



---

# **RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT: PROSPECTS AND PARAMETERS OF UN PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN DONBASS**

---

Materials for the Trilateral Expert Meeting  
14-17 August 2018, Cadenabbia, Italy

This publication was prepared by the Razumkov Centre with the assistance and support of the Konrad Adenauer-Stiftung Office in Ukraine as part of the project for Russian-Ukrainian-German dialogue

Kyiv, August 2018

Project Manager – Mykhailo Pashkov  
Editors – Valeriya Klymenko, Anna Pashkova  
Photo Editor – Andriy Khopta  
Design and Layout – Oleksandr Shaptala

Kateryna Bilotserkovets and Yuri Silvestrow, employees of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Office in Ukraine, took part in preparation of this publication.

This publication was prepared by the Razumkov Centre with the support of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Ukraine Office as part of the Project for Ukraine-Germany-Russia Dialogue.

This publication, prepared by the Razumkov Centre with support of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Ukraine Office, presents materials to be discussed at the regular 8<sup>th</sup> meeting between Ukrainian, Russian and German experts. Starting from 2015, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has been holding regular trilateral expert discussions twice a year – in Germany (Berlin) and in Italy (Cadenabbia) – dedicated to the issues of Russia-Ukraine conflict settlement/minimisation. In four years, expert discussions have covered the following topics:

**“Conflict Resolution – Action Ukraine, Germany and the EU Need to Take”** (March, 2015)

**“EU-Ukraine-Russia Relations Amid the Protracted Conflict”** (August, 2015)

**“Ukraine Conflict Settlement, Post-Conflict Development Scenarios and the Impact of the Syrian War”** (February, 2016)

**“Paths, Scenarios and Prospects for the Russia-Ukraine Conflict Settlement”** (August, 2016)

**“Eastern Ukraine – the Forgotten War? Prospects of the Minsk Agreements and the Normandy Format”** (February, 2017)

**“The Russia-Ukraine Conflict in the Context of Global Change”** (August, 2017)

**“Development Amid a Protracted Crisis. The Fifth Year of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict”** (February, 2018)

**“The Russia-Ukraine Conflict – Will There Be a UN Peacekeeping Mission?”** (August, 2018)

This publication contains opinions, assessments and forecasts by German, Ukrainian and Russian experts on the prospects of a UN peacekeeping mission in Eastern Ukraine, and a summary of certain proposals and recommendations as to the parameters, composition and deployment area of the UN mission to Donbass.

Selected results of sociological studies conducted by the Razumkov Centre in the period of the Russia-Ukraine conflict (2014-2018) are also included herein.

The opinions and assessments stated during the interviews represent personal positions and do not necessarily correspond with the positions of the Razumkov Centre.

Please provide a proper reference to this publication when using the information contained therein.

Address of the Razumkov Centre: 16 Lavrskaya St., 2nd floor, Kyiv 01015

Phone: (044) 201-11-98

Fax: (044) 201-11-99

Website: [www.razumkov.org.ua](http://www.razumkov.org.ua)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/therazumkov/>

ISBN 978-966-2050-15-8

© Razumkov Centre, 2018

© Zapovit Publisher, 2018

---

# CONTENT

## **PARAMETERS OF THE UN PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN DONBASS: EXPERT INTERVIEWS**

*Summary of Interviews with German, Ukrainian and Russian Experts  
to be discussed at the 8<sup>th</sup> Expert Meeting (August 2018)* . . . . . 125

**THE CONCEPT FOR INTRODUCTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL PROVISIONAL  
ADMINISTRATION (IPA) IN THE TERRITORIES OF THE DONETSK AND LUHANSK  
OBLASTS OF UKRAINE, OCCUPIED BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION** . . . . . 136

## **UN PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN DONBASS: GEOPOLITICAL REALITY, CHANCES AND PROSPECTS**

*Interviews with Ukrainian, Russian and German Experts (May-June 2018)* . . . . . 143

### **German Experts**

Only a Strong Western Front Can Prevent Russia's Further Expansion  
and Start a Constructive Dialogue with the Russian Federation  
*Armin STAIGIS* . . . . . 144

The Mandate that Reduces the UN Mission to Protection of OSCE Observers  
Speaks of the Degree of Russia's Frivolous Attitude to This Matter  
*Gustav GRESSEL* . . . . . 148

Motivation of the Russian Side to Find a Compromise Regarding  
the Peacekeeping Mission Is Presumably Lower Than It Originally Was  
*Susan STEWART* . . . . . 150

There Is Zero Chance of a Real Peacekeeping UN Mission  
*Eckart STRATENSCHULTE* . . . . . 152

Deployment of a UN Peacekeeping Mission Would Provide Kremlin  
a More or Less Convenient Way Out of the Current Confrontation  
*Andreas UMLAND* . . . . . 153

### **Ukrainian Experts**

Positive resolution of the issue of deploying a UN peacekeeping mission  
to Donbass depends on Russia changing its position  
*Kostiantyn KONONENKO* . . . . . 158

Compromise regarding the UN peacekeeping mission in Donbass  
is impossible until after Ukraine's presidential and parliamentary elections  
*Volodymyr FESENKO* . . . . . 160

Due to the absence of visible possibilities for mutual concessions,  
it will be long before parties' positions are harmonised  
*Vitalii MARTYNIUK* . . . . . 164

---

# CONTENT

Main signal is the implementation of the first provision of Minsk agreements  
*Olena SNIHYR* . . . . . 167

