

## Enhancing France-Ukraine Security and Defence Cooperation

*The objective of this paper is to identify the possible ways of improving bilateral cooperation between France and Ukraine as well as to propose new possible formats of multilateral cooperation within the existing and new frameworks. Given the deterioration in regional and global geopolitical situation, new threats to national security and challenges to world order against the backdrop of distrust among the traditional allies; taking into account Ukraine's key role for security and stability in East of Europe, and France's leading role in the European defence and security structures – it is in the common interests of both countries to enhance defence and security cooperation.*

### France-Ukraine: Where Do We Stand?

A new era in France-Ukraine diplomatic relations officially began on January 24, 1992, a month after Paris officially recognized the independence of Ukraine. However, from the 1990s through mid-2000s, the bilateral relations lacked dynamics, and neither France nor Ukraine ever considered each other as a strategic partner.

One of the turning points was the “Orange Revolution” of 2004, after which the France-Ukraine dialogue intensified to some extent, however, still lacked a mutual trust and was out of priority list in foreign policy agendas of both countries.

The NATO Bucharest Summit of 2008 cooled down the rapprochement efforts. François Fillon, then-Prime Minister of France, voiced an opposition to the NATO enlargement to the East – in the name of “*balance of power in Europe and between Europe and Russia*.”<sup>1</sup> The position of France and Germany against granting

the Membership Action Plans (MAP) to Ukraine and Georgia was predictably negatively perceived in Kyiv. A few months later, in August 2008, Russia carried out a military aggression in Georgia. Nicolas Sarkozy, then-President of France, proposed a mediation and brokered a peace deal<sup>2</sup> that has neither been fully respected by Russia, nor enforced by the international community. This created even more frustration and mistrust towards France in Ukraine. Later, this distrust was felt during the first year of Russian military aggression in Ukraine, when a number of Ukrainian experts, civil society activists and government officials were sceptical over France's role in the so-called Normandy Four format (France, Germany, Russian, Ukraine), aimed at facilitating the settlement of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

In the foreign policy domain, Paris is guided by the White Paper on the Foreign and European Policy for 2008-2020 (*Livre blanc sur la politique étrangère et européenne de la France*). Even though this document was compiled long before the Russian annexation of

<sup>1</sup> Par Marie Jégo, “L'adhésion à l'OTAN divise l'Ukraine, géographiquement et politiquement”, *Le Monde*, 02.04.2008, [http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2008/04/02/l-adhesion-a-l-otan-divise-l-ukraine-geographiquement-et-politiquement\\_1029991\\_3214.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2008/04/02/l-adhesion-a-l-otan-divise-l-ukraine-geographiquement-et-politiquement_1029991_3214.html).

<sup>2</sup> Reuters, “France's Sarkozy stands by Georgia peace plan,” August 27, 2008, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSLR456959>.

Crimea and military aggression in Ukraine, it is necessary to point out that the 137-page White Paper is still in force and the word “Ukraine” is only mentioned for three times. The document is explicit about the absence of Ukraine’s future in the EU and indicates that “*the limited enlargement to the Balkans will concern neither Ukraine nor Turkey.*”<sup>3</sup> The document also proposes two possible scenarios, for instance, the first one provides for the future enlargement (after 2020) toward Ukraine “*if the Union is capable to absorb [Ukraine] without giving up on its ambitions*” while the second outlines a possibility of an enhanced European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). However, taking into account the period when the document was drafted, the world was living in a less harsh security environment.

Paradoxically, it was the Russian military aggression against Ukraine that gave a new impetus to closer ties between Paris and Kyiv. On June 6, 2014, on Paris’ initiative, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko took part in the celebration ceremony of the Normandy landings,<sup>4</sup> and that day the Normandy Four format was established. This initiative caused a significant resonance in the Ukrainian media as well as a hope that France would change its view of Ukraine by recognizing the role of Ukrainians in the fight against Nazism during the Second World War. Paris’ role in Normandy Four will be considered in more detail below in the text.

The trade between France and Ukraine cannot be called enough intense. The growth in turnover from \$1,93 bn in 2010 to \$2,7 bn in 2013 was interrupted by Russian invasion of Ukraine, and France-Ukraine bilateral trade dropped to \$2,0 bn in 2014 and even to \$1,6 bn in 2015. In 2016, the two countries traded for \$2,19 bn, but positive dynamics stopped in 2017 with turnover of \$2,17 bn.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, it should be stressed that

France remains the first foreign employer with more than 160 companies operating in Ukraine.<sup>6</sup>

Besides strong presence of French business in Ukraine’s financial and banking sector as well as in agriculture, among the important bilateral projects one should note the construction of a confinement arch over the Chernobyl nuclear reactor with the overall cost of \$1,6 bn, built by two French companies Bouygues and Vinci,<sup>7</sup> and inaugurated in November 2016. In 2015, the French enterprise AREVA signed a contract with the Ukrainian Energoatom for the supply of enriched uranium to Ukraine,<sup>8</sup> making an energy sector an important domain of bilateral cooperation with even more potential to explore. Another recent positive sign was an opening of a representation office in Kyiv by Alstom, French rail transport giant,<sup>9</sup> as well as signing of a contract for 55 Airbus helicopters supply for the Interior Ministry of Ukraine.<sup>10</sup> Although it is too early to speak about solid positive trend, we can reserve a right to express a cautious optimism for the bilateral trade relations.

