everything I could” is more than puzzling. The Head of the state, which is actually on the verge of political and military disaster, has to

Poroshenko tries to justify U.S. President's decisions

strenuously defend its interests and not to perform a decorative role of a chief diplomat.

The only truly meaningful agreement during a visit to Washington was the arrangement to involve the United States into future negotiations on Ukraine-Russia crisis solution. However, the format and timing of this agreement implementation remain unclear. The fact that it became known not from the President but his diplomatic advisor Valeriy Chalyi, makes doubtful the implementation of this certainly long-awaited and extremely important for the official Kyiv agreement reached in Washington.

Overall, the results of both working visits of President Poroshenko point to disappointing conclusions that Ukraine and Ukrainian people are alone with the aggressor. Only blatant Putin's military incursion into Donbas and the Ukraine's south can force the West to change dramatically their attitude towards the events in Eastern Europe. The same situation was in 1940, when the U.S. changed their neutral position and took a decision to open a well-known Lend-Lease program which allowed to hold back Hitler's armed forces, and then became one of the key factors that contributed to the Allies victory in World War II.

Ukraine is alone with the aggressor

Nevertheless, the price, which Ukraine can pay this time, may become disproportionate to the events that took place seven decades ago.

Minsk agreements — II. Reaching a dead-end road?

As many experts predicted, the Russian side turned out not to be ready to fulfill so-called Minsk Protocol signed on September 5. Russian troops and equipment have not been withdrawn from the territory of Ukraine; shelling Ukrainian positions is continuing, though without Grad rockets; troops with heavy machinery are still accumulating in Donbas as well as on the borders with Ukraine and Crimea. All this happens despite the unprecedented steps taken to confirm the sincerity of President Poroshenko's striving for peace. He even went so far that “supported” Ukrainian People's Deputies decision to hold a closed session of Verkhovna Rada, where notorious laws on local

government in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions and amnesty were adopted. It can be assumed that the President's phrase to “persuade” the parliament members “if not these laws, there will be a war” means that on the part of Vladimir Putin during “beneficial and productive negotiations” (as they are publicly called by the President of Ukraine), not only diplomatic ultimatums are delivered, but emotional blackmail is attempted.

Russia went on to attempt emotional blackmail after diplomatic ultimatums

At the same time, following the logic of public administration decisions, another, perhaps final, at-

tempt to delay the start of full-scale military operations in Eastern Ukraine in fake Minsk format has been made. According to the results of so-called Contact Group meeting late in the evening on September 19 in the most prestigious hotel in the Belarus capital, a memorandum on the implementation of the Protocol of September 5 with 9 clauses was signed. The innovations of this document are aimed at creating a so-called buffer zone width of 30 km by withdrawing the armed forces of both sides at 15 km depth from the positions they held till September 19, as well as a ban on aviation use, including drones, apart from those used by the OSCE. The remaining clauses are essentially the repetition of what has been agreed at the beginning of September.

The Memorandum was signed by Ukraine's former President Leonid Kuchma, Russia's Ambassador to Ukraine Mikhail Zubarov, the OSCE Representative Heidi Tagliaviani, the leaders of the self-proclaimed DPR Oleksandr Zakharchenko

and Andriy Purgin, and the head of so-called LPR Ihor Plotnyskiy.

Meanwhile, the prospects to stick to the agreements recorded in another legally doubtful document in Minsk are poor. Confirmation of this axiom are constant attempts of militants supported by the Russian regular troops to capture Donetsk airport, Avdiivka and several other towns which are uncontrolled by the Ukrainian military. Any signs of the Russian troops, mercenaries and heavy machinery withdrawal have not been observed yet. Moreover, on September 2, less than three days after signing the Memorandum, "first deputy prime minister" of the self-proclaimed DPR stated that "Minsk agreements will be executed but not as fast as we would like to". It is obvious that behind this rather diplomatic phrase, as for one of the leaders of militants, lies an out-right Kremlin's urge to deescalate the conflict.