At the moment, a UN mission to Donbass is the only possible option  
for conflict resolution, albeit hard to implement  
*Mykhailo PASHKOV* . . . . . 172

## Russian Experts

The Peacekeeping Mission Should Not Freeze the Conflict,  
but Facilitate Its Resolution  
*Andrey ZAGORSKY* . . . . . 177

Any New Settlement Initiatives and Proposals Can Be Considered  
Only Within the Framework Formulated by Russia  
*Dmitriy DANILOV* . . . . . 184

UN Mission Prospects Look Rather Vague  
*Tatiana PARKHALINA* . . . . . 191

If Ukraine Does Not Attempt to Make Progress Towards Resolution,  
Other Stakeholders Will Adopt the Wait-and-See Approach  
*Sergey UTKIN* . . . . . 195

Progress or Crisis in International Relations Will Affect Russia  
and Ukraine and the State of Conflict Between Them  
*Mikhail SUBBOTIN* . . . . . 199

## Articles

Domestic Policy Processes in the Russian Federation:  
Dynamics and Prospects  
*Lev GUDKOV* . . . . . 202

Conflict in Eastern Ukraine:  
Is There Any Hope for Coordinated Effort?  
*Vladislav INOZEMTSEV* . . . . . 208

## THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT: ASSESSMENTS AND OPINIONS OF UKRAINIAN CITIZENS

*The Results of Sociological Studies* . . . . . 215

Kyiv-Moscow Relations, Causes and Consequences of the Conflict. . . . . 215

Prospects of Russia-Ukraine Contacts. . . . . 217

Peacekeeping Mission in Donbass. . . . . 218

Summary, or the Matrix of Attitude to Russia . . . . . 219

# PARAMETERS OF THE UN PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN DONBASS: EXPERT INTERVIEWS

---

*Summary of Interviews with German, Ukrainian and Russian Experts  
to be discussed at the 8<sup>th</sup> Expert Meeting (August 2018)*

---

**D**iscussions on a UN peacekeeping mission to Donbass became practical and take place on different platforms and in different formats. This topic has been discussed during Volker-Surkov meetings and the talks continue in the Normandy format. A number of countries have already spoken about the possibility of their participation in this mission. Yet, Ukraine and Russia's positions are drastically different.

What are today's chances of blue helmets appearing in Eastern Ukraine? How do we reach a compromise on the mandate for a possible peacekeeping mission? Will this mission be a means to help settle the conflict or an instrument for freezing it?

In interviews, German, Ukrainian and Russian experts were asked to define certain parameters of a potential UN peacekeeping mission to Donbas, namely: **(a) goals, tasks and functions of a peacekeeping mission; (b) composition, deployment area and timeframe.**

But the purpose of the publication was not to prepare a single "peacekeeping solution" for Eastern Ukraine but to present the materials for discussion at a regular 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of experts from Germany, Ukraine and Russia. Therefore, some proposals are incompatible and mutually exclusive.

However, it is encouraging to see common points in the opinions of experts from the three countries, which gives reasons to believe that developing a joint position on the problem of conflict resolution in Eastern Ukraine is viable.

Summaries of expert proposals are presented below.

## 1. GOALS, TASKS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE PEACEKEEPING MISSION

### GERMAN EXPERTS

❖ The main objective of the mission is to ensure control and support for the peace process in Donbass in cooperation with the OSCE and in coordination with Ukrainian state institutions in line with Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

Mission tasks and functions:

- Support the OSCE mission in Ukraine in monitoring the situation;
- Control and sustain the ceasefire regime, first of all, along the line of separation;
- Ensure disengagement of the conflicting parties on both sides of the line of separation;
- Support and control withdrawal of heavy weapons according to Minsk agreements, as well as ensure monitoring and control of the pre-determined areas of forces concentration;
- Ensure dissemination and disarmament of all illegal armed groups in the conflict area;
- Provide support to OSCE observers and in the process of withdrawal of all foreign armed forces, military formations and mercenaries from the conflict area;
- Establish security throughout all of the conflict area in a coordinated effort of the OSCE mission and the Armed Forces of Ukraine;
- Ensure support for the units of Ukraine's State Border Guard Service in restoring full control over the border with Russia in close cooperation with the UN mission;
- Assist in the release and exchange of all hostages and prisoners on all sides of the conflict;
- Ensure support and execution of unimpeded access, supply, storage and distribution of humanitarian aid in the conflict area;
- Assist in restoring the Ukrainian authority, especially of law enforcement agencies, as well as independent judicial authorities in Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts, on the basis of the constitutional reform and decentralisation in these regions;
- Provide support in preparation for local elections and their implementation in close cooperation with Ukrainian institutions and OSCE.

❖ The first task of the mission is to ensure the ceasefire regime, withdrawal of heavy weapons and Russian troops, mercenaries and their weapons. In the territory controlled by the separatists, the mission should assume all executive government functions (administration, police, court, radio, television and public information), and after that – ensure formation of new institutions subordinate to representative local government, and provide them with the necessary support.

It is necessary to organise elections, ensure the security of such elections – from registration of parties and candidates to vote counting. This is a rather broad mission mandate. There is a risk of non-recognition of results. Ukraine will not accept a mission aimed only at “changing the label” of today’s “people’s republics”, their authorities and leadership. As for Russia, it is strongly against the re-integration of territories into Ukraine, especially the deployment of Ukrainian security forces. But particularly because local “security forces” are nothing more than “mafia with AK-74 in their hands”, security issues cannot be entrusted to anyone local. Therefore, security forces should get really broad powers, the so-called “broad mandate”.