The military cooperation between the two countries is regulated by a 1996 Intergovernmental Agreement on Cooperation in the Defence Field<sup>11</sup> and the Plan on bilateral military cooperation for 2018.<sup>12</sup> The fact that France refused to finalize the sell of Mistral-class amphibious assault ship to Russia was welcomed by Kyiv and the neighbouring countries of the region and perceived as a positive and important sign. It should be mentioned that France has relied on Ukraine for the transportation of troops and military equipment to Mali. Kyiv has provided the cargo aircraft Antonov An-124-100 and the world’s biggest An-225 “Mriya.” For instance, during the two months in 2013, the Air Force of France chartered 115 flights with An-124 and 7 with An-225 for the operation in Mali.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Alain Juppé et Louis Schweitzer, *La France et l’Europe dans le monde*, [https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/2LI-VREBLANC\\_DEF.pdf](https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/2LI-VREBLANC_DEF.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> RTL, “Cérémonies du Débarquement: Hollande invite le nouveau président ukrainien,” 28.05.2014, <http://www.rtl.fr/actu/politique/ceremonies-du-debarquement-hollande-invite-le-nouveau-president-ukrainien-7772314929>.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, “Bilateral trade and economic cooperation between Ukraine and France,” <https://france.mfa.gov.ua/ua/ukraine-france/trade>.

<sup>6</sup> France Diplomatie, “Déplacement de Jean-Yves Le Drian en Ukraine (22-23 mars 2018),” <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/dossiers-pays/ukraine/evenements/article/deplacement-de-jean-yves-le-drian-en-ukraine-22-23-03-18>.

<sup>7</sup> Graham Templeton, “30 years later, \$1.6B mega-project finally puts Chernobyl to rest,” *ExtremeTech*, December 5, 2016, <https://www.extremetech.com/extreme/240367-30-years-later-1-6b-mega-project-finally-puts-chernobyl-rest>.

<sup>8</sup> AREVA S.A., “AREVA awarded enriched uranium contract in Ukraine,” April 24, 2015, <http://www.sa.aveva.com/EN/news-10505/aveva-awarded-enriched-uranium-contract-in-ukraine.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Alstom, “Alstom opens a representative office and appoints a business development manager in Kyiv,” 05.07.2018, <http://www.alstom.com/press-centre/2018/07/alstom-opens-a-representative-office-and-appoints-a-business-development-manager-in-kyiv>.

<sup>10</sup> Michel Cabirol, “L’Ukraine s’offre 55 hélicoptères d’Airbus Helicopters,” *La Tribune*, 14.07.2018, <https://www.latribune.fr/entreprises-finance/industrie/aeronautique-defense/l-ukraine-s-offre-55-helicopteres-d-airbus-helicopters-785142.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, “Agreement between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of the Republic of France on cooperation in the field of armaments and military equipment,” 15.02.1996, [http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/250\\_035](http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/250_035).

<sup>12</sup> La France en Ukraine, “Signature du plan de coopération militaire bilatérale franco-ukrainien 2018,” 23.02.2018, <https://ua.ambafrance.org/Signature-du-plan-de-cooperation-militaire-bilaterale-franco-ukrainien-2018>.

<sup>13</sup> Vincent Lamigeon, “Transport militaire: l’incroyable dépendance russe de la France,” *Challenges*, 28.03.2017, [https://www.challenges.fr/entreprise/defense/transport-militaire-l-incroyable-dependance-russe-de-la-france\\_463147](https://www.challenges.fr/entreprise/defense/transport-militaire-l-incroyable-dependance-russe-de-la-france_463147).

However, despite positive examples, it is obvious that France-Ukraine bilateral relations have never been intensive and remain unexplored, while the room for rapprochement is underestimated by both sides. This paper aims at contributing to remedy the current unsatisfactory situation.

## French Role in the Normandy Format

To start with, let us analyse the Paris' role in peace talks over the Russia-Ukraine conflict that is currently the main security issue for Ukraine and the whole Central and Eastern Europe.

Despite France's priority attention to the MENA region, caused by history, geography and focus on terrorist threats, it would be incorrect to blame Paris for ignoring the security issues of the East European countries. Since 1992, France has been participating in the Minsk Group on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and it was French President Nicolas Sarkozy who played the major role in negotiating ceasefire during the Russia-Georgia war of 2008.

