

Modern Trends in the Armed Forces of Ukraine Transformation toward NATO Standards

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Abstract

The article is concerned with the study of current trends which are applied by the Ukrainian Armed Forces on their way toward Euro-Atlantic Standards. The main purpose of this study is to underline the scope and main directions of the UAFs transformation agenda and critical challenges faced during introduction of the best practice and procedures into military service. The Ukrainian defence reform is expected to result in the establishment of effective, mobile defence forces, equipped with modern weapon systems, military and special hardware, able to guarantee national security and defense as well as provide an adequate and flexible response to military threats to the national security of Ukraine sustainably using the available operational (combat) capabilities and resources of the nation (1).

The conducted study allowed determining the effect of transformation in the main dimensions of the Ukrainian Armed Forces development and finding out the points of cooperation with partner nations. In addition, the main challenges on the prospects of reform have been identified, among which there is a need to overcome the current autocracy and address demand for new type of leadership and quality of military personnel. It is concluded that new approaches have taken by the current Ukrainian Defense Authority opens a new window of opportunity to intensify reformation efforts, which will allow Armed Forces of Ukraine to meet NATO's membership criteria as well as satisfy level of national security and defense in the most effective way.

Key words: national security, defense reform, national defense, defense forces, armed forces, equipment, modern weapons, military and special hardware, military threats, combat capabilities, resources.

Introduction

Since 2014 while having to respond to the Russian military aggression, Ukraine also had to restore its Armed Forces' combat capabilities and effectiveness to protect its territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. Under such condition, Ministry of Defense and General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine had to develop and improve legislative base and other defense internal regulations covering the entire defense sector. In current moment the key issue is to continue building up the strength of all sphere of defense sector. Such strategic mission is one of top priorities for the Ukrainian state, and the actual level of security of population will rely upon how

effectively and efficiently the Ukrainian Leadership would address this matter.

One of Ukraine's most reliable partners in security and defense sectors are North Atlantic Treaty Organization and its individual members, which has been traditionally supporting Ukraine in carrying out crucial internal reforms aimed at achieving not only stable economic and political development, but also gaining appropriate capability and capacity for internal and external defense. NATO remains convinced that mutually beneficial Ukraine – NATO cooperation will continue to be a key importance to the security in the Euro-Atlantic region and beyond as well as

fundamental base for modern, more effectively managed, democratically and militarily responsible to security threats defense system. NATO standards are foremost about interaction and mutual support in a world where new security challenges arise and new threats emerge, which single nation could not handle it.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

The relations between Ukraine and NATO have been widely studied in modern expert, scientific and professional societies. In recent years, especially among security experts, there has been considerable interest to the issue of modern trends in the Armed Forces transformation, lessons learned from introducing Euro-Atlantic Standards within defense forces of the Central-Eastern European countries and particularly in Ukraine. Among the Ukrainian researchers, the perspectives of Ukrainian aspiration, Alliance standards introduction were studied by prominent scholars and practitioners such as: Leonid Poliakov (2019), Ihor Kabanenko (2020) and Oleksandr Soskin (2007). The implications of integration of Ukraine to NATO for Euro-Atlantic security are thoroughly analysed in presentations and publications of the President of Potomac Foundation Centre (USA), Doctor Phillip Karber (2018, 2019), Pershing Chair in Strategic Studies at the Centre for European Policy Analysis (USA) and Distinguished Fellow at the Royal United Services

Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI), Lieutenant-General (retired) F.B.Hodges (2019, 2020). The key issues surrounding NATO enlargement and its outcomes are also pointed out by Ambassador John Herbst (2018, 2019), Director Dinu Patriciu Eurasia Center, the Atlantic Council, and former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine and Marcin Kozeil (2013), Director of the NATO Liaison Office in Ukraine. However, there is still a considerable ambiguity with regard to defining the practical impact of the above-mentioned matters to the Euro-Atlantic security and relation with Russia. These issues require further thorough scientific studies and researches.