The prospects to stick to Minsk agreements are poor

European policy

On September 18, the European Parliament adopted another resolution on the situation in Ukraine and the state of relations between the EU and Russia. Some revolutionary proposals from the previous projects, namely, the complete arms embargo on Russia, its exclusion from programs and systems for nuclear cooperation and the Swift, as well as Moscow disqualification to hold the competition Formula 1 in autumn 2014 and the World Cup in 2018, were not included into the final draft of the document. Nevertheless, the adopted resolution should be considered as the most damaging to Russia and favourable to Ukraine. In particular, it contains verification that Ukraine has a right to apply for EU membership in case of complying with democratic standards, minority rights and the rule of law.

The European Parliament may not approve the new European Commission assignment. The concern is about several nominees, whose political affiliation and previous background pose many questions. It refers to Alenka Bratusek (Slovenia), Jonathan Hill (UK), Miguel Arias Canete (Spain),

Tibor Navracsics (Hungary) and Karmenu Vella (Malta). For example, Bratusek, who has been nominated for a high enough profile position of Vice President of the Energy Union, lacks convincing experience in this field. British Jonathan Hill is at risk because of reports about his previous lobbying activities, and Spanish Miguel Arias Canete is the subject of criticism for making sexist comments.

Quite unexpectedly, the EU Delegation to Ukraine published reports, according to which, the next tranche of Macro-Financial Assistance to Ukraine will be disbursed only if Kyiv will successfully fulfill a set of policy conditions. Specifically, Ukraine is obliged to do the following:

To receive Macro-Financial Assistance Ukraine has to fulfill a set of policy conditions

- publish action plans for public procurement;
- comply with the Budget Code regarding budget transparency (publication of the draft state budget and monthly data on its progress);
- implement anti-corruption legislation to declare the property; legislative proposals regarding an independent anti-corruption agency;
- timely refund VAT settled in cash;

- improve transparency of Naftogaz by introducing the annual report in accordance with the standards of IFRS.

Only on condition that Ukraine will meet these genuinely radical demands, macro-financial assis-

tance disbursed to Ukraine. Resolution on its allocation was approved before, 1 billion euro worth. This task is unlikely to be carried out next 2 — 3 months because of current Verkhovna Rada inability and inaccurate forecast of the composition of the next Parliament.

“Parade” of referendums on independence in Europe

On September 18, a Scottish independence referendum was held. Until the last moment, the number of supporters and opponents out of the United Kingdom was approximately equal. However, official results announced on September 19 still proved to be surprising. Thus, over 55% of Scottish voted against independence. Hence, Europe succeeded in the first serious test for the ability to remain stable and united. However, the fact of the growth of disintegration sentiment in several other European countries should encourage EU leaders to

The growth of disintegration sentiment should encourage the EU to have a more balanced policy

have a more balanced policy towards minorities and those nations and peoples who have been aiming at claiming their own statehood for decades or even centuries.

In particular, Catalan, Flemish and South Tyrol nationalists are not discouraged by the failure of their counterparts. For example, Catalan President Artur Mas intends to hold similar referendum on November 9, 2014. Although the central government of Spain considers such initiatives illegal, the leader of the Catalans, in case of a majority vote for independence, can be regarded as the result of a political mandate to negotiate the region independence from Madrid. The leaders of Flanders and South Tyrol also cherish hopes for independence.

Russian influence in Central Asia

In the light of confrontation between Russia and the West for domination in Ukraine, Central Asia begins to suffer from the current crisis outcomes. Despite the fact that the countries of Central Asia, in contrast to Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, are not engaged into the fight between Russia and the West, this confrontation can not help affecting their foreign policy.

EU Eastern Partnership Program aiming at forging closer ties between the EU and Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, officially does not cover 5 Central Asian countries. The geographical and cultural region remoteness from Europe partially isolated it from its confrontation between Russia and the West, which is observed in Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and the Caucasus. In addition, the tendency of power authorities to authoritarianism and centralization in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmeni-

stan prevents the EU from political ambitions in the region. Historically, Russian strong regional influence allowed Moscow to intensify integration with some Central Asian countries, opposing the attempts of some former Soviet republics to receive membership in NATO and the EU. Meanwhile, while Russia starts to feel the negative effects of Western sanctions, economic ties between Russia and Asia will only deteriorate. As a matter of fact, all countries in the region are closely tied to the Russian economy.