French role in Normandy Four negotiation format is usually underestimated both by politicians and experts. At least partly, it is because Angela Merkel used to be far more charismatic than Francois Hollande. But let us remember that it was French ex-President who gave impetus to the establishment of the Normandy format on June 6, 2014, when France, Germany, Russia, and Ukraine leaders met on the margins of the 70th anniversary of the D-Day allied landings in Normandy. And it was Paris that cancelled in 2015 the contract on transmit of two state-of-art Mistral-class amphibious assault ships to Russia, despite the significant financial losses and risks of deterioration in relations with Moscow.

French Parliament non-binding calls of 2016 to lift sanctions imposed on Russia did not influence Paris' adherence to a solid line of preserving sanctions as long as Moscow does not demonstrate progress in the implementation of Minsk accords. French legislation does not provide legal ground to prohibit visits of some pro-Russian politicians to the occupied Crimea, but Paris regularly stresses that these visits do not reflect the official position of France that remains committed to restoring of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> France Diplomatie, "Ukraine - Q&R - Extrait du point de presse," 15.05.2018, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/dossiers-pays/ukraine/evenements/article/ukraine-q-r-extrait-du-point-de-presse-15-05-18>.

<sup>15</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "France Rules Out Quick Review Of Russia Sanctions," June 06, 2018,

Macron's May 2018 visit to Russia should be assessed within the wider context of Paris' vision of a multilateral world with France's special role among the major actors. In 2018, French President also visited China and the U.S., so a visit to Russia seemed to be obvious in this line, especially given the official invitation from the Russian side after the Putin's Paris visit of 2017. Whether the Government of Ukraine likes it or not, the reality is that Russia-Ukraine conflict is not the only topic on Paris' agenda regarding Moscow. The war in Syria and collapsing Iranian deal are among France's top priorities, and Emmanuel Macron believes he should at least try to find some common ground with Russia – not least due to the corresponding expectations of some French political circles.

At the same time, it should be noted that Emmanuel Macron visited not Russia's capital Moscow, but St. Petersburg economic forum, thus actually limiting the level of his visit to the economic sphere. Ukraine was not the major topic of Macron's talks with Putin, but anyway, French President stressed that sanctions against Russia would remain in force until Minsk agreements are fulfilled.

This visit raised criticism among Ukrainian expert circles, but it might be more productive to propose some fresh ideas to French colleagues on how the French-Russian contacts could be used to more effectively negotiate peace for Donbas. Given historically good relations between Paris and Moscow, the lack of trust and contacts between Kyiv and Moscow, as well as France's participation in the Normandy format, it is advisable to get usage of such occasions instead of useless and groundless blaming for betrayal.

On 6 June 2018, France's foreign minister Jean-Yves Le Drian confirmed that Paris opposed any quick changes of European sanctions imposed on Russia for its aggression in Ukraine, insisting that their lifting should be conditioned on advances in the peace process.<sup>15</sup> That was a French response to the words of a new Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte who promised to "*promote a review of the sanctions system.*"

Besides the role of mediator and guarantor within the Normandy format, Paris also provides the humanitarian aid. While visiting Kyiv in March 2018, Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said that France had decided to pledge additional €500,000 for the conflict-hit eastern Donbas region.<sup>16</sup>

<https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-france-rules-out-quick-review-of-sanctions/29275595.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Reuters, "Ukraine signs deal with France to buy 55 Airbus helicopters," March 23, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us->

## Ukraine and France in the Context of NATO-EU Relations

While Paris along with Berlin is the major promoter of the EU's "strategic autonomy" in security issues declared in the "Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy: Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe" (2016),<sup>17</sup> at the same time, France remains an important component of the NATO's European pillar, spending on security more than any other European country except for the United Kingdom.<sup>18</sup>

It is clear that development of the EU's own military capabilities will take quite a time, and in the near future Europe will have to rely primarily on NATO. Moreover, there is a consensus among the Western Allies that development of the EU's security and defence component is not aimed to substitute NATO, but rather to complement it through enhancing Europe's capabilities to provide security in own region and to act autonomously when needed. Given that Ukraine actively cooperates with NATO and the EU, enhancing coordination with France as an important player in both structures might contribute to the effectiveness of Kyiv's relations with them.

Although the cooperation between NATO and the EU was established in early 1990th (initially, with the Western European Union), only in 2002 NATO and the EU signed the Declaration on a European Security and Defence Policy reaffirming EU's assured access to NATO's planning capabilities for the EU's own military operations. The "Berlin Plus" arrangements of 2003 set the basis for the Alliance to support the EU-led operations in which NATO as a whole was not engaged. The same year, NATO assets were made available to the EU for the purposes of the EU-led Operation "Concordia" in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The largest civilian mission ever launched under the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) was deployed in Kosovo in December 2008, with the aim to assist and support the Kosovo authorities in the rule of law area, specifically in the police, judiciary and customs domains. The EU Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) works closely in the field with the NATO peacekeeping force in Kosovo (KFOR). Ukrainian peacekeepers have

been participating in KFOR mission from 1999, thus contributing to peace and stability in the region together with NATO and the EU. On 14 March 2008, Ukrainian peacekeepers along with their Polish, Romanian and French colleagues took part in restoring civil order in the city of Mitrovica, where one Ukrainian serviceman was killed and twenty were injured.