Setting objectives. The purpose of the article is to determine the most critical reforms which have to be done within the Ukrainian military in order to fulfill NATO membership criteria and implement Euro-Atlantic standards at day-to-day business practices. This goal requires defining a number of related **strategic** and **operational** political-military **objectives**. In order to develop an effective model of engagement with NATO in this regard, first of all, it is necessary to analyze the current status of interaction, aims and prospects for further cooperation, as well as to identify the key reforms multipliers and enablers as well as to examine their impact through the main dimensions of the Ukraine – NATO relations.

Material and methods

An effective model of Ukraine-NATO engagements in the context of Euro-Atlantic integration should be taken into account not only fresh approaches in introduction the levels of interaction between the Ukrainian and NATO subjects matter experts, but also above all the degree, their influence on Euro-Atlantic security and defense. This model should be based on a synergetic approach, which provides an opportunity to take into account the latest changes in the Ukrainian and NATO security

environment and the peculiarities of multilateral cooperation within NATO. The materials of this article allow us to identify a number of reasons that motivate the parties' engagements and affect its outcomes. To determine the degree of influence of these reasons on the development of transformation agenda in Ukraine, it is necessary to study their effect through the main dimensions of Ukraine-NATO relations, identifying the common interests of the parties in each individual area of engagement.

Results and discussion

1. The main reasons influencing necessity of introduction NATO Standards to the Armed Forces of Ukraine. According to the NATO

Lisbon Summit declaration a stable, democratic and economically prosperous Ukraine is an important factor for Euro-Atlantic security.

The results, achieved by Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, the Czech Republic and other new member of the Alliance, perfectly attest to the fact that implementation of Euro-Atlantic standards is the easiest and, at the same time, the most successful way to develop modern and effective security and defense sector as well as efficient free market economic system. There are number of main reasons for the transition of the UAFs toward NATO standards. Among them:

1.1 Political reason. Political dimension is the most critical one due to not only provision of Washington Treaty, but also democratically oriented political decision making process within Alliance based on consensus where countries' voice is equal. The foreword of Washington Treaty underlines common political value and practices of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization: "They are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area". Many NATO standards are not directly related to the activities of the Armed Forces, but are loud enough to say that the country has switched to them in order to be a member of this club. The most important example of such standards is the introduction and effective function of civilian democratic control and parliamentary oversight over the Armed Forces. Civil society and political leadership have to know and control how the military develops and functions. Only with strong civilian control and sufficient parliamentary oversight, military could be effective in deterrence of any threats and serve national interests of the country (Leonid Poliakov, 2020).

This political dimension also includes the principles of peaceful settlement of conflicts and the ability and desire to contribute to joint NATO operations and missions.

1.2 Technical and administrative (organizational) reasons. Armed Forces that have implemented NATO standards are fighting more effectively. They are more efficient and better prepared and trained. The transition to these standards, combat capability

improvement and combat readiness of the Armed Forces are linked. NATO's approach to the force building up and capabilities development, planning and application of troops are the most effective and has already been proven in practice. There are countries that are not members of NATO, but they have implemented Euro-Atlantic standards deeply and widely into the Armed Forces and Ministry of Defense functions. Bright example such nations are Sweden, Finland and Australia. Their Armed Forces are considered by the NATO subject matter expert one of the most capable. (Leonid Poliakov, 2020)

1.3 Interoperability and compatibility reason. Despite key importance of political processes within Alliance, the implementation of NATO interoperability and compatibility standards are a priority number one for the any Armed Forces. NATO conducts political, technical consultations based on common interest, joint and combined military exercises with member countries as well as partners, participate in different type of crisis response missions and operations in Euro-Atlantic area and beyond. When the structure, procedures, principles, terminology, functionality, command and control systems of the Ukrainian brigade and the brigades of NATO countries coincide, it means they will understand each other and effectively perform and successfully execute common tasks. From the other hand it allows greater military interaction, participation in different type of the military missions, operations and training activities abroad and in the country, which will lead to deeper integration into the all Alliance's systems. The active national position in this field will strengthen the overall operational capabilities of the UAFs and facilitate a bigger scale of international engagements of Ukraine in general in accordance with national interests. (Leonid Poliakov, 2020)

2. Categories of NATO Standards for the Armed Forces of Ukraine to be more resilient and effective.

Currently there are **three categories** of NATO Standards which could have influence on multidimensional improvement of the Ministry

of Defense and Armed Forces of Ukraine in following areas: defense forces management, resources planning and management, combat capability developments, logistic support and professionalization and operational military reserve. The **first category** includes **technical standards** that include the basics for armaments and munitions, military and special hardware and software etc. The **second category** is **operational standardization**, which means the ability to work together and support the joint actions of allies and partners and their entire defense forces. The **third category** is **administrative standards**, which enable NATO countries and partners to have common approaches to administrative procedures, principles, practices and management techniques.

