

SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

"RETHINKING THE DE-OCCUPATION POLICY OF UKRAINE IN IN THE FRAMEWORK OF RUSSIA'S HYBRID WAR AGAINST UKRAINE "

The goal of this study is to outline the views of the interested actors on the de-occupation process, to analyze the motives and interests of Ukraine, Russia, and other international players; to study relevant cases of de-occupation and reintegration in other countries in the region, which should be taken into account by Ukraine; to analyze previous analytical findings on this issue and offer recommendations for a new policy of de-occupation of the Ukrainian territories temporarily occupied by Russian Federation (the Crimean Peninsula, parts of Black and Azov Seas and parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions) in the framework of the undeclared hybrid war of Russia against Ukraine.

The authors of the study emphasize: **Russian hybrid war against Ukraine** is a way of conducting Russia's neocolonial policy to limit Ukraine's sovereignty and its ability to implement independent domestic and foreign policies, establish political, economic, informational, and strategic control over the Ukrainian state, use its territory as a springboard for projecting power and expanding Russia's geography of influence in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean basins, in Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Russia is waging a hybrid war by applying a set of political, economic, energy, informational, mass-cultural, diplomatic, terrorist and military measures subordinated to a single plan in dynamically changing proportions of their combination, without formal recognition by Russia of such a war against Ukraine.

Motives that prompted **the Russian Federation** to launch an undeclared "hybrid" war against Ukraine, caused by the peculiarities of the interpretation of national interests by the Russian ruling elite and a large part of the Russian population, who did not accept the decline of their status in the hierarchy of international relations after the collapse of the Soviet Union and applied the revanchist strategy. These motivations increased by the interweaving of personal interests of the autocratic ruling elite of Russia, for which aggressive foreign policy has become a way to distract the population from domestic problems, a source of consolidation of public support and preservation of power.

Globally the motive of the Russian Federation lies within the desire to renew the status of a global actor with the right to vote in addressing key issues of international relations and its own sphere of influence. In this context, Russia sees Ukraine as a source of strengthening its geopolitical weight, necessary to claim an equal dialogue with major global actors.

On the **regional level**, Russia seeks to prevent the expansion of competing world actors in its sphere of influence, as well as to create a security perimeter around Russia, in which it will dominate (in particular, in the Azov-Black Sea basin, which Moscow sees as a springboard for projecting Russian power deep into the European continent and onto the Middle East).

On the **national level**, Russia's state interests are intertwined with the private motives of the ruling elite, and Moscow considers Ukrainian territories in the context of increasing demographic, technological, natural, and human resources and to cultivate the image of Vladimir Putin as a "collector of Russian lands". The prospect of successful development of democratic European Ukraine as an alternative model of development in the post-Soviet space is considered by the autocratic Kremlin regime as an existential threat to the preservation of its power and Russia's integration projects.

Russian motivations come into antagonism with the **national interests of Ukraine**, which in the context of de-occupation policy are to end the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, certain districts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions (ORDLO), adjacent Black and Azov Seas by the Russian Federation, and by Russia controlled and supported illegal armed groups and occupation

administrations; restoration of the sovereignty and constitutional order of Ukraine in these territories; ensuring the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders; protection and restoration of the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of individuals and legal entities affected by the occupation, including compensation by the Russian Federation for the damage caused. Such national interests are based on the primacy of "defending independence and state sovereignty", which is affirmed by the updated National Security Strategy of Ukraine of September 14, 2020.

The concept of **sovereignty** is the cornerstone of legislation defining the state independence of Ukraine, as well as its laws on national security and de-occupation policy. Therefore, **the priority of national interests in the context of de-occupation policy should be determined based on their potential to contribute to the preservation of the inviolability of the state sovereignty of Ukraine.** Hence, **the implementation of the policy of de-occupation and restoration of the territorial integrity of Ukraine can in no case be carried out at the cost of limiting its state sovereignty.**

In this context **any proposals of Russia on the conditional formula "return of territories in exchange for restrictions on sovereignty"**- both on the domestic and foreign policy of Ukraine are unacceptable. Also, the restoration of territorial integrity at the cost of sovereignty would not make sense from a practical point of view, because with the loss of the ability to determine its policy, the Ukrainian state would not be able to effectively perform its fundamental functions, including guarantee the rights, freedoms, security, welfare and social protection of citizens.