In 2014, Ukrainian frigate "Hetman Sahaydachniy" along with warships from France and other EU and non-EU countries took part in the first counter-piracy military operation undertaken by the European Union Naval Force – EU NAVFOR Somalia, also known as "Operation Atalanta," at sea off the Horn of Africa and in the Western Indian Ocean.<sup>19</sup> A year before, frigate "Hetman Sahaydachniy" contributed to the corresponding NATO counter-piracy operation "Ocean Shield" in the same region.

As it has been already mentioned, in the missions overseas, the French Armed Forces strongly rely on the Ukrainian strategic airlift capabilities. For instance, in 2013, France intensively used the Ukrainian cargo aircraft An-125 and An-225 during the operation "Serval" in Mali.<sup>20</sup>

Ukraine and France already have a positive experience of participation in the same NATO and the EU peacekeeping missions both on land and sea, and even on the bilateral level. This complements the experience of Ukrainian and French militaries participation in the missions under the UN mandate, including in the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Liberia.

## Opportunities Driven by the Intensification of NATO-EU Cooperation

Since the Russian aggression against Ukraine, NATO and the EU have intensified the consultations and strengthened cooperation. At the NATO Warsaw summit of 2016, Allied leaders welcomed the Joint Declaration by the President of the European Council Donald Tusk, the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Jens Stoltenberg that out-

ukraine-france-helicopters/ukraine-signs-deal-with-france-to-buy-55-airbus-helicopters-idUSKBN1GZ1FK.

<sup>17</sup> European External Action Service, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy," June 2016, [https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top\\_stories/pdf/eugs\\_review\\_web.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> NATO, "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010-2017)," 29 June 2017, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2017\\_06/20170629\\_170629-pr2017-111-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_06/20170629_170629-pr2017-111-en.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> EUNAVFOR, "Ukrainian Frigate Hetman Sagaidachniy Heads For Home After Completing EU Counter Piracy Operation," February 26, 2014, <http://eunavfor.eu/ukrainian-frigate-hetman-sagaidachniy-heads-for-home-after-completing-eu-counter-piracy-operation>.

<sup>20</sup> Vincent Lamigeon, "Transport militaire: l'incroyable dépendance russe de la France," *Challenges*, 28.03.2017, [https://www.challenges.fr/entreprise/defense/transport-militaire-l-incroyable-dependance-russe-de-la-france\\_463147](https://www.challenges.fr/entreprise/defense/transport-militaire-l-incroyable-dependance-russe-de-la-france_463147).

lined the concrete areas of cooperation between two organisations including countering hybrid threats; operational cooperation including at sea; cybersecurity and defence; complementary and interoperable defence capabilities of EU Member States and NATO Allies; defence industrial cooperation; exercises; and building the defence capabilities of partners to the East and South.<sup>21</sup>

At their meeting in December 2016, NATO foreign ministers approved a series of more than 40 measures to advance how NATO and the EU work together including on countering hybrid threats, cyber defence, and making their common neighbourhood more stable and secure. In December 2017, foreign ministers also agreed to step up NATO-EU cooperation in three new areas: military mobility; information sharing in the fight against terrorism and strengthening coordination of counter-terrorism support for partner countries; and promoting women's role in peace and security.

Thus, Ukraine's case gave a new impetus to stepping up NATO-EU cooperation in security and defence on the one hand, and speeded-up shaping of EU's own military capabilities on the other hand. It would be in common interest to involve Ukraine as an active participant in both of these processes.

France's opposition to the idea of further NATO and EU enlargement to the East should not prevent Paris and Kyiv from taking advantages of the opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation in security and defence that are already available and will further expand given Ukraine's aspirations for the EU and NATO membership,<sup>22</sup> already recognized by NATO.<sup>23</sup>

When recalling that at NATO Bucharest Summit of 2008, Paris and Berlin blocked granting Membership Action Plans to Ukraine and Georgia, it should be also remembered that at the same time, France along with other Allies supported Summit Declaration, which stated that *"NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO."*<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the public opinion

poll of April-May 2015 by Pew Research Center indicated that 55% of surveyed French citizens supported the idea of Ukraine's joining NATO in response to Russia-Ukraine conflict.<sup>25</sup>

It is an excessive simplification to call France as pro-Russian as well as to claim that Paris will never support Ukraine's membership in the EU and NATO. The decision would depend on the ratio of advantages and disadvantages in the assessment of the French authorities, and not on the position of the Russian state. It is an ambitious but still realistic goal for Kyiv to persuade Paris that benefits prevail over risks in the issue of closer cooperation with Ukraine including in security and defence. Since 2014, the Ukrainian Armed Forces have been undergoing an ambitious transformation, becoming one of the strongest and experienced battle-hardened armies in Europe. Actually, Kyiv has a lot to propose to the Allies, although not always knows how to properly present own advantages.