“These standards apply not only to military and technical requirements. It is also about the standards of democracy, the rule of law, good governance, human rights, fundamental freedoms and a functioning free market economy. They also include a commitment to civilian control and democratic oversight of security and defense sector institutions” (NATO Representation in Ukraine, 2019).

3. Strategic directions and operational political-military objectives within processes of introduction NATO Standards into the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Based on overall defense reform aim, 28 **operational objectives** for the reform have been identified and split into **five strategic directions**. All operational objectives as well as strategic directions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine development have been elaborated based on provision of following national documents of strategic planning: Law on National Security of Ukraine (2018), National Security Strategy (2016, 2020), National Military Strategy and Strategic Defense Bulletin (2016). The reforms in Armed Forces of Ukraine are comprehensively supported by many Western countries and international organizations, first of all and foremost NATO. Cooperation with NATO members and partners covers a range of areas, including advisory support, development of joint training programs for Ukrainian military

personnel, development of legislative initiatives, technical assistance etc. The Law on National Security has significant implications for the entire security and defense sector. The adapted LNS foresee that three laws in force are revoked, while their provisions are consolidated into one law. The laws in question are “On the basics of the national security of Ukraine”, “On democratic civilian control over the military organization and law enforcement agencies of the State” and “On organizing of Defense planning”. This approved law regulates the system of the national security as well as the powers of each of its actors including the President, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Armed Forces, the General Staff, the Security Service, and the State Border Guard Service etc. The former head of the Ukrainian Parliament Andriy Parubiy emphasized that “the law is important to counteract the Russian aggression, reform the security sector as well as is a step forward on Ukraine’s way towards NATO”. Also, this legislation act is a framework law and thus defines only the general principles of the national security system as well as outlines “the fundamental national interests” – state sovereignty and territorial integrity, Ukraine’s integration into the European political, economic and legal area, membership in the EU and NATO. The National Security Strategy of Ukraine was several times discussed with the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and sets the goal of achieving full membership in both organizations (Ihor Kabanenko, 2020). Currently, the Ministry of Defense is working on the draft of new National Military Strategy and Strategic Defense Bulletin of Ukraine, based on the current doctrinal principles of the NSS, enacted by the President of Ukraine on September 14, 2020. These documents will focus on developing a special partnership with NATO to gain a full membership in the Alliance. Strategic Defense Bulletin is a roadmap for Defense Reform, which is based on National Military Strategy and Ukraine-NATO Partnership Goals (MoD, 2020).

The main priority in the field of supporting the UAFs transformation agenda toward NATO

standards in 2021 is improving national legislation, specifically in term of Law on the Security Service of Ukraine, Law on State secrets and management of classified information.

3.1 Strategic Direction – Defense forces management. Strategic goal is unified command of the defense forces in line with the principles and standards adopted by NATO nations. The end-state in this journey, a defense forces management system is established based on the new division of authorities, functions, tasks, duties and responsibilities in the area of defense in line with the principles of NATO member-states. Operational objectives are: democratic civilian control of defense forces by increasing effectiveness of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine and strengthening relations with the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (the Ukrainian Parliament) and civil society; Improvement of the defense forces management system; improvement of the command and control system of the defense forces through the separation of troops (force) generation and force application; establishment of an effective operational (combat) command and control, communication, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) system; improvement of the cyber defense and information protection system; increasing the effectiveness of the existing anti-corruption agencies and independent control institutions in order to reduce corruption risks in the activities of the defense forces; establishment and development of strategic communications capabilities of the defense forces as a part of the national and inter-agency strategic communications system focused on support the development and implementation of the security and defense policies of Ukraine and achievement of national defense goals. In addition, Ukraine must develop its own C2 system, based on the agreed PARP PGs, the Law on National Security (LNS) as well as agreed NATO C2 principles, and tailored to specific Ukrainian needs. In accordance with the C2 Transformation process, the clarification and delineation of roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders in C4 domain continues. Since the beginning of 2020 significant progress has been made in the restructuring of the

