

# ICPS newsletter®

## Endless political crises put Ukraine's Euroatlantic ambitions to sleep

***In contrast to the April NATO Summit in Bucharest,\* Ukraine had few expectations of the December Summit in Brussels. The Council of the North Atlantic Alliance met at the level of foreign ministers and did not even schedule the question of granting the Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Ukraine and Georgia, although the two countries had applied in early 2008. Instead, the Alliance proposed more intense cooperation with Kyiv, in part by establishing National Annual Plans (NAPs) and beefing up the NATO Documentation and Information Center in Kyiv. Why was Ukraine unable, in the end, to join the MAP? What does the current formula for cooperation bode for Ukraine's Euroatlantic prospects? For answers to these and other questions, we turned to Viktor Chumak, ICPS's director for policy analysis and security programs***

**NL:** *Why was Ukraine unable to join the MAP, after all? How did Ukraine's government use the time between the two summits: to intensify work with the main opponents of the MAP within NATO, France and Germany, and with those outside the Alliance, Russia?*

**VC:** After the Bucharest Summit, there were no illusions about Ukraine possibly joining the MAP in December. First, there was the foreign policy reason: there are countries within the Alliance, foremost France and Germany, who are against pushing Ukraine into NATO. Nor did we see the Ukrainian government put any systematic efforts into working with these countries after Bucharest. If anything was being done, it was not public.

Instead, what was public was a variety of statements, both from European countries and from Russia that Ukraine could not be given the MAP. If anyone was systematically working with those opposed to Ukraine's membership, it was Russia. Moscow has serious leverage to influence the Europeans: their dependence on Russia for natural gas and the inevitable reluctance to cause a fight with Russia.

\* At the NATO Summit in Rumania in April, a decision was made that Ukraine and Georgia could eventually join the Alliance, although the MAP itself was set aside.

Other reasons are internal. First of all, there is little serious support among Ukrainian voters for the country to join NATO and widespread misunderstanding of what the MAP really means—both of which are largely the result of a failure on the part of Ukraine's Government to wage an effective public awareness campaign. If there was a proper PR campaign outlining the advantages and disadvantages of membership, then it was only because of the efforts of local NGOs. There is no real debate going on in Ukraine about a security system in which the country might participate.

Secondly, we have no consensus among the country's political leadership.

Thirdly, the country's endless political crisis is a real problem. How can we possibly present ourselves as a reliable, stable partner of NATO? We can't. The lack of a stable and understandable policy places a big question mark on all our Euroatlantic ambitions and efforts.

**NL:** *The war in the Caucasus: Who among those with a vested interest in Ukraine's getting/not getting the MAP was in a position to use those events in their own favor?*

**VC:** Unfortunately, we proved unable to turn those events to our benefit. What's more, there was neither serious analysis of this war, nor a consolidated government position on it.

As far as Alliance members are concerned, then here it's pretty obvious: NATO is not unified in terms of how its members see a collective security system. One group of countries, newer members like Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, increased their support for Ukraine's application after the war in the Caucasus. Another group of countries—France, Germany and Belgium—were even more afraid after those events. To their way of seeing things, were Ukraine and Georgia join the Alliance, the collective security system would cease to be stable.

And this is something Russia is maximizing on, although it continues to cooperate with NATO fairly normally. In Russia's way of thinking, the question of Ukraine joining NATO is a fundamental one, because it means Ukraine will finally leave the Eurasian civilization that Russia itself is part of.

**NL:** *What is really meant by the "deeper cooperation" that was proposed in Brussels?*

**VC:** One of the key aspects of the proposed method of cooperation is the establishment of National Annual Plans (NAPs). After all, the MAP consists of a series of National Annual Plans. The measures anticipated by the MAP are broken up into timeframes in National Annual Plans. This means that if Ukraine carries out these programs, it will effectively have carried out part of the MAP. In other words, Ukraine has not officially been invited to join the MAP, but in fact we will be carrying out those steps that are provided for by the procedures in the MAP. ■

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