Ukraine's transition to NATO standards, intensified after Russian aggression in 2014, opens new opportunities for well-developed French military industry. Ukraine already signed several purchase agreements with French producers, including the half-billion Euro contract with Airbus Helicopters on supplying 55 helicopters of H125, H225 and H145 models for National Police, State Emergency Service, State Border Guard and National Guard.<sup>26</sup> This purchase, partly made at loans from the French banks, will satisfy Ukraine's urgent needs in helicopters and contribute to independence from Russia in this sphere.

These first agreements indicate that many mutually beneficial projects are possible if Ukraine is closer engaged to the EU and NATO defence and security cooperation.

## Common Ground for Combating Terrorism and Hybrid Threats

France is the most vulnerable EU country in terms of terrorist threats. In 2015-2016, 241 victims were killed

<sup>21</sup> NATO, "Joint declaration by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization," 08 Jul. 2016, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_133163.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133163.htm).

<sup>22</sup> Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, "The Law of Ukraine On the Principles of Internal and External Policies," Rev. 30.11.2017, <http://zakon5.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2411-17>.

<sup>23</sup> NATO, "Enlargement," Last updated: 11 Jul. 2018, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49212.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49212.htm); "Brussels Summit Declaration," 11 Jul. 2018, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_156624.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156624.htm).

<sup>24</sup> NATO, "Bucharest Summit Declaration," 03 Apr. 2008, [https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/official\\_texts\\_8443.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/official_texts_8443.htm).

<sup>25</sup> Katie Simmons, Bruce Stokes and Jacob Poushter, "NATO Publics Blame Russia for Ukrainian Crisis, but Reluctant to Provide Military Aid," Pew Research Center, June 10, 2015, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/06/10/nato-publics-blame-russia-for-ukrainian-crisis-but-reluctant-to-provide-military-aid>.

<sup>26</sup> Government Portal, "Ukraine and Airbus Helicopters sign agreement on the supply of 55 helicopters for the needs of the SES, the National Police, the National Guard and the Border Guard Service," 14.07.2018, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-ta-airbus-helikopters-pidpisali-ugodu-pro-postachannya-55-gelikopteriv-dlya-potreb-dsns-nacionalnoyi-policiyi-nacgvardiyi-ta-prikordonnoyi-sluzhbi>.

in terrorist attacks in France, compared to 67 in Belgium, which is the number two on this sad list. The total number of foreign fighters leaving France between 2011 and 2017 was 2147 persons, about 65 of them went to fight in the Ukrainian Donbas.<sup>27</sup>

Since the beginning of the Russian hybrid aggression in 2014, Ukraine also has been suffering from the terrorist threats and attacks, including shelling on residential areas and explosions in crowded places.

As a good example of France-Ukraine cooperation in counterterrorism may serve a new initiative launched through the NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme, with the aim to develop and test a system for the detection of explosives and firearms in mass transport environments. The first project in this initiative brings together experts from France (Office National d'Études et de Recherches Aérospatiales), Ukraine (Usikov Institute for Radiophysics and Electronics at the National Academy of Sciences), and South Korea (Seoul National University) to design and develop a microwave imaging system. It will be able to detect explosives and concealed weapons in real time and will help secure mass transport infrastructures, such as airports, metro and railway stations.<sup>28</sup>

While considering expanding cooperation, it is advisable to keep in mind that Paris mainly focuses on threats coming from the MENA region and leads several counterterrorism campaigns in Africa. Ukraine has a good record of participating in Africa missions under the U.N. mandate and can become a valuable partner for France in the region.

Following Emmanuel Macron's initiative outlined in his September 2017 Sorbonne speech, in June 2018, nine EU member states agreed to establish a joint European military intervention force for rapid deployment in times of crisis near Europe's borders.<sup>29</sup> Among other tasks, this force will focus on counterterrorism activity. So far, nine countries joined the initiative, namely Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK. It is advisable for Kyiv to explore the possibilities for engaging

to this initiative that might indicate Ukraine's support for French security initiatives, boost multilateral and bilateral cooperation with the EU and NATO member states, and contribute to Ukraine's image as a security contributor, including through sharing the combat experience acquired in countering Russian aggression.

As a nation possessing the highly developed IT-sector and valuable experience in countering cyber-attacks against critical infrastructure, government and business entities, Ukraine has a lot to propose in the sphere of cyber defence, and vice versa, French experience in this sphere can be beneficial for Ukraine. Given Ukraine's ambition to become a member of NATO and the EU, Kyiv can use the provisions of the NATO Cyber Defence Pledge<sup>30</sup> and the EU Cybersecurity Package<sup>31</sup> as guidelines for developing such cooperation. Joining the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence or at least close cooperation with it should be also among Kyiv's priorities.