❖ The goal of the mission is to make sure that all parties (Ukraine, Russia, separatists) comply with security-related provisions of the Minsk agreements (for instance, stable ceasefire, real withdrawal of heavy weapons), in order to prepare for the so-called political provisions of the agreements, such as conducting elections in the occupied territories in line with Ukrainian legislation and OSCE standards.

❖ There will be no peacekeeping mission in Donbass – a mission for Donbass at most. It is possible only within the framework of an integrated package of agreements on the future relations between the EU and Russia, since the US is no longer a predictable actor. In any case, the EU’s external policy is weak, especially in its relations with Russia and due to the lack of unity in EU’s Russia policy. As long as the situation remains like this, Vladimir Putin will not be willing to make any compromises, as he is getting more with his “divide and rule” strategy, while paying less.

## **UKRAINIAN EXPERTS**

❖ The peacekeeping mission in Donbass has to be an integrated mission that, in addition to the military, includes a police and civil administration components as well. This means the deployment of a multi-task UN International Provisional Administration (IPA) to Donbass that will be able to ensure full de-escalation in the conflict area and accelerate conflict resolution.

**The ultimate goal of the IPA will be the *re-integration* of the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts into Ukraine.** The re-integration means implementing a complex of measures aimed at reinstating Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, including (in line with 2015 Minsk Package of Measures):

- ensuring a stable security regime (complete ceasefire, demilitarisation of all illegal armed groups on the occupied territory, demining, restoring control over the Ukrainian border in the occupied territory);
- establishing a legal framework for socio-economic activity in the occupied territories in line with Ukrainian legislation;
- reinstatement of Ukrainian government institutions on the occupied territories, support of justice processes, transitional justice and reconciliation in line with Ukrainian legislation;
- ensuring the functioning of media (television, newspapers, radio, Internet media) in line with Ukrainian legislation;
- organising legitimate elections to local self-government authorities in the occupied territories in line with Ukrainian legislation.

❖ The purpose of the peacekeeping mission is to facilitate full resolution of the military-political conflict in Donbass. According to UN terminology, this should be a peacekeeping operation with the task of ceasefire facilitation.

The tasks of the peacekeeping mission are: to facilitate the suspension of hostilities in the conflict area (ensure control over truce and ceasefire conditions execution); disengage conflicting parties; assist in the withdrawal of heavy weapons, as well as foreign and all illegal armed formations from the conflict area; ensure the disarmament of all illegal armed formations in the conflict area; ensure control over the currently uncontrolled sections of the Russia-Ukraine border; assist in mine clearance operations in the conflict area; carry out humanitarian operations (if necessary); assist in the work of the International Provisional Administration on organising and holding local elections in the conflict area, restoring and maintaining order (until Ukraine's full sovereignty over the territories in the conflict area is restored); ensure security in the conflict area during the transitional period (until Ukraine's full sovereignty over the territories in the conflict area is restored, including during preparations and holding of local elections in certain districts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts), i.e., the execution of police duties.



❖ The UN peacekeeping mission to resolve the Russia-Ukraine conflict is possible only if Russia ceases to deny its obvious participation in it. Making a decision upon the mission's mandate, the UN should take into account its experience of previous and ongoing missions, but the focus should be on the unique nature of this artificial conflict orchestrated by a nuclear state – a permanent member of the UN Security Council – without any real reasons.

The goal of the mission should be the cessation of hostilities between Ukrainian and Russian forces in order to restore peace, security, law and order and the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

The list of tasks for the mission should include: prevent the resumption of hostilities and ensure ceasefire observance; demilitarise the conflict zone; ensure public safety and the rule of law on the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts temporarily uncontrolled by the Ukrainian government; create secure conditions and support the formation of international civilian presence, interim administration, humanitarian and other missions; provide assistance in demining activities; execute border control functions regarding the section of the Russia-Ukraine border temporarily uncontrolled by Ukraine; together with Ukrainian border guards, ensure control over the contact line until it ceases to exist; ensure freedom of movement for own forces, international civilian presence and international organisations' staff; create conditions to prepare for and conduct elections to local bodies of power according to Ukrainian law; execute main administrative functions on the temporary basis, until the Ukrainian government and the lawfully elected local authorities resume control of their territories; provide assistance in restoring key infrastructure facilities.

The mission's function should be to invest maximum effort in restoring law and order (in line with Ukrainian legislation), as well as to ensure the restoration of regular life for civilian population on the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts temporarily uncontrolled by the Ukrainian government.

❖ Ukraine and the EU countries need the UN peacekeeping mission to bring peace and security to Eastern Ukraine. In order to achieve this, conditions should be created for complete resolution of the conflict: fundamental human rights and freedoms should be guaranteed, and preconditions for full re-integration in the social, humanitarian and economic sectors – ensured. Elections and other elements of political life in the occupied territories will become possible only after these territories are back under Ukraine's legal and humanitarian framework. Otherwise, there is a risk of legitimising the existing occupation authorities and the order established by them, which will make the eruption of a new conflict just a matter of time.

## RUSSIAN EXPERTS

❖ A real resolution of the situation in the East of Ukraine is impossible without a full-fledged peacekeeping mission with a mandate extending over the entire territory of Donbass.

❖ The goal of the mission is to support the implementation of Minsk agreements. Mission tasks are:

- to support the ceasefire regime;
- to ensure smooth operation of the OSCE mission;
- to help ensure safety of civilian population (the police component);
- after elections are held and the main provisions of the Minsk agreements are implemented, to assist in mine clearance of the conflict area, withdrawal of heavy weapons, ammunition.