The authors of the study are convinced that **Russia will be ready to liberate its occupied territories only when it is convinced that Ukraine's return to its sphere of influence is no longer possible, and a change in the regional balance of power will make the further occupation of Ukrainian territories unreasonably expensive and impractical for Kremlin strategists.** Ukraine's task is to make its contribution to a favorable change in the balance of power, primarily through the strengthening of its sovereignty in its broadest sense, the consolidation of society, and strengthening of security, defense, and economic potential.

At the same time, an important task is to prevent the escalation of the conflict and to avoid a full-scale military confrontation with Russia as an enemy superior in power and means of action. However, you need to understand that **the only effective interpretation of the popular European phrase "do not provoke Russia" should not be a policy of appeasing the aggressor, but creating conditions under which the Kremlin will consider the escalation inexpedient because the expected losses will exceed the possible gains.** Given the persistence of risks of an escalation of the conflict, it will be in Ukraine's national interest to take the following measures to help "not to provoke Russia" to use force to expand the zone of occupation of Ukrainian territories:

- constant strengthening of Ukraine's defense capabilities, providing the Armed Forces with modernized and new weapons, increasing their power and means and improving their organization, which, if necessary, would allow to inflict unacceptable losses on the enemy; growth of investments in training and the level of material support of the personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military agencies;
- strengthening the effectiveness of the counterintelligence regime in Ukraine;
- expansion of military-technical cooperation with international partners, including the procurement and receipt in the form of assistance of weapons necessary to strengthen Ukraine's defense capabilities, the establishment of joint production in the field of defense;
- maintaining and, if possible, strengthening the current level of political and diplomatic support for Ukraine in the international arena, including maintaining the sanctions regime, ensuring its rapid expansion in the event of an escalation of the conflict or further blocking of the negotiations process by Russia;
- providing support to Ukraine's international partners in negotiating formats, including the Normandy one, the "security first" formula, which, in particular, provides moving to the political provisions of the agreements only if security is implemented.

The national interest is also priority **preservation of the unitary system of the Ukrainian state**, as other options may provoke further disintegration and separatist sentiment in Ukraine.

In the context of de-occupation and subsequent reintegration of the territories temporarily occupied by Russia, it is important that their inhabitants seek to associate their future with the prospects of Ukraine. So, **carrying out effective reforms to achieve positive dynamics of economic development, increasing living standards, improving the institutions of democracy and the rule of law** is a priority national interest in the context of Ukraine's de-occupation policy.

In implementing the goals of de-occupation policy, Ukraine relies on **the support of international players**, who have the political will/willingness to join in the settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, and also have the tools to influence the Russian Federation. The key

positions in this regard will continue to belong to **Germany** and **France** who are facilitating the de-escalation negotiation process in Normandy format, making efforts to ensure de-escalation, decisively influencing the shaping of the consolidated position of the EU states. Guided by the enhanced partnership with Ukraine, which is regulated, inter alia, by the Association Agreement, the **European Union**, which in recent years has demonstrated the sustainability of sanctions policy and provides strong support for reforms that strengthen the potential and capabilities of Ukraine and gets more influence as an actor. No less important is the role of the **United States of America**. Although the United States is not directly part of the Normandy format, since the beginning of Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine, it has been in close contact with European partners, showing support for Ukraine in international institutions, including the UN Security Council, and apply sanctions against Russia.

Great Britain should be mentioned separately as a significant security contributor on the European continent. **Canada** demonstrates solidarity with American and European allies in support of Ukraine. **Turkey** is an important actor who provides support to Ukraine, as well. **Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania**, which use the levers of influence available to them to maintain European solidarity in support of the sanctions regime, as well as to shape in the EU a vision of the threats posed by Russia in Central and Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region, are directly interested in ending Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine.