Ukraine and France could develop cooperation in countering hybrid threats within the NATO-Ukraine Platform on Countering Hybrid Warfare, established in 2017.<sup>32</sup> The Platform already held two meetings, in Warsaw (2017) and Vilnius (2018), where more than 100 participants from NATO and partner countries shared experience and best practices. Unfortunately, so far, Paris has not paid much attention to this perspective framework. France participates in another platform, the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats,<sup>33</sup> and it would be beneficial for all sides to engage Ukraine to close cooperation with this structure, given Kyiv's rapidly acquired experience in this field.

Increasing cooperation with third countries in countering hybrid threats and building respective capacities in partner countries, including within the Eastern Partnership, is also envisaged in the Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council "Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats: a European Union response."<sup>34</sup> The provisions of this document

<sup>27</sup> GLOBSEC, "GLOBSEC Megatrends 2018," [https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Globsec\\_Megatrends\\_2018.pdf](https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Globsec_Megatrends_2018.pdf); "From Criminals to Terrorists and Back?," <https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Crime-Crime-Terror-Nexus-update.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> NATO, "New NATO initiative to help detect explosives and firearms in public transport," 14 May 2018, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_154437.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_154437.htm).

<sup>29</sup> Yasmine Salam, "Nine EU states, including UK, sign off on joint military intervention force," *Politico*, 25.06.2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/uk-to-form-part-of-joint-eu-european-defense-force-pesco>.

<sup>30</sup> NATO, "Cyber Defence Pledge," 08 Jul. 2016, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_133177.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133177.htm).

<sup>31</sup> European Commission, "Cybersecurity Package," 2017, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/com-2017-477\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/com-2017-477_en).

<sup>32</sup> NATO, "Joint statement of the NATO-Ukraine Commission," 10 Jul. 2017, [https://www.nato.int/cps/su/natohq/official\\_texts\\_146087.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/su/natohq/official_texts_146087.htm).

<sup>33</sup> The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/about-us>.

<sup>34</sup> EUR-Lex, "Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council "Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats: a European Union response," 06.04.2016, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016JC0018&from=EN>.

may serve as a guide for choosing the areas of cooperation between the EU member states and partner countries, such as France and Ukraine.

Kyiv and Paris may also share experience and beneficially cooperate in the sphere of countering disinformation and debunking fake news. Ukraine possesses a valuable and rather successful experience in this sphere, and France proved its intention to counter disinformation through the adoption of the law against “fake news” in July 2018.<sup>35</sup>

## AA and ENP: Opportunities for Security and Defence Cooperation

EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (AA) signed in 2014 and fully entered into force in 2017 is usually considered with a view to the economic and political cooperation between the European Union and Ukraine. At the same time, the agreement also envisages prospects for cooperation in security and defence, and the most part of this potential is still waiting for its practical implementation. France and Ukraine are the parties to AA, and all the provisions of this agreement apply to them.

Article 7 of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement outlines that “*the Parties shall intensify their dialogue and cooperation and promote gradual convergence in the area of foreign and security policy, including the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), and shall address in particular issues of conflict prevention and crisis management, regional stability, disarmament, non-proliferation, arms control and arms export control as well as enhanced mutually-beneficial dialogue in the field of space.*” Article 10 states that “*the Parties shall enhance practical cooperation in conflict prevention and crisis management, in particular with a view to increasing the participation of Ukraine in EU-led civilian and military crisis management operations as well as relevant exercises and training activities,*” and that “*the Parties shall explore the potential of military-technological cooperation.*” Article 13 envisages cooperation “*to prevent and combat terrorism.*”<sup>36</sup>

Besides the opportunities provided by the Associated

Agreement, Ukraine can also develop cooperation with the EU member states within the Eastern Partnership as a specific dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Council conclusions on Eastern Partnership of 14 November 2016 underline “*the importance of a stronger cooperation between the EU and the EaP partners in the field of security, including security sector reform, hybrid threats, border management, fighting cybercrime. The Council values the importance of cooperation in Common Security and Defence Policy related issues and welcomes the important contribution of the partner countries to the EU’s CSDP Operations and Missions.*”<sup>37</sup>

Currently, three out of six EaP countries (Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova) participate in EU-led missions or contribute to EU Battle Groups. Ukraine has been contributing to CSDP missions since 2003, whereas Georgia and Moldova since 2014. The activities on CSDP are conducted by the European External Action Service in cooperation with EU member states and partner countries and co-sponsored by the European Union’s Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations through the European Neighbourhood Instrument.<sup>38</sup>

## Three Possible Scenarios for France-Ukraine Relations

“**Status quo**” scenario foresees neither positive nor negative change in bilateral France-Ukraine relations. This scenario is most possible and auto-achievable if Kyiv shows no additional will to improve the relations, while Paris sees no argument to take the initiative. In this scenario, France continues seeing Ukraine within the “other Europe/Eurasia” zone, on the periphery of its foreign policy interests, while Kyiv has to rely on the current insufficient number of tools for gaining France’s support in the international arena.