Economic ties between Russia and Asia will deteriorate in the future

For example, **Kazakhstan** as a country with the strongest economy in Central Asia and as a member of the Customs Union, is the most economically integrated with Russia. As a result, Kazakhstan suffers from flagging Russian economy in addition

to its own internal economic problems. Since the national currency of Kazakhstan is linked to the Russian ruble, devaluation of tenge reached 20%. In spite of the difficulties, Kazakhstan still plans to join the Kremlin project on extension the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015.

However, Kazakhstan is not tied exclusively to Russia, as its status of a powerful oil and gas producer played a significant role in strengthening relations with the West and China. In recent years, Kazakhstan has been trying to reduce its dependence on Russia and increase its own commercial and investment ties outside the Russian sphere of influence. It is likely that it will be increasingly difficult for Moscow to maintain its position and influence, and the Ukrainian crisis would help Kazakhstan to strengthen its position.

Ukrainian crisis can help Kazakhstan to strengthen its position

Another country, which has also announced its plans to join EEC, is **Kyrgyzstan**. Bishkek refers to the weakness of its economy, which remains heavily dependent on Russia's financial support. In particular, Russia is going to provide Bishkek with USD 500 mln of economic assistance, which will help to offset negative impacts of Kyrgyzstan's accession to the Customs Union. Simultaneously with the intensive rapprochement with Russia, Kyrgyzstan is actively trying to eliminate Western influence within the country. In July this year, US air force base "Manas" near Bishkek has been shut down. The military base has existed in the country since 2001 and served as a strong point for more than 5 mln of NATO servicemen. Obviously, the decision to shut down the base, made under Moscow's pressure, is a consequence of the growing Russian influence in Kyrgyzstan. In addition, in recent years, Russia and Kyrgyzstan have concluded a number of agreements on investment in energy and transport sectors. Thus, Kremlin has gained additional controlling tools of influence in the country. Bishkek, in turn, relies on Russia as an unchangeable energy supplier and

arbitrator in a dispute with its neighbors (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan) on the limited water resources of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers. Therefore, Kyrgyzstan is gradually becoming the state in Central Asia under huge control of Russian Federation and the main pro-Russian center of influence in the region.

Kyrgyzstan is becoming the Russian-controlled state in Central Asia

In contrast to the apparent pro-Russian position of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, **Uzbekistan** conducts more independent foreign policy in the region. This is caused by the country's own self-sufficiency in energy and agricultural sectors. Official Tashkent decided not to join the Customs Union and the Collective Security Treaty, skeptically considering integration initiatives of Moscow and trying to isolate itself from both the West and Russia. It is likely that Uzbekistan will continue to follow a similar policy. It should be noted that the term of office of Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov expires in April 2015, and it will likely reinforce competition between Russia and the West for future influence in the country.

Uzbekistan will be trying to isolate itself both from the West and Russia

Recently, one can observe an increased EU attention to **Turkmenistan**, which is becoming an important producer and exporter of natural gas amid European efforts to reduce energy dependence on Russia. As a result, EU continues putting pressure on Turkmenistan persuading to join Azerbaijan in the project "Southern Gas Corridor". However, considering a strong Moscow's position on this issue, the official Ashkhabad has chosen not to hurry with the final decision. It is quite possible that due to a potential security threat from the Russian side amid the current crisis, Turkmenistan will be avoiding implementation of such a controversial project in the future.

Energy Diplomacy

Decrease in financial stability of "Gazprom"



There has been an increased activity in the global oil and gas market observed in mid-September 2014. For the first time over the last 14 months, the price for Brent oil dropped below \$100/barrel — to \$99-97. It caused concerns of the OPEC member countries. According to the Arab Petroleum

The drop in oil prices is a temporary situation

Investments Corp, level of prices required for a balanced budget of Saudi Arabia is about \$98.40, but for OPEC in general it amounts to \$104.80. The drop in oil prices should be considered as a temporary situation. It is expected that winter demand can cause an increase in the hydrocarbons prices. However, Mark Mobius, Head of group funds of Templeton Emerging Markets, expects even lower prices for Brent oil - \$80/barrel, but it will be a temporary situation as well. The analyst refers to decline in economic growth in India and China as an argument for his assumption.