Based on Washington's policies, **NATO** increasingly performs as an actor who projects a solid force outside its area of responsibility, promotes the strategic balance of forces in Eastern Europe, provides diplomatic support to Ukraine in the international arena, actively cooperates with the Armed Forces of Ukraine, supports defense sector reforms and as a partner of Ukraine strengthens Ukraine's defense capabilities, which collectively contributes to Russia's strategic deterrence.

The strategic or tactical intersection of interests and motives of the mentioned actors with Ukrainian interests, incl. regarding the de-occupation of the ARC and ORDLO, creates a generally favorable international political background for Ukraine in counteracting Russia's hybrid aggression.

The authors of the study predict that in line with the German approach **the EU will continue to focus mainly on economic and diplomatic instruments**, while **the United States, Britain, Canada, and NATO will also strengthen the security component of Ukraine's support**. Kyiv, which is interested in preserving both of these tracks, must remember that their permanence **will be determined by the effectiveness of the reform policy in Ukraine**. The idea of closer involvement of the EU and the US in the negotiation process should also be developed, cooperation with the Bucharest Nine format should be deepened, the Lublin Triangle initiative should be strengthened, and new formats such as the Central and Eastern European Conference on Emerging Security Challenges should be launched.

Ukraine's de-occupation policy is based on a **regulatory framework**, the cornerstone of which is the determination of the legal status of the occupied territories, the legal regime for them, as well as a set of measures for de-occupation at the national and international legal level.

A set of documents has been formed that determine the status of the occupied territories, regulate the state policy on them and their de-occupation, determine certain issues of relations and future reintegration. First of all, according to the logic of the study, attention was paid to long-term planning documents, as they lay the legal basis for the formation of de-occupation policy (for details - in the Annex "Basic legal acts that determine the legal status of TOT and regulate their de-occupation" Chapter 4).

Today, Ukraine has a fairly developed but imperfect legal framework that determines the legal status of the occupied territories and the legal regime that applies to them. In particular, it regulates the following issues:

- defined territory of Ukraine, which is recognized as temporarily occupied;
- The Russian Federation is recognized as an occupying power and is responsible for violating human rights and freedoms in the occupied territories;
- a special procedure for ensuring the rights and freedoms of the civilian population in the temporarily occupied territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and ORDLO has been determined;
- defined the goals of state policy to ensure the state sovereignty of Ukraine in the temporarily occupied territories and the obligations of the state to respect the rights and freedoms of citizens.

A special place in the regulatory framework is occupied by the Law of Ukraine "On the special order of local self-government in certain districts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions", designed to put into action the Minsk Protocol of September 5, 2014, but never implemented due to non-compliance by the Russian side.

Characterizing **the current state of de-occupation policy**, the authors of the study highlight its **following features/properties**:

- the settlement process continues to be carried out within the framework of the Minsk agreements. However, the expediency of their revisions as whole or individual provisions, in particular, in terms of the mechanism of returning control of Ukraine on the Ukrainian-Russian border, is increasingly outlined;
- Some initiatives of the Ukrainian side (creation of the Advisory Council with the participation of ORDLO representatives, coordination of the "Steinmeier formula") are ambiguous and contradictory. The lack of effective communication between the Ukrainian authorities and their own society regarding the agreements reached during the negotiations opens opportunities for information manipulation by the Russian Federation, which creates additional tension in society and leads to its polarization instead of consensus;
- In practice, the cases of Autonomous Republic of Crimea and ORDLO continue to be considered as separate, although officially the issue of de-occupation of Crimea is not removed from the agenda, but is called equally a priority. At the level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, an initiative has already been announced to create a negotiating platform for discussions on the return of Crimea to the jurisdiction of Ukraine;
- the issue of "war and peace" is closely linked to the domestic political discourse in Ukraine, in particular in the context of the confrontation between the current and previous authorities, which harms the de-occupation policy, which becomes dependent on the struggle of political parties and politicians;
- There is still no integral vision of the strategy of de-occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and ORDLO as a comprehensive set of measures in domestic and foreign policy. The vision of the future of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and ORDLO after their de-occupation and reintegration into Ukraine remains uncertain.