There is a risk that in a long run this scenario may result in less and less attention from Paris toward Ukraine. Further concentration of France on the internal EU agenda and initiatives boosting the unity within the European Union will limit the EU enlargement prospects with the borders of Balkan countries. France is one of the locomotives of the European integration, and

<sup>35</sup> Zachary Young, “French Parliament passes law against ‘fake news’”, Politico, 04.07.2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/french-parliament-passes-law-against-fake-news>.

<sup>36</sup> “Association Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Ukraine, of the other part,” Official Journal of the European Union, [http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2016/november/tradoc\\_155103.pdf](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2016/november/tradoc_155103.pdf) (in English), Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, [http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/984\\_011](http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/984_011) (in Ukrainian).

<sup>37</sup> Council of the European Union, “Council conclusions on Eastern Partnership,” 14 November 2016, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/22461/ep-st14244en16.pdf>.

<sup>38</sup> EU Neighbours, “EaP countries’ participation in EU-led missions and operations – discussion in Brussels,” 02.05.2016, <https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/east/stay-informed/news/eap-countries-participation-eu-led-missions-and-operations-discussion>.

this role only strengthens with Brexit and deterioration in Germany's internal political situation. In this regard, getting off the radars of French foreign politics poses a risk of finding oneself "off the boat" of the European integration, and surely, such possible development does not meet the interests of Ukraine.

**"Playing on contradictions of the major international actors."** This scenario of exploiting contradictions among the major international actors in order to capitalize on them might seem to be the easiest way to achieve Ukraine's foreign policy goals under conditions of insufficient resources and lack of allies. Kyiv used to resort to such foreign policy under the Leonid Kuchma presidency – sometimes it helped, but in the end, resulted in where Ukraine finds itself now.

There might be a temptation to believe that as long as Ukraine finds herself under the Russian military threat, the EU would turn a blind eye on shortcomings in reforms and provide Kyiv with economic support in advance. There might be also a false impression that contradictions between the U.S. and Germany could help Ukraine prevent the construction of Nord Stream 2 pipeline, or that Washington's pressure could make Paris and Berlin change their positions on NATO membership prospects for Ukraine. Under such scenario, Kyiv's relations with Paris might develop changeably – from an episodic burst of activities to decline, stagnation or even deterioration until the next improvement due to certain positive conjuncture.

However, the reality is that possible tactical gains achieved through contradictions among the international actors might cost too much and be too harmful in a long-run. If Ukraine wants to have a clear European and Euro-Atlantic perspective, it should better rely on stable and predictable foreign policy, based on mutual interests and compromises with all allies and partners, including France. Such Ukraine would be a much more valuable counterpart for Paris and for other influential world capitals.

**"More than pragmatic relations."** Against the backdrop of Trump's unpredictability, Brexit, shaky political stability in Germany, Polish-Ukrainian tensions over historical issues and a Hungarian-Ukrainian dispute over the recently adopted education law, it is advisable for Kyiv to consider expanding the circle of foreign policy partners in the West.

Given that Macron's France has ambition and real chance to increase its leadership position in the European and international stages, as well as Paris' participation in the Normandy Four negotiation format – the need for developing closer relations with this country seems obvious. Establishing a real strategic partnership with France would let Ukraine benefit from the so

far underexplored potential for political, economic and security cooperation, as well as facilitate Kyiv's engagement with the European defence frameworks.

This scenario demands persistent and comprehensive efforts in all spheres where Ukraine and France can find common interests and ground for interaction, starting from culture and economy, and steadily developing to closer political and military cooperation.

As we consider this scenario the most appropriate and beneficial for both Ukraine and France, it determines the conclusions and recommendations set out below.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

What can Ukraine and France do to enhance the mutually beneficial cooperation?

First of all, both sides need a clearer vision of each other's interests and potential – and to a greater extent, this applies to Kyiv which needs Paris attention more than vice versa.

It is important to abandon the rhetoric of "betrayals" and learn to understand the nature and internal logic of the French politics, to distinguish the diplomatic protocol gestures from the essential foundations of the foreign policy. When the Ukrainian officials and experts get a clearer vision on how the foreign policy priorities are shaped in Paris and through which prism France sees the world, including the Central and Eastern European region, – it will become easier to search the common ground for Ukrainian and French foreign policy agenda.

When asking what France is doing to support Ukraine, one should also think about what Kyiv is doing to support Paris' initiatives. Mutual benefits shape a strong basis for a long-lasting partnership, while requests for one-sided help cause nothing but fatigue. In this sense, a half-billion contract for the purchase of French helicopters seems to be a reasonable far-sighted political step. And Ukrainian politicians and experts, who criticize this deal as allegedly economically unfavourable (that is a disputable argument by itself), should recall that just a few years ago Kyiv urged Paris not to consider the "Mistrals" deal in merely economic categories, and the voice from the Dnieper riverbanks got positive response from the Seine.