❖ The peacekeeping operation is intended to facilitate the implementation of the Minsk agreements, to ensure the cessation of armed clashes in the conflict zone. Not to freeze the conflict, but to facilitate its resolution.

As a first step, peacekeeping forces should be deployed on both sides of the contact line in the safety zone, from which heavy weapons are to be withdrawn in accordance with Minsk agreements.

❖ In UN practices, an official approval of the operation's mandate is required from DPR and LPR, as well as reaching standard agreements with them, in particular, on the issues of safety of international staff, cooperation in the course of operation deployment and execution of its mandate. The UN peacekeeping doctrine requires approval of all parties. Without signing a standard memorandum with representatives of DPR and LPR (and Ukraine), no state will send its forces into the conflict zone.

❖ Besides deploying a peacekeeping mission to consolidate the ceasefire regime, it would be appropriate to ensure broader international presence in the Eastern Ukraine to provide assistance in resolving the political aspects of the Minsk agreements (apart from those that depend exclusively on Kyiv, including the adoption of relevant laws and constitutional acts). The best option is a hybrid mission: a multicomponent international presence with division of duties between different international organisations, each solving their specific tasks.

❖ The peacekeeping mission must have the necessary and sufficient number of staff and armaments to carry out its mandate. Because its mandate should allow for a limited use of force, such operation can only be deployed by the decision of the UN Security Council. The mission must have the right and possibility to end violations of the ceasefire conditions on any side, prevent the return of heavy weapons into the safety zone, ensure the safety of civilians and critical infrastructure facilities, suppress attempts to prevent it from fulfilling its mandate.

❖ As the situation in the safety zone stabilises, the peacekeeping mission's geographical scope could be gradually expanded. It would be reasonable to synchronise such expansion with introduction of a larger international presence to serve as an international provisional administration and assist in implementing the political aspects of the Minsk agreements.

❖ The different stages of expanding the geographical scope of the peacekeeping mission must at the same time be synchronised with phased implementation of political provisions of the Minsk agreements. It is important that the sequence of mission deployment steps, up to the establishment of control over the Russia-Ukraine border in the conflict area, as well as specific criteria (military and political) of transitioning between stages are identified in the UN Security Council decision at once, without requiring any other special decisions of the SC. Expanding the peacekeeping operation area would allow to establish control over the Russia-Ukraine border after the elections and complete the formation of legitimate government agencies in the East of Ukraine.

❖ Such presence would be required for the entire special status period in separate regions of Eastern Ukraine. Its purpose is to coordinate the work of different international structures aimed at solving post-conflict reconstruction tasks, including preparation for elections and elections themselves, formation of legitimate government institutions, return of refugees and internally displaced persons, law enforcement, ensuring independent justice, economic recovery, delivery of humanitarian aid, re-integration of areas caught in the conflict zone into Ukraine and other tasks.

❖ The best scenario for expanding international presence in the conflict area involves various organisations, including the UN (peacekeepers), OSCE (SMM, ODIHR and, possibly, additional missions), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Committee of the Red Cross and others. In this situation, the main task will be to coordinate the work of different organisations. Given that the UN and OSCE missions will be the basis of

international presence in the conflict zone, it is recommended that the positions of the special representative of the UN Secretary-General and OSCE Chairperson-in-Office be united into one.

❖ The UN peacekeeping mission should not undermine or blur the boundaries of the Minsk process, it can only be organised in the framework of Minsk agreements in order to support their full execution. This is why the Russian draft resolution submitted to the Security Council for consideration talks about deploying a mission to ensure the security of the OSCE monitors directly in the conflict zone, along the contact line.

❖ At the same time, parties could consider a compromise: adopting the Russian proposal, but with the prospect of further gradual mandate expansion – its geographical scope, political goals and practical tasks. If such actions on the Russian part were indeed possible, it would be on the terms that Kyiv strongly refuses to accept – recognising Donbass as a party to the conflict. Putin’s position is perfectly clear and Kremlin will be persistent in upholding it: it is necessary to have representatives of Kyiv government and representatives of the unrecognised republics sit down at the negotiating table. Conflict resolution is impossible without a direct dialogue between the conflicting parties.

## GERMAN EXPERTS

### 2. COMPOSITION, DEPLOYMENT AREA AND PERIOD OF OPERATION

❖ The mission should be comprised of military units – land and air forces, with technical means for reconnaissance and surveillance; police forces, law enforcement and administrative personnel (without an executive mandate, to support local Ukrainian agencies).

Such units are to be staffed by European and Asian countries (mainly, by the EU countries, Russia’s neighbouring countries, for instance, Belarus and Central Asian countries, but not by Russia!). The mission should be managed from the UN headquarters, with Germany and/or France forming the core of the management body with broad Russian representation.

Operation territory should cover Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts entirely, first of all, along the line of division. As with all peacekeeping missions, it is difficult to give a prognosis regarding its period of operation, but at least three years.

❖ The mandate should cover the entire territory of DPR/LPR, Russia-Ukraine

border, as well as monitoring territory 30 kilometres from the frontline on the Ukrainian side. Mission size – 20-60 thousand people of regular armed forces, including heavy mechanised divisions and well-armed militarised police units. Initially, there should be more military and less police, in time – vice versa. The mission should also include investigators, prosecutors, judges, administrative and economic experts, etc.