General Staff to the J-structure, separating force generation from force employment, and the separation of the Commander in Chief and the Chief of the General Staff. Joint Forces Command, Medical Forces Command, Command of the communications and cyber security, Logistic Command has been introduced. In addition, the establishment of IT Directorate at the MOD should facilitate a more coordinated approach in IT transformation strategy and policy development, in line with both NATO and modern business best practices.

3.2 Strategic Direction – Resources planning and management. Strategic goal is an effective policy, planning and resource management system in the defense sector based on modern Euro-Atlantic practices. The development of defense planning as part of the national defense and security planning system will provide for a clear division of responsibilities among public agencies with regard to planning activity within the assigned mandates as well as the introduction of modern methods used by the Alliance to improve their own defense capabilities, particularly the principle of “comprehensive approach to defense”, capability-based planning, mission-oriented training and logistics support to meet the national defense needs. Expected result lying down around the processes of policy development, resource planning and management are harmonized with the Euro-Atlantic principles and ensure creation of adequately trained, equipped and supported defense forces capable of effectively performing the tasks that are set out in the strategic documents on the national security of Ukraine, defending Ukraine and participating in international peacekeeping and security operations through the development of necessary capabilities within the available resources. Operational objectives are: introducing the process of defense planning in the defense sector in line with Euro-Atlantic principles and procedures; establishment of an integrated risk management system as part of the defense planning system; establishment of the capabilities development planning for the defense forces; Introduction of Euro-Atlantic

principles and approaches to budget planning into the budgetary policy in the defense area; establishment of an integrated procurement system in the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine; Improving the mechanism for preparation and implementation of the public defense contract; Introducing the system to manage and develop infrastructure; Relieving the Ministry of Defense from inappropriate functions.

3.3 Strategic Direction - Combat capability development. Strategic goal is operational (combat, special) capabilities of the defense forces needed to guarantee repelling an Russian armed aggression, defend the country and support peace and international security. Expected results assuming that joint capabilities of defense forces will ensure a firm repulse of an armed aggression and effectively respond to military threats to the national security; defend Ukraine, protect its sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability; comply with Euro-Atlantic standards and NATO membership criteria; ensure capabilities of the defense forces to participate in peace keeping and international security missions. Operational objectives are: improve doctrinal documents on the force training and application of AFU and other components of the defense forces implementation, their joint training and on achievement of interoperability with the Armed Forces of NATO and the EU member-nations; optimization of organizational structure and composition of Defense Forces, classification of effective combat strength of the Armed Forces based on the level of readiness to perform the assigned objectives during the time of peace; unification of weapon systems and special hardware as well as repair, modernization and procurement of new type for the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other components of the Defense Forces; creating special operations forces as a separate branch in line with NATO standards; establishment of the effective military intelligence system based on NATO principles and standards; restoration of the national naval potential; reforming the military law enforcement service in AFU into the military police.

3.4 Strategic Direction – Logistic support and

standardization systems. Strategic goal is an integrated logistics and medical support systems capable of supply all the components of defense forces. Modernization of logistic system expects to have single effective logistics system of defense forces which is established in accordance with NATO guidelines, standards and instructions on logistics. Such logistics management system has to be developed for defense forces and available logistical stocks are stored in consistency with the standards that allow performing assigned tasks in the time of war, special period and peace. Operational objectives are: improving logistics support of the defense forces; building a medical support system to provide necessary medical assistance for all the tasks of the defense forces. The new structure of the J-4 Logistics Directorate in the GS is consistent with NATO standards and allows the Chief of Logistics to analyze, forecast and direct the development of a functioning logistic system in the framework of short-term and medium-term defense planning. Improvements of the standardization management capability of AFU are clearly recognizable with regulations adopted, and information management systems delivered, early in 2020. 172 NATO standards had already been adopted. 117 national and military normative legal acts and normative documents have been developed in connection with 97 NATO standards. In total (within the framework of the Partnership Goals and beyond), 246 NATO standards were implemented through the development of 266 national and military documents.