In general, **the evolution of the regulatory framework largely reflects the miscalculations and fluctuations of state de-occupation policy**: the formation of the regulatory framework was mostly reactive, resulting in significant gaps in the legislation. The current regulatory framework is focused mainly on repelling Russian aggression, rather than on the implementation of de-occupation. The controversial law "On the creation of a free economic zone "Crimea" and on the peculiarities of economic activity in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine ", which has repeatedly been criticized for inconsistency with existing realities continues to be valid. Long-term planning documents that will reflect the de-occupation strategy are missing. At the same time, a positive precedent was set for the satisfaction of Ukraine's claims to the Russian Federation for compensation for damages caused by the occupation of Autonomous Republic of Crimea and ORDLO. The UN International Court of Justice has recognized its jurisdiction in Ukraine's case against Russia.

Currently, the task is to create a regulatory framework aimed at strengthening Ukraine's de-occupation policy and preparation for the return of Ukraine's jurisdiction to the temporarily occupied territories. The formation of such a base will demonstrate Ukraine's intentions and readiness to act exclusively in the legal field to the population of these territories, as well as to the world community.

In order to take into account previous developments, the study conducted a comparative analysis of ten previously published **plans/proposals for the settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict**, prepared by foreign and Ukrainian diplomats, politicians, experts. After analyzing the pros and cons of such plans/proposals, as well as their possible intersection of conditional "red lines" in terms of Ukrainian national interests, it was noted that **the main shortcomings of foreign plans are a lenient attitude to the actions of the Russian Federation and loyalty to attempts to impose restrictions on Ukrainian sovereignty** - most of the conditions are imposed on Ukraine, not Russia. In fact, there is a willingness not to take into account Moscow's previous aggressive actions, not to look for mechanisms to bring it to justice for violating international law. Regarding **Ukrainian "plans", their main drawback is the unrealistic implementation of certain provisions, incomplete consideration, and inherent declarativeness, sometimes sensitivity to the political situation.**

The need to analyze previous "peace plans" comes not only from the desire to understand the motives and views of third parties, the reaction of Ukrainian society and politicians to the proposals already voiced, but also from the fact that **some ideas, even rejected plans, still penetrate the political discourse both in Ukraine and in European countries.** Some of these ideas "emerge" from time to time during public discussions, closed consultations, or already in proposals under new authorship. Such ideas include Ukraine's renunciation of the EU and NATO membership in the near future, the easing of sanctions against Russia, the search for compromises on European security issues under the domination of large powers, and so on.

The authors of the study consider it necessary to take into account **lessons in resolving other international conflicts**, the analysis of which, in particular, proves the counter-effectiveness of direct negotiations with representatives of the self-proclaimed authorities and occupation administrations instead of the state which is party to the conflict. Thus, the example of Transnistria shows that ***the start of negotiations with separatists' / occupation administrations not only gives the latter de facto legitimacy and changes the status of a real party to the conflict to a mediator*** but does not create any advantages for settlement: the negotiation process reduces the dynamics, which leads to delays in decisions on de-occupation or reintegration. At the same time, the traditional practice of the Russian Federation is de facto coercion (as the cases of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine prove) to conduct direct negotiations with proxy entities, formalize the participation of self-proclaimed authorities in the negotiation process as a "party to the conflict."

Previous experience of other conflicts also shows that ***tactics of "advances" or de facto unilateral implementation of the Minsk agreements by Ukraine will be unjustified*** and will not lead to a peaceful settlement. In the absence of real bilateral steps and compromises, the option of "freezing" the negotiations may be strategically more advantageous to Ukraine than the tactics of "advances" to the Russian side.

As the available experience proves, ***initiating a revision of the initial package of agreements between the parties is quite an adequate tool*** for finding ways of mutually acceptable compromise. Therefore, the idea of updating the Minsk documents will not mean a way out of the appropriate negotiation format, but it may be an attempt to bring it out of the deadlock.