Countries that can potentially provide their units are preferably to include neutral and non-aligned states. But due to language requirements, this will be limited to post-Soviet and post-communist countries. An agreement could be reached between NATO and CSTO (Belarus and Kazakhstan). In case of Belarusian and Kazakh contingents, it would be necessary to ensure their regular territorial rotation in order to prevent them from building ties with local organised crime groups.

❖ The mission must cover the entire area of the occupied territories, as well as the areas adjacent to the contact line on the part of the territory controlled by the Ukrainian government. Members of the mission are to be armed and to have the right to access any buildings or areas in order to establish the fact and the extent of implementation of Minsk agreements.

The mission is to be headed by a country that is neither a NATO, Eurasian Economic Union, nor the Collective Security Treaty Organisation member. For example, Sweden or Austria. Candidates for other mission members are proposed by the heading country, which holds consultations with other future participant countries, and coordinates such decisions with the leadership of the Ukrainian and Russian states. Mission's duration – two years, with the possibility of extension if approved by all parties.

## **UKRAINIAN EXPERTS**

❖ It is proposed that the mandate of the peacekeeping mission extend over the entire occupied territory of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (including the section of the Russia-Ukraine border uncontrolled by Ukraine) and be effective until all tasks for these territories' re-integration have been accomplished. This said, the timeframe for each stage of mission's tasks implementation is to remain flexible and without prior definition. The mission should be headed by one of the neutral countries with the necessary experience – possibly, Finland, Austria or Sweden. It is expected that the mission will also include mainly neutral and non-aligned countries that are geographically remote from the military conflict area in Donbass, and do not have a conflict of interest in this situation. An important condition

in determining the mission's composition is that representatives of Ukraine's neighbouring states are not part of the military or police contingent of the international provisional administration in Donbass, and their presence within any civil or economic administration body cannot exceed 50%.

Experts estimate that in case of mission's success, the process can take from 3 to 5 years.

❖ The mission should include representatives of states with experience of participation in peacekeeping operations. As a party to the conflict, Russia cannot be part of the mission. Since Russia insists that there should be no representatives of NATO countries in the mission, – there should neither be representatives of CSTO member states and countries that are Russia's military allies.

Mission territory should include separate regions of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts currently uncontrolled by the Ukrainian government that represent the conflict zone; sections of Russia-Ukraine border in the conflict area uncontrolled by Ukraine; territory along the contact line that is controlled by the Ukrainian government and that is part of the agreement on the withdrawal of heavy and medium weapons.

Mission length is to be determined by the time necessary to achieve the set goals and the period of work of the international provisional administration, – until Ukraine's full sovereignty over the separate territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts is restored. The exact term will be determined by the mission mandate depending on the timeline for execution of its tasks.

❖ The mission should consist of contingents from United Nations member states, with the exception of parties to the conflict – Russia and Ukraine, as well as Russia's allies in the CSTO. The length of the UN peacekeeping mission's mandate should be set at 1 year with the possibility of annual extension. The conditions for mandate extension should be determined by mission's progress and the achievement of tasks assigned to it. UN mission territory should cover separate parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts that remain uncontrolled by the Ukrainian government.

❖ Ukraine will accept a peacekeeping contingent that does not contain troops from Russia and its military allies – CSTO member states. Based on the territory, the proposed mission size is 20 thousand people. The timeframe for a peacekeeping mission has to be connected with Ukraine's exit strategy – Kyiv's definition of

political conditions and security markers that indicate the fulfilment of the mission's mandate. It is quite possible that the peacekeeping mission's presence on the territories uncontrolled by Kyiv will be required for a fairly long period – buffer time – to overcome and eliminate the negative and traumatic consequences of Russian occupation for the population of Donbass, before the start of discussion on holding elections and forming local authorities.

## **RUSSIAN EXPERTS**

❖ At the peak of its activity, the mission can consist of up to 20 thousand people with a gradual decrease in number along with stabilisation of the situation. A part of the contingent – international police forces. Possible participants – Finland, Austria, Switzerland, Ireland, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Serbia, Brazil, Bangladesh, etc.

Territory covered (with phased deployment) – contact line and further into the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts uncontrolled by Kyiv, up to the border with Russia.

❖ Mission operation should cover the entire Donbass territory. The mission cannot include representatives of interested parties (either NATO, or CSTO); it should exclusively consist of representatives of countries that have proved themselves impartial peacekeepers (for example, Uruguay).

❖ Russia would oppose including the US or other NATO countries' troops in the peacekeeping mission forces. Given the fact that it would be preferable to staff the mission with forces of the OSCE member-states, there are not many options left. Possibly, forces of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Serbia (if they agree to provide them), neutral European states, including neutral EU member states such as Austria, Finland, Sweden, could be perceived as unbiased peacekeepers by all parties.

We should not exclude the possibility of involving forces from other regions that have diverse experience of participating in UN operations, such as Brazil.

There is a possibility to include unarmed observers from Russia and Ukraine, and expand the mandate of OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to include monitoring of UN peacekeepers' performance of their tasks.

# THE CONCEPT\*

## for introduction of the International Provisional Administration (IPA) in the territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine, occupied by the Russian Federation

The group of experts from Ukrainian analytical centers, working in the framework of “The Future of Donbass” discussion club, defined the basic concept on introduction of the United Nations International Provisional Administration (IPA) in the territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine, recognized by the Parliament of Ukraine as temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation. In their work, the authors of the concept followed the provisions of the UN Charter, UN Security Council Resolution 2202 (2015), Budapest Memorandum and UN’s experience of resolving conflicts using the resources of peacekeeping contingents and International Provisional Administrations.