A number of factors, including the slowdown in industrial production in China and its decline in the United States, provide grounds to consider that oil prices will not grow in the near future and will

be fixed at this level. "Gazprom" reported about a forecast reduction of gas production in 2014. Such statements of the energy giant "Gazprom" have a real basis - gas exports reduction, and, obviously, are aimed at "warming" an agiotage at the European market before the fall-winter heating season. However, due to the reverse gas supplies and a reduction in gas consumption, Ukraine continues to accumulate gas reserves. Currently, there are 16.3 bln cubic meters of natural gas in Ukrainian gas storage facilities, which is 14% more than as of this date last year.

European countries enhance activities on diversifying gas supply directions. In particular, on September 19, official representative of the German energy company E.ON announced the signing of a billion agreement with a Canadian company PieridaeEnergy on supplies of 6.5 billion cubic meters/per year of liquefied gas to Germany. Germany will receive 7% of the necessary gas from Canadian deliveries from 2020. In addition, on September 20, during the visit to Azerbaijan, President of Bulgaria Plevneliev announced the negotiations between Bulgaria and Azerbaijan regarding gas supplies (200-300 mln cubic meters per year) to Bulgaria from 2016.

Kazakhstan has also made a demonstrative step towards strengthening energy sovereignty. Thus, on September 19, the first Vice-minister of energy of Kazakhstan Uzakbay Karabalin announced establishment of joint enterprises by the operators of the largest oil fields in Kazakhstan — “Kashagan”, “Karachaganak” and “Tengiz” — and the European partners. Also Kazakh national oil and gas company “KazMunaiGas” began negotiations with the state company SOCAR (Azerbaijan) and Turkmenistan’s refineries on fuel and lubricant purchases.

On September 20, a solemn ceremony of the “Southern Gas Corridor” laying was held. The corridor provides for transit gas supplies through Georgia and Turkey directly to Europe. Key stakeholders of the TANAP project, according to which construction of a new pipeline has begun, is the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (58%), Turkish Botas (30%) and British BP (12%). It is expected that the first supplies will be realized in 2018 to Turkey, and in 2019 — to Europe. The supply volume is 10 bln cubic meters with a possibility to be increased up to 20 bln. There is no doubt that implementation of a new large-scale energy project would have a serious impact on the world energy order.

The activity of Russian oil and gas companies in foreign markets during this period was characterized by a certain passivity. “Gazprom” began negotiations with Chinese partners to deliver 30 billion cubic meters of gas to China in the forthcoming 30 years. According to the Head of the Russian gas monopoly Alexey Miller, development potential of “Gazprom” is quite comparable with the potential of the Asian gas market. “This potential cannot be measured by the “European yardstick” today”, Miller said.

In addition to “bright” Chinese perspectives, the Head of “Gazprom” also noted rate of decline in gas production observed at the end of 2014: from 496 to 463 billion cubic meters. The reasons for a his-

toric drop in “Gazprom” production are as follows: EU sanctions policy, stagnating Russia’s economy, suspension of gas supplies to Ukraine. In reality, because of boycott of Russian goods on a global dimension, production of goods has been decreased.

As a result, gas consumers in the domestic market reduced the purchase of natural gas due to objective difficulties. In addition, domestic competition in Russia’s fuel and energy complex has been aggravated. President of “Rosneft” Ihor Sechin suggested the Head of the government of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev to reorder independent gas producers’ access to the gas transmission system (GTS) of “Gazprom” in order to reform the system of tariffs and tighten control over the monopolist.

Thus, the decline in world oil prices, reduction of “Gazprom” gas production, as well as diversification of gas supplies by European states, have a negative impact on the financial stability of the state gas monopolist. The situation with “Gazprom” is exacerbated because of the domestic situation: first, a competition between Sechin and Miller has gained a new impetus, while the president of “Rosneft” is initiating control tightening over “Gazprom”. Second, because of the boycott of Russian goods by the international community, production volumes in Russia has reduced, and, consequently, demand for hydrocarbons in the domestic market has decreased. Probably, complications of internal and external situation on “Gazprom” have caused the postponement of the tri-lateral meeting in the format Ukraine-EU-Russia regarding the Ukrainian gas issue from September 20 to September 26, 2014. Obviously, the Russian monopolist has chosen a “delay strategy”. Thus, it is difficult to forecast whether the upcoming meeting will be productive.

