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Draft National Security Strategy of Ukraine: an initial overview

The new draft National Security Strategy of Ukraine reflects the general trend of uncertainty in the search for effective ways to strengthen national security on the backdrop of current crisis and needs further elaboration.

Active work on preparing a new National Security Strategy, the need for which is long overdue, has been already started in Ukraine. At the same time, a preliminary analysis of the publicly available draft Strategy (access mode - http://www.niss.gov.ua/public/File/2015_table/Strategia_2015.pdf) revealed its imperfection, to put it mildly. For a more complete understanding of the essence of this basic document and the issues, it raised in the context of the current national security developments, an initial and, to some extent, critical overview of the proposed draft is prepared, not scrutinizing on methodological issues being premature for mentioning, if any.

Let's start with the first chapter of the draft document concerning the initial assumptions for the development of the Strategy. In this chapter, the overall current security situation around Ukraine seems to be covered in one-sided and rather emotional manner without providing deep essence of the changes. The main emphasis is given only to the aggressive actions of the Russian Federation, without saying a single word about systemic crisis of the European security system, which became the catalyst for the recent events in Ukraine. Moreover, there is no reference here to determine the special place of Ukraine in the European security architecture. The draft also contains no mentioning on the previous version of the updated Security Strategy and clear reasoning to change it (at least with regard to the need to implement the provisions of the current program "Strategy - 2020", etc.). The general logic of compliance with existing conceptual apparatus in the sphere of the national security is also violated, namely the need to protect fundamental

national values dominates the protection of the national interests as the main object and core issue of the national security implication, which was completely omitted.

With regard to the objectives of the proposed draft Strategy, their formulations are supposed to be based on the "status quo" approach in terms of the possible further developments in the field of national security not considering the possibility of worsening the situation. The term of "the European future" used herein is rather vague and requires greater specificity (preparing the basis for EU membership, etc). The general wording of all these objectives seems to be eroded and inconsistent with the provisions declared in the initial elements regarding relations with the RF and latest situation developments in and around Ukraine.

Ways to achieve the objectives of the Strategy are also quite generalized with the preference given to effective defense and security sector reform, while other crucial aspects - socio-economic stabilization and sustainable development fade into the background. In this regard, the document is more like a draft military doctrine, which must be derived from. There are also missing links to specific foundations of the new foreign policy positioning of Ukraine in unstable global security conditions, including Euro-Atlantic perspective in light of the recently declared abandonment of the so-called "non-bloc" status.

In the proposed list of the actual threats to the national security of Ukraine, there is no reference to their priority, although provided list seems to be slightly updated

and elaborated in comparison with the existing one. As serious drawbacks of this chapter, I would like to note the following:

- No gradation of internal and external threats as well as references to transnational threats significantly exacerbated in the current security crisis (human and illegal drug trafficking, international terrorism and extremism, etc.);
- Military threats are not singled out to have the greatest degree of impact on national security;
- Threats of the large-scale military invasion and unleashing of regional military conflicts are also not duly noted in the list, given both the previous decision of the Russian parliament and new doctrinal provisions on this matter;
- No reference to the following important current threats: worsening socio-demographic crisis; increased social tensions and protest actions; increasing number of refugees and internally displaced persons; growth of unemployment rate and organized crime; uncontrolled proliferation of weapons among the population; threat of using nuclear infrastructure for terrorist purposes; lack of effective control over the state border, etc.;
- No reference to potential threats to national security and their possible evolution, which is not acceptable for a document with strategic vision, despite the limited timeframe to be covered.

As for the threat posed by “hybrid war”, it would be advisable to disclose its content more specifically, having in mind, among other things, a kind of symbiosis with a number of other threats caused by external interference in internal affairs from foreign countries, especially Russia.

In the context of identifying potential threats to the national security the following threats and challenges should be noted, namely: intensification and broadening of the existing armed conflict; “freezing” of the conflict in the East of Ukraine; increased social and economic instability, deterioration of the socio-demographic situation; restriction of foreign aid and lack of international support; further external intervention in the internal affairs by supporting radical movements, exerting economical pressure and committing other destructive actions; activation of separatism; ineffectiveness of existing structures that ensure international security and global stability, etc.

Among the proposed priorities of the national security policy of Ukraine the most questionable are those related to the public administration reform, strengthening state’s defense capability and restoration its territorial integrity, establishing effective system of guarantees to the national security as well as developing of a special partnership with NATO.

Regarding public administration reform, I would propose to draw more attention to the need to overcome the problems associated with the weakness of public administration, lack of institutionalization as well as need for separation of the political aspects from purely professional ones to ensure sustainability of the public administration system.

One of the important elements for improving state’s defense capabilities, which was not mentioned in the draft document, is the need for participation in military alliances and blocs, including through membership in NATO or the creation of appropriate conditions for this.

Declared priorities for the restoration of the territorial integrity of the state have no linkages to the need for regaining control over all areas of the state border and strengthening temporary control measures at dividing line with separatist regions. The primary focus here should be on creating not only favorable political but also social and economic conditions for the restoration of territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Inclusion in the list of priorities of national security policy references to the necessary formation of an effective system of national security safeguards against the backdrop of recent developments and practical confirmation of their inefficiency provides clear evidence for actual neglecting of existing security realities. In fact, it means a sort of compliance with previously declared non-bloc status, when it comes to what we will again rely on our own in mid-term perspective so that meeting Russia’s aspirations. In terms of proven ineffectiveness this item should be removed from the draft as of yet.

There is also suggestion to supplement the sub-item, which focuses on the development of a special partnership with NATO. The reference should be given to the prospect of the Ukrainian NATO membership as the main purpose of the special partnership against the background of the strategic goal of joining NATO to be the basic element of the European security system, not “joining the European security system, which is based on NATO”, as proposed in the draft text.

Special attention is required for foreign policy priorities identification, first of all strategy of bilateral relations with Russia. It is proposed to clearly indicate the officially approved status of Russia as the aggressor country that needs appropriate reflection in the Ukrainian foreign policy. This sub-item also should be complemented with reference to the necessity for Ukraine imposing its own sanctions against the Russian Federation in case of emergency, we are facing with. It is also astonishing to find in the draft Strategy any notice to the need to review the existing legal framework of bilateral relations as well as developing new mechanisms to be the future basis for relations with Russia amid further supporting armed confrontation in Ukraine.

In general, as far as the national security policy priorities of Ukraine are concerned, it is worth mentioning the need to describe measures focused on addressing the above-mentioned additional threats to national security both actual and perspective ones. They include preven-

tion of possible socio-demographic crisis, reducing social tensions, resolving issue of refugees and displaced persons, reducing unemployment, curbing uncontrolled proliferation of weapons.

Relevant provisions on a mechanism envisaged for monitoring its implementation should also supplement final provisions of the draft Strategy.

All of the comments provided are not exhaustive on their nature and relate only to the main aspects of the draft Strategy directly effecting national security under current European security crisis. However, even such a superficial analysis shows absolute weakness of the proposed draft Strategy to be a kind of natural reflection of the general trend of Ukrainian uncertainty in seeking effective ways for strengthening national security on the backdrop of current security developments, and needs further elaboration.

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