**By offering the concept of the International Provisional Administration as a solution to the conflict, the experts:**

**ACKNOWLEDGE, THAT** any clause of a set of actions envisaged by the Minsk agreements as of February 2015 has not been fulfilled in full; all the terms defined in it have long expired and were not extended.

**NOTE, THAT** not only the geopolitical situation, but also the political and legal evaluation of the events in the east of Ukraine has changed since signing of the Minsk agreements. The Minsk “set of actions” envisages mechanisms designed to resolve the internal civil conflict, which is an internal civil one neither in point of fact nor legally. The Law of Ukraine "On the peculiarities of the state policy of ensuring the state sovereignty of Ukraine over temporarily occupied territories

---

\* Introduction of the International Provisional Administration in the temporarily occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts as part of a peacekeeping strategy for Ukraine – Centre for Research of Donbas Social Perspectives, Kyiv, 2018.

The Concept was prepared and translated by Centre for Research of Donbas Social Perspectives.



of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts” recognized Russia as an aggressor state, and certain territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts as those occupied by Russia;

**NOTE, THAT** the Minsk agreements, reached after the military defeats of Kyiv, are perceived as unfair by the majority of Ukrainian society and parliamentarians, so their implementation as they are today **in the conditions of continuation of the Russian occupation of the Donbass and lack of international guarantees of restoring the territorial integrity of Ukraine** can lead to significant negative socio-political consequences for the whole state;

**RECALL, THAT** due to the lack of progress in implementation of the Minsk agreements, Ukraine daily faces negative impacts and great risks in the social, economic and environmental spheres, what carries more and more threats not only to the Donbass, but to the whole Ukraine and even Europe;

**NOTE, THAT** a total four-year anti-Ukrainian propaganda in the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts creates serious risks of fear and rejection of the return of Ukrainian authorities for local population;

**UNDERLINE, THAT** under the conditions of Russia’s denying to be a party to the conflict, and the failure of Ukraine to recognize the so-called “DPR”-“LPR” as parties to the conflict, there is a high probability that any purely military or police mission will face the absence of the administrative authorities, recognized by both real parties to the conflict, in the territories of the mission’s mandate.

Taking all this into account, **for the creation of safety conditions and political settlement within the Minsk process, the experts OFFER** to establish an effective international mechanism for resolving the conflict, which will serve as a guarantee of restoration of peace and territorial integrity of Ukraine in the Donbass. Namely, the United Nations Mission, which will include both the peacekeeping contingent and temporary civilian administration (hereinafter referred to as the International Provisional Administration, IPA). Civilian authorities should consist of representatives of the countries – guarantors of the territorial integrity of Ukraine under the Budapest memorandum.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

1) **The International Provisional Administration (IPA)** is a multi-profile integrated mission of the United Nations (UN), the ultimate goal of which is de-occupation and subsequent reintegration of the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts into Ukraine.

The IPA consists of a military and police contingent, as well as of civilian personnel involved in the socio-economic management of the occupied territories.

**De-occupation and reintegration** – are a set of measures to restore Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, namely:

- ensuring a sustainable security regime (complete cease-fire, disarming of all illegal armed formations on the occupied territory, demining, restoration of control over the area of Ukrainian-Russian state border on the occupied territory);
- providing a legal regime of social and economic activity on the occupied territory in accordance with the current legislation of Ukraine;
- restoration of the institutions of Ukrainian state power in the occupied territories, support of the processes of justice, transitional justice and reconciliation in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine;
- ensuring the functioning of mass media (television, newspapers, radio, Internet media) in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine;
- holding legitimate local government elections in the currently occupied territories in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine.

The IPA is guided by the mandate of the UN and legislation of Ukraine.

## **POLITICAL POSITION OF UKRAINE**

2) The members of peacekeeping and police contingents of the IPA in the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts cannot include representatives of the countries having a state border with Ukraine.

3) Representatives of the state of Ukraine must be included into all structures of civilian control within IPA’s validity area.

4) The number of representatives of the countries having a state border with Ukraine as part of any civil authority of the social and economic management of the IPA in the occupied territories may not exceed 50% of its structure.

5) De-occupation and reintegration of the currently occupied territories cannot be a condition for determining the foreign policy of Ukraine.

## **SECURITY**

6) The IPA's priority tasks in the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts are disarming of all armed units and establishment of control at the state border of Ukraine and the Russian Federation within the occupied territory.

It is mandatory for representatives of the relevant state authorities of Ukraine to participate in the contingent of the IPA at the border of Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

7) The IPA controls the entry of civilian population and goods to the occupied territory of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, functions as a migration and customs service in the presence of the OSCE monitoring mission.

8) During the work of the IPA, police forces in the occupied territory of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts are being formed in accordance with the resolution of the UN Security Council.

9) Police forces of the IPA in the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts control the circulation of weapons among the population.

## **CIVIL MANAGEMENT**

10) The IPA takes social and economic management of the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts upon itself while instituting effective control over these territories prior to the holding of local elections in the specified territories.

11) After instituting effective control of the IPA, monetary and financial system of the occupied territories proceeds according to the legislation of Ukraine.

12) The IPA facilitates the return of the temporarily displaced persons to the occupied territories, restoration of all their material and immaterial rights.

## **MEDIA AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH**

13) The IPA maximally contributes to the technical and physical admission and functioning of the Ukrainian media (TV, newspapers, radio, Internet media and their representatives – journalists and technical staff) on the territory of the IPA's operation. All media in the occupied territory operate in accordance with the requirements of Ukrainian legislation after its transition to the IPA's control.