3.5 Strategic Direction – Professionalization and operational military reserve system. Strategic goal is creation fully professional defense forces and establishing the necessary operational military reserve system. Expected results: professionally trained military personnel with high moral posture, capable of performing complex professional military tasks; defense forces are manned with trained and motivated personnel; reserve corps of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is established, maintained and prepared for deployment; it is capable of conducting offensive (counter-offensive) operations, augmenting groupings of troops (forces) on the

most dangerous areas, ensure rotation of troops (forces), their replenishment and replacement in case of loss of combat capability. Among key operational objectives of this direction are: development of social and humanitarian support system of personnel; improvement of military education and personnel training system; reforming the mobilization system and establishment of operational military reserve system; establishment of modern HR management system. In the existing framework of defense reform put special efforts for implementation of specific initiatives and projects focusing on most crucial issues of Armed Forces activities such as. As for today, NATO representatives in Ukraine underlying significant progress which has been made within

PME area, with the development of PME project and implementation plan to 2025. A professional, competent and effective NCO corps is a critical component of any defense reform. The main focus in 2020 was NCO career development and enhancement of the NCO leadership, specialist and instructors' courses. Gender Advisor (GENAD) positions were established in some UAF commands, including in the offices of the CHOD, Naval Forces Command, and Air Force Command. The Ministry of Defense has agreed to improve Military Career Transition system but not yet adopted the necessary HRM mechanisms to support service leavers in their transition to civilian career advance of their release date.

Conclusions

Supporting Ukraine's ongoing security and defense sectors reform remains one of the main priorities of Ukraine – NATO cooperation. Approximately 10% of NATO's overall partnership budget is used to support activities in Ukraine on annual basis, confirming NATO's continued support to the UAF reform and development process (NRU, 2020). This reform is meant to make security and defense sectors more modern, better managed and more adequate to the national and international security threats. In this context introduction of the Alliance standards within the Armed Forces of Ukraine is getting special value. The key drivers of relations that contribute to such transformation are factors relevant to both parties. On one hand, it is vital need for Euro-Atlantic as well as Ukrainian security – deterrence of the current Russian Federation aggressive policy. On other hand, "special partnership" between Ukraine and NATO could facilitate gaining higher Ukrainian national military resilience and the ability of society and the State to quickly adapt to changes in the security environment and maintain sustainable functioning, in particular by minimizing external and internal vulnerabilities in term of implementing NATO standards. Due to this, the Ukraine's priorities for bilateral cooperation with NATO should be driven by development of

strategic relations with key foreign partners, especially with the EU and NATO and their member states, including the United States, Poland, UK along with pragmatic cooperation with other countries and international organizations, based on Ukraine's national interests. Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account some skepticism which exist among western political leaders especially in Germany, France, Netherlands and Belgium regarding Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration policy. In order to counter this, in addition to continue work on NATO standards introduction to defense forces, "Ukraine should develop a clear and transparent monitoring mechanism for the implementation of NATO standards, complete with realistic and achievable short- and medium-term goals. Such a step would bring much-needed clarity to government communications and enable state officials to speak with one voice on what is a hugely complex subject that lies at the heart of Ukraine's wider geopolitical strategy. It would also help to remove the necessity of issuing periodic clarifications regarding the country's continued commitment to the Euro-Atlantic course established in 2014 (Tetiana Gaiduk, Head of Communications at the Kyiv-based TRUMAN Agency, 2020). Having analysed the proposed factors and their impact on the

Ukraine-NATO relations through the main dimensions of transformation, we can conclude that the interests of Ukraine and NATO complement each other. This, in turn, opens new opportunities for Ukraine to maximally satisfy its national interests in the context of building modern defense forces and better ensuring national security.

Prospects for further research. A perspective area for further research is to develop predictive scenarios for further cooperation between Ukraine and NATO in term of the Ukrainian Armed Forces transition toward Euro-Atlantic standards with respect to the framework, presented in this article.

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