The decline in oil prices negatively affects the financial stability of “Gazprom”

Economic Diplomacy

EU will control Ukrainian dairy products quality

European Union mission is going to visit Ukraine in order to test Ukrainian dairy products quality. According to the results of the visit, the mission will confirm the right of Ukrainian producers to export their dairy products to the EU.

The main EU claim concerns the quality of raw materials, and not the process of milk processing at Ukrainian enterprises. It is about the low level of contactless milking technology, which adversely affects the quality of Ukrainian raw milk. According to experts, about one third of 266 milk processing plants in Ukraine meet the requirements of the EU. That is, in prospect, they can obtain the right to export their products to the European market.

About one third of milk processing plants in Ukraine meet the EU requirements

Currently, only four Ukrainian poultry farms and a number of manufacturers of casein, fish and honey have the right to export their products to the EU. The main reason for the inability of other manufacturers to export domestic products is caused

by the lack of required certification of Ukrainian enterprises and the inconsistency of Ukrainian legislation on food safety with European legislation.

In general, preliminary evaluation suggests the Ukrainian producers' fulfillment of the EU requirements. The main condition regarding EU market entry for the Ukrainian livestock products has become the adoption of the Law of Ukraine "On the amendments to some legislative acts of Ukraine on food products" by the Verkhovna Rada.

The law provides for clarification of terminology, types of offenses and the adequacy of penalties, creation of a single supervisory authority in the sphere of food safety, abolition of permits and licensing procedures, which are absent in the EU, implementation of the European principles for the regulation of GMOs and registration of GMOs sources.

The law envisages the implementation of basic elements within one year and adoption of a several regulations, as well as a substantial reform of the regulatory body, which is currently being established on the basis of the State Veterinary and Phytosanitary Service.

Russia continues to blackmail Ukraine

Russia continues the blackmail policy on Ukraine in economic sphere. In particular, on September 19, Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev signed a decree on the introduction of fees for goods from Ukraine. It will be implemented if Ukraine will conduct a "hidden economic implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement". According to Mr. Medvedev, these fees will be imposed if Ukraine begins to apply economic articles of the Agreement before the said period (early 2016), that is, begins judicial implementation or actual application of the provisions. In addition,

Russia threatens to impose fees if Ukraine will begin implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement

tion, he noted that the main goal is to protect Russian producers from unfair competition.

Roselhoznadzor declared the possibility of imposing restrictions on the import of fruits from Ukraine. Such measures from the Russian side are a manifestation of growing fears regarding the state of its own economy, which is suffering substantial losses because of sanctions and lower revenues from energy sales.

In addition, decrease in Russia's gas supplies to a number of European countries has been observed over the past week despite the concluded contracts. In particular, reduction of gas supplies has been observed

One can observe the decrease in Russia's gas supplies to the European countries

in Germany, Poland (by 20% of planned volume) and Slovakia (by 25% of planned volume). Taking into account that most of the European countries, which are suffering from this situation, take part in reverse supplies to Ukraine, such actions of the Russian Federation should be considered as another attempt to pressure on Ukraine through these European countries, especially on the eve of trilateral energy consultations Ukraine-EU-Russia to be held on September 26 in Berlin. Nevertheless, the official Russia represented by the Minister of Energy Oleksandr Novak continues to claim that the European countries would not be punished for reverse gas supplies to Ukraine.

It is expected that fees can be raised for the following products: meat, dairy and bakery products, fruits and cereals, as well as beer, wine, alcohol, ciga-

rettes, cars, clothes, shoes and sanitary engineering. The fees are going to be imposed according to the Unified Customs Tariff of the Customs Union. The Annex to the Agreement on free trade serves as a legal justification for such action. It envisages the possibility of introduction of import customs duties on products from a country - party to a contract if this country joins integrative unions with third parties.

Ukrainian side promptly responded with a statement of the Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk. He noted that if Russia introduces restrictive measures against Ukrainian goods, Ukraine urgently introduce mirror measures. In turn, all economic documents on the implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement are being prepared and will take effect when Ukraine opens the market for European goods.

The aim of the publication is to provide analysis of Ukraine's foreign policy in the context of global processes in the region and the world, as well as an overview of major world events that may have an impact on the further development of Ukraine and the region. Special attention is paid to the European integration of Ukraine, in particular implementation of Ukraine–EU Association Agreement.

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