14) The IPA restrains the activities of political parties and political agitation in the occupied territory prior to the start of the local government's election campaign.

### **LEGAL SYSTEM**

15) The state of Ukraine, territorial communities of villages, settlements, cities located in the temporarily occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, state authorities, local governments and other subjects of public law retain their right of ownership, other real property rights, which includes real estate (including land parcels located in the temporarily occupied territories of the Donetsk and the Luhansk oblasts).

The IPA guarantees the recovery of property rights that were violated in 2014, as of 2014.

16) The IPA is governed by legislation in force in relation to citizens living in the occupied territory of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts without Ukrainian citizenship. It regulates the rules of stay of citizens of other states and stateless persons on the territory of Ukraine.

17) The IPA contributes to the formation of pre-trial and judicial investigation agencies in the occupied territory in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine.

18) All crimes committed by members of illegal armed groups because of political, ethnic and religious hostility, war crimes and crimes against humanity in the occupied territory of Ukraine will be submitted to the UN Criminal Tribunal, which should be created separately.

19) All crimes committed in the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts are investigated in accordance with the Criminal Code of Ukraine. All persons who have committed crimes will be prosecuted in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine and the norms of international law.

20) Ukraine passes special laws on amnesty and collaboration (on forgiveness), which will be applied in the occupied territory of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

21) Ukraine agrees to the amnesty for the citizens of Ukraine participating in illegal armed formations in the occupied territory of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts who did not commit crimes against humanity, war crimes and are not involved in the creation of illegal armed formations, provided that they did not commit other crimes provided for by the Criminal Code of Ukraine.

22) Ukraine passes the law on collaboration (on forgiveness), which restricts the right to participate in elections of all levels and be elected to the councils of all levels, the right to be appointed to positions in executive and law-enforcement, judicial and local government branches at all levels, the right to create non-governmental and political organizations for all citizens of Ukraine who held key positions in the quasi-public bodies in the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts after April 14, 2014 and violated the oath of employees of the internal affairs bodies, prosecutors, judges, servicemen and government officials

## **ELECTIONS**

23) After achieving the goal of sustainable security, namely, the complete cessation of fire, getting overall control over the border area of Ukraine and the Russian Federation in the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts by the IPA, disarming all illegal armed formations, as well as after the provision of the legal regime for socio-economic activity on the occupied territory and stable operation of the mass media in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine, the IPA organizes and holds the elections of local government in the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in accordance with the current legislation of Ukraine.

24) The date of the elections of local government in the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts is appointed by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

25) After forming the statutory authorities of local government in the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, the authority of the IPA is terminated and transferred to local government.

## **CONCLUSION**

According to experts of “The Future of Donbass” discussion club, the involvement of component of civilian control during the transition period is equivalent to a peacekeeping component, because:

- the legitimate institutions of state power in the temporarily uncontrolled by Ukraine territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts were completely destroyed in 2014;

- since 2014, the functions of administrative and socio-economic management on the occupied territory are executed by illegitimate military formations (controlled by Russia, but even not recognized by it) that do not have international subjectivity;

- the Russian Federation continues to disavow itself as a party to the conflict and disclaims its responsibility for managing the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

The experts believe that not only military issues' settlement, but also civilian management of the occupied territories by the UN Neutral Mission during the transition period will create real conditions for resolving the conflict, reconciliation and socio-psychological rehabilitation of residents of the affected areas of Ukraine.

### CONTRIBUTORS TO THE CONCEPT:

**Serhiy Harmash**, Head of the Centre for Research of Donbas Social Perspectives (CRDSP)

**Valeriy Kravchenko**, Director of the Centre for International Security;

**Yevhen Yaroshenko**, Political Scientist at the Democracy House;

**Oleksiy Semeni**y, Director of the Institute for Global Transformations;

**Hryhoriy Kaposlioz**, National Security Expert, Lead Expert at the National Security Academy non-governmental organisation;

**Lada Roslycky**, International Security and Strategic Communications Consultant, works together with the Center for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies;

**Oleksandr Ustymenko**, National Security Expert, Assistant Professor of the Department of Globalistics, European Integration and National Security Management of the National Academy for Public Administration under the President of Ukraine;

**Ruslan Kermach**, Political Analyst of the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation.

# UN PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN DONBASS: GEOPOLITICAL REALITY, CHANCES AND PROSPECTS

*Interviews with Ukrainian, Russian and German experts  
(May-June 2018)*

---

This publication is a prelude to the trilateral meeting between German, Ukrainian and Russian experts initiated by Konrad Adenauer Foundation in March 2015. The upcoming expert meeting in August 2018 in Italy is dedicated to the issues of peacekeeping in Donbass and the prospects of Russia-Ukraine conflict regulation/minimisation in general.

In interviews, presented in this publication, experts from three countries assessed the nature and special aspects of internal political processes in Russia and Ukraine (including the election results in Russia and the upcoming elections in Ukraine). Are changes (adjustments) possible in Russia's foreign policy during Putin's next term in office? How do the approaching presidential elections in Ukraine affect its foreign policy positions? How much and in what way does the domestic situation in both countries influence the process of Donbass conflict resolution?

The second part of the discussion corresponds to the first one, and focuses on the problems of peacekeeping. How real (in the current geopolitical situation) are the chances for the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission to Donbass? Is there a possibility of a compromise regarding the main parameters of the mission's mandate, and what concessions can Moscow and Kyiv make?