Wide ***international support for the victim state of aggression*** is one of the key factors in ending the international armed conflict and restoring territorial integrity, but it ***cannot be limited to political and economic pressure on the aggressor state***. International experience shows that ***the availability of instruments of coercion to peace*** (including international missions) ***significantly increases the chances of settlement in accordance with international law***. At the same time, the deployment of an international peacekeeping contingent (apart from the mandate of the "peace enforcement" mission) is more in line with the "freezing of the conflict" and a deterrent, but not de-occupation and/or reintegration. The mission on the line of demarcation helps to lock the "separate" existence of separatist enclaves.

The importance and the effectiveness of the international mission for resolving the conflict and restoring the territorial integrity of the state also increase if the mission is authorized with the function of a transitional administration. In this way, the necessary time is created for the transition from demilitarization to a comprehensive political settlement; social and political tensions between the parties to the conflict are reduced; the necessary organizational component is provided both for the demilitarization of the region and for political steps, in particular, elections. The transitional administration (with clearly defined functions and terms of office) can perform the function of post-conflict transit of power in the event of a ceasefire and the beginning of the dismantling of separatist/occupation structures of power.

Granting "special status" in one form or another in the framework of reintegration with a high degree of probability not only does not guarantee the settlement of the conflict but also ***may lead to political, cultural, and administrative separation of the relevant areas from other regions of the state***, reduce the ability of the central government to influence the processes in these areas.

The authors of the study emphasize the need **rethinking the policy of de-occupation** of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and ORDLO, primarily given that the ***RF intensifies efforts to achieve recognition of the so-called "DPR" and "LPR"*** as equal participants in the peace negotiations (currently they are not officially involved in the Normandy and Minsk processes), ***to get rid of the status of a participant in the conflict, changing it to the role of "mediator"*** (or "peacemaker"). Moscow seeks to take advantage of the vulnerability of the Ukrainian authorities, which voiced optimistic deadlines for settlement and demonstrated readiness for risky "advances" to the Russian side.

The new de-occupation policy has to ***offer a clear and acceptable algorithm of actions*** on the restoration of sovereignty over the temporarily occupied territories and their subsequent reintegration, taking into account the whole range of motivations of Russia. Also, the formation ***of a systematic and comprehensive vision of the hierarchy of goals of de-occupation policy***, based on the priority of national interests of Ukraine and taking into account the available opportunities and potential, lessons of previous policy and international experience, existing realities and forecasts of the world, regional and national situation is needed.

Rethinking the approaches, goals, and capabilities of this policy, as well as the current internal and external situation in Ukraine, points to ***the need for a conceptual transition from a pure defense and counteraction policy to a proactive new de-occupation policy***, the ultimate

goal of which should be the reintegration of the Ukrainian territories temporarily occupied by Russia (taking into account the specifics of the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and ORDLO).

The authors offer several diverse and multilevel **recommendations synthesized as guidelines for the formation of a renewed de-occupation policy of Ukraine**, determining behavior in relations with Russia and counteracting its hybrid aggression, in particular, with the participation of international partners. The guidelines are conditionally divided by subject areas.

In this case, the authors determine **the de-occupation policy of Ukraine as a state policy on de-occupation of the parts of the sovereign territory of Ukraine occupied by the Russian Federation** (the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (the Crimean Peninsula, parts of the Black and Azov Seas) and ORDLO (parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions), and possibly other parts) **and overcoming the negative socio-political and socio-economic consequences of the occupation within the framework of the undeclared (hybrid) war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, restoration of the constitutional order of Ukraine in these territories, obtaining appropriate compensation from the Russian Federation for damage to Ukraine.**

Deoccupation policy provides **two conditional stages** (with their inherent periods):

— **Stage of de-occupation:**

- **«de-escalation»** (Deployment of an international peacekeeping operation, withdrawal of occupation troops, demilitarization and elimination of the line of contact, the liberation of the TOT from the occupying forces)