➤ The more attractive Ukraine would be for the French business and the more investment from France would come – the more Paris would be interested in Ukraine's security. Inviting French business to privatisation and establishing transparent and safe conditions for busi-



ness would work much better than thousands of political appeals to support Ukraine in Russia-imposed conflict.

➤ Given that Paris is not in the list of capitals ready to discuss Ukraine's membership in NATO and the EU, a comprehensive and persistent work with French politicians, experts and the wider public is needed. Inter alia, such work should include the regular Ukrainian-French discussions at different levels, high-quality public events in France as well as professional and convincingly argued media coverage.

➤ Kyiv should more fruitfully cooperate with well-known and authoritative French experts and thinkers, who already support Ukraine's European integration ambitions, as well as constantly expand the network of Ukraine-supporters among the experts, politicians and opinion leaders in France. Moreover, the regional aspect should not be neglected by Kyiv, since identifying the projects of common interest on the Central and Eastern European level might get more attention from France than purely bilateral ones.

➤ In French political discourse Ukraine is often being artificially pushed out of the merely European regional context – either through considering Ukraine as a part of Eurasia (in geopolitical context), as a part of the Russia-led civilizational framework, or within the group of post-Soviet countries without Euro-Atlantic aspiration, such as Belarus and Azerbaijan. This negative trend should be changed through integrating Ukrainian issues within the European regional discourse. Ukraine should be firmly anchored as a part of Europe through regularly organized presentations, conferences, roundtables and other events on a wide range of issues of regional importance – from security and business to culture and art. Ukraine in the context of Central and Eastern Europe would be considered quite differently in Paris than Ukraine as a part of the post-Soviet space.

➤ Paris ambition to play a key role in European security issues can and should be projected to more active engagement to conflict resolution in Eastern Europe – either solely or within the EU's common action. Given Emmanuel Macron's decisiveness to restore France's influence as a global player and Germany's entering the period of long-lasting political turbulence, the role of Paris in Normandy Four negotiations might become more important than it was previously. A detailed realistic plan for the implementation of Minsk agreements with a clear prospect for peaceful settlement would bring Kyiv closer to getting more active Paris' support.

➤ It is important to expand Ukraine-France practical military cooperation in all spheres where it is possible and mutually beneficial. The list includes but is not limited to the defence industrial cooperation, international

peacekeeping missions, fight against terrorism and cyber-attacks, tackling hybrid threats, countering disinformation and etc. In the spheres where Paris is not yet ready to cooperate with Ukraine at the official level – expert networking might give a good start.

It is worth trying to engage France with the NATO Trust Funds and Programmes working in Ukraine. Current collaboration within the NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme is a good example that such work can be mutually beneficial.

Since the de facto arms embargo has been overcome with the supply of the U.S.-made "Javelin" anti-tank missile systems to Ukraine, the negotiations on purchase of France's lethal weapons and bilateral projects in the defence industry sphere might be also possible.

➤ Given Ukraine's membership ambitions, it is advisable to pay more attention to the European Union's activity in security and defence. France is among the most dedicated supporters of the EU's strategic autonomy ambition in security and defence, hence Paris is the right counterpart to discuss possible Ukrainian input in strengthening the European potential. Inter alia, it is advisable to consider possible Ukraine's engaging to the recently launched (at President Macron's proposal) European military intervention force initiative.

➤ Kyiv should be more proactive in proposing ways of cooperation in the spheres of security and defence envisaged in Articles 7-13 of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, including the Common Security and Defence Policy, conflict prevention and crisis management, regional stability, disarmament, non-proliferation, arms control, dialogue in the field of space, participation of Ukraine in EU-led civilian and military crisis management operations as well as relevant exercises and training activities, military-technological cooperation and combating terrorism.

➤ Ukraine should not forget about the so far unrealized potential of security cooperation within the Eastern Partnership as a specific dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Inter alia, the Council conclusions on Eastern Partnership of 14 November 2016 envisage cooperation between the EU and the EaP partners in the field of security, including security sector reform, hybrid threats, border management, fighting cybercrime, as well as contribution of the partner countries to the EU's CSDP operations and missions. Increasing cooperation with third countries in countering hybrid threats and building respective capacities in partner countries, including within the Eastern Partnership, is also envisaged in the Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council "Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats: a European Union response" of 6 April 2016.

➤ The cultural aspect of cooperation is also of vital importance, and it is advisable to consider more active Ukraine's participation within the International Organisation of La Francophonie, where Kyiv has the status of observer since 2006. It should be noted that along with French-speaking cooperation the members of this organisation discuss a wide range of other issues, including the international politics, economic

cooperation, human rights, security, conflict prevention and etc.

In September 2018, the year of the French language in Ukraine starts. Let us hope that it will be a sign that a new quality in Ukraine-France relations is approaching – based on a clear vision of each other's interests and pragmatic and mutually beneficial cooperation.

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