- **«administrative transit»** (exemption from occupation administrations, the introduction of a transitional international administration)

- **«restoration»** (return of control over the state border, restoration of the constitutional order of Ukraine in the former TOTs, restoration of the system of local authorities of Ukraine, return to the places of permanent residence of IDPs, certification of Ukrainian citizenship of former TOTs, return of former TOTs to the Ukrainian security, legal, economic and information space)

- **«decollaboration»** (expelling collaborators and proxies from local authorities, administrative structures, and government agencies)

- **«restitution»** (ensuring compensation by the Russian Federation for property losses caused to Ukraine and its citizens (and legal entities), restoration of property rights, return/compensation of property)

— **Reintegration stage:**

- **«decentralization»** (creation of local self-government bodies based on a new administrative territorial structure and a new procedure for managing regional development and organization of local self-government, etc.)

- **«renaissance»** (Regional economic and social revival (including - through international assistance programs, donors/investors), ensuring the prospects of sustainable development)

- **«democratization»** (restoration of pluralistic democracy, freedom of conscience, speech and thought, the full return of former TOTs to the Ukrainian political, social, and cultural space)

As international experience proves, **the final stage of the de-occupation process - the reintegration process should provide for a certain transition period** (from 5 to 15 years), during which the introduction of certain regulations will be postponed (temporarily suspended) in the former temporarily occupied territories (for example, military service and work in central executive bodies, law enforcement and judicial authorities, special services, electoral participation in parliamentary and presidential elections, etc.). **This gradualness in the process of de-occupation is necessary to avoid the threat of the fictitious end of the conflict and large-scale destabilization of the state as a whole.**

The principles of the strategy of the de-occupation policy of Ukraine should be:

— **proactivity and transparency:** the transition from responding to the initiatives of the Russian side to the formation of its proposals, active promotion with the participation of international organizations of issues related to human rights and freedoms in the occupied territories, as well as the environmental situation in Autonomous Republic of Crimea and ORDLO; building an effective communication policy both inside and outside the country, informing the public as widely as possible about the agreements reached;

— **complexity and systematic approach:** solving tasks through a combination of various means (military, diplomatic, economic, information, etc.), consistency in setting tasks and defending national interests in relation to the temporarily occupied territories;

— **legality and legitimacy**: further development of the legal framework, elimination of the existing legal gaps, adoption of a set of laws aimed at reintegration of the temporarily occupied territories.

The new de-occupation policy must take into account both "hard" and "soft power" ways and means of its conduct. "Soft power" can be widely used in the categories of both subjects of the policy of liberation / de-occupation:

- **"fight for people"** - education of the inhabitants of the temporarily occupied territories with the help of informational, humanitarian, cultural events, increase of information broadcasting on the occupied territories, creation of sites and youtube channels, etc. The main emphasis should be on how Ukraine sees the future of the ARC and ORDLO;

- **"fight for territories"** - Continuation of the practice of lawsuits to international courts to get the compensation from the Russian Federation for damages caused by the occupation, promoting increased international pressure on Russia for human rights violations, conducting active information work in other countries to create a sustainable image of Russia as an aggressor, promoting initiatives in security areas that may be of interest to international partners and contribute to the formation of an alliance of countries with anti-Russian positions.

So, ***carrying out effective reforms in order to achieve positive dynamics of economic development, increasing living standards, improving the institutions of democracy and the rule of law*** is a priority general tool in the context of Ukraine's de-occupation policy.

It is necessary to maximize the monitoring/observation and documentation of the whole set of decisions, actions, and behavior of the occupation administrations in the ARC and ORDLO - for appropriate use in legal (including - international legal), diplomatic, informational, humanitarian, internal political, defense activity of Ukraine.

The de-occupation strategy should take into account the current impossibility of liberating the TOT exclusively by military means in the current military superiority of Russia. Thus, ***de-occupation will provide***, among other, ***asymmetric measures aimed at weakening the occupying power*** and its positions in the temporarily occupied territories, ***as well as strengthening Ukraine's respective own capabilities.***

Note that **this study** conceived and implemented precisely as an analytical development (rather than a "settlement plan" or a "de-occupation strategy"), **designed to expand the possibilities of using analytical findings for further integrated work.** Without claiming to be exhaustive, **the authors initiate a reasoned professional discussion** to find ways to further improve the policy of de-occupation and verify its strategy, as well as to convincingly determine the question: what are the causes of human, material, and territorial losses in the South and East of Ukraine - internal separatist manifestations/conflicts or war with Russia/Russian aggression? What are the differences between Russia's occupation policy towards the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and ORDLO, and should there be different strategies for the de-occupation of these Ukrainian regions? The answers to these and other basic questions are crucial for the formation of the political vision, position, and behavior not only of Ukraine, but also of our partners, and the achievement of domestic and international consensus.

The realities show that unfortunately there is still no clear awareness of the importance of these questions, let alone convincing clarity about the answers to them, which should be the basis for the formation of appropriate decisions and actions neither in Ukrainian politics nor in society in general. And if the eclecticism of public perception is generally a natural phenomenon for a young democratic society, the ***mosaic and even chaotic assessments, which are sometimes demonstrated by the politicum and the establishment, pose a threat to security and statehood itself and have a negative impact on the shaping of public opinion and social mobilization, they do not allow political consensus and distort by their contradictions both the process of shaping and the content of structured through the prism of goal-setting state policy on de-occupation; create a favorable ground for heterogeneous external hybrid subversive effects.***

Based on the understanding of the threats posed by such a situation to Ukraine's national security, at least the political establishment must finally make "in which year of war" intellectual and willful efforts to overcome the contradictions in order to reach a consensus. The reasons for this are obvious: ***the cause of Ukraine's human and material losses is not some ephemeral "conflict", but a very real war with Russia, caused by the latter's armed aggression; the cause of territorial losses is not separatism, which in Ukraine has never gone beyond the political margins, but Russian military expansion. Neither one nor the other was provoked by Ukraine, which is waging a purely defensive war*** for restoration of sovereignty and territorial integrity in full compliance with the international law.

At the same time, neither a "truce" nor a "freezing of the conflict" can be the ultimate goal, because they will not end the war. ***The goal of Ukraine's de-occupation policy should be to liberate all sovereign Ukrainian territories occupied by the Russian Federation - actual de-occupation and reintegration.*** To do this, Ukraine needs effective governance and civilian mobilization, a stable politicum and society, a healthy economy, a strong defense industry, reliable counterintelligence, counter-sabotage and counter-terrorism regimes, the strength, capabilities, and skills of the armed forces, and diplomatic skills.

Partner organizations:

**Foreign Policy Council "UKRAINIAN PRISM"
Research NGO "Strategic and Security Studies Group"
Eastern European Security Research Initiative Foundation
Pylyp Orlyk Institute for Democracy
Black Sea Center for Security Environment Research
Ilko Kucheriv's Democratic Initiatives Foundation
Center for Global Studies "Strategy XXI"
OPORA Public Network**

Authors:

**Sergiy GERASYMCHUK Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism"
Yaroslav MATIYCHYK Research NGO "Strategic and Security Studies Group"
Maksym KHYLKO Eastern European Security Research Initiative Foundation
Artem FYLYPENKO Black Sea Center for Security Environment Research
Hanna SHELEST Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism"
Maria ZOLKINA Ilka Kucheriv's Democratic Initiatives Foundation
Natalia BELITSER Pylyp Orlyk Institute for Democracy
Hennadiy MAKSAK Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism"
Oleksandr TYTARCHUK Eastern European Security Research Initiative Foundation
Vitaliy MARTYNYUK Center for Global Studies "Strategy XXI"
Oleksandr KLYUZHEV Civic Network "Opora"
Mykhailo HONCHAR Center for Global Studies "Strategy XXI"
Yulia KAZDOBINA Ukrainian Foundation for Security Studies
Oleksandr KRAYEV Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism"**

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