Experts' answers to these questions are varied, as well as their ideas on the tasks and functions of the proposed mission. They were also very sceptical about chances to reshape the opposing positions of Kyiv and Moscow. Yet, another thing is also clear – all discussion participants support the idea of a UN peacekeeping operation in the Eastern Ukraine in one way or the other. Otherwise, the uncertainty surrounding the situation in Donbass, where for the fifth consequent year, with varying degrees of intensity, the fighting continues and people are dying, risks escalating the conflict even further.

At the moment, the key task of the Normandy Four, as well as the Trilateral Contact Group is to minimise confrontation in the conflict area and, essentially, to handle a deteriorating relationship between Russia and Ukraine. Fundamentally, this is the primary topic of the upcoming discussion and a trilateral expert dialogue in general.

## GERMAN EXPERTS

### ONLY A STRONG WESTERN FRONT CAN PREVENT RUSSIA'S FURTHER EXPANSION AND START A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE WITH THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

*– In your opinion, how will (do) domestic political processes in Ukraine and Russia (Putin's new presidential term, future presidential elections in Ukraine) affect the Moscow-Kyiv conflict resolution?*

Domestic and foreign policy developments and decision-making are closely related processes. There is nothing new here, today this rule is even more relevant than it was before. In today's multipolar world, there is an ongoing struggle for supremacy – primarily between liberal and authoritarian states, but also among the authoritarian states. This struggle is marked by mutual mistrust, misguided assessments, vanity, expansionist trends and nationalist ideology.

This is the angle that we need to take when looking at Russia and Ukraine, as well as the ongoing since 2014 conflict surrounding the Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. Internal political processes in both countries undoubtedly affect the conflict, but at the same time, we need to look at it in a general European and global context.

*As a result of the presidential election held in March, President Putin has clearly strengthened his autocratic system, where everything revolves around Kremlin.* However, controversial election results, restriction of fundamental rights and human rights, major interference with the work of opposition, media and civil society organisations signify government deficiency in domestic policy. All of this is happening amid a difficult economic situation. After his re-election, Putin proclaimed that one of his primary tasks in the next term is the development and modernisation of economy and raising the standard of living of the population. In order to achieve this in today's globalised world, it is important for Russia to have strong partners, especially in Europe. President Putin will be able to count on this only if he gets back to respecting the norms of international relations, thus becoming a predictable, credible and trustworthy politician.

However, today's Russia sees its future in isolation from the West, rather than in cooperation with it. Therefore, we need to wait and see how much Russia is



**Armin STAIGIS,**  
Retired Brigadier General,  
Chairman of the Association of  
Friends of the Federal Academy  
for Security Policy, Berlin



---

prepared to end its policy aimed at dividing the West, and take productive steps to resolve conflicts in Europe and in the Middle East.

In connection with the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections, 2019 is expected to be a difficult year for Ukraine. And I am not talking about formation and further development of strong, independent and credible state institutions, or development of efficient political culture inside the country. As Federal President of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier said during his recent visit to Kyiv, this is about “preventing the destruction of the things gained during the Maidan”. *Ukrainians must demonstrate courage and really implement the necessary reforms, especially those aimed against corruption, as well as resist any manifestations of aggressive isolationist nationalism.* This is the only way to ensure stabilisation inside the country and its ability to resist external influences, which will be a prerequisite for Ukraine’s future as a part of Europe.

What does it all mean for the Russia-Ukraine conflict? There is no generic answer to this one. What we need here is “the pluralism of thought” and alternative approaches that can provide best possible answers to a range of different development schemes. That is why below we present three possible scenarios.

### **Scenario 1. Cooperation.**

President Putin adheres to the autocratic form of government inside the country, yet realises that in order to reinforce his power and strengthen Russia’s role as a global player, he needs partners that can help Russia keep up with the 21<sup>st</sup> century economically. Whether China is able to fulfil this role in the near future, and whether it is willing to do so, is yet to be seen. President Trump’s actions are based on the principle “America first”, so he will always be on the lookout for his own benefits. Europeans will certainly be ready to work together, if President Putin returns to the policy of cooperation in the security sector and becomes a reliable European neighbour. 2019 – the election year – will make Ukraine even stronger in the political, economic and social context. Then, joint initiatives will become possible – on the implementation of Minsk agreements, the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission to Eastern Ukraine, and in search for solutions for the post-war reconstruction of Syria, where Putin will desperately need the support of Europe.

### **Scenario 2. Confrontation.**

President Putin’s Russia, based on the overall vulnerability of the West, decides to use its chance and “destroy” the West. It uses all kinds of hybrid techniques to intensify dividing tendencies in the transatlantic relations, and exacerbate different crisis manifestations inside the European Union, in order to use them for its own benefit, descending to cyber attacks on Western institutions, support for populist

movements, and in extreme situations – to armed clashes. Ukraine, with its possibly aggravating domestic situation, will definitely fall one of the first victims to Russia’s continued expansionist policy, as Russia continues trying to divide the world into the spheres of influence, and attempting to “become great again and wash away the shame of the collapse of the Soviet Union”.

### **Scenario 3. Stagnation.**

In short, here we will hardly see any changes in Russia’s attitude towards the West, Europe and Ukraine. President Putin thinks that his positions inside the country has strengthened after the elections, and operations inside Ukraine and Syria helped to restore the image of a global player. In Europe, over the past years, due to the so-called “protracted conflicts” in Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria, Georgia, and especially in Ukraine, Russia has built itself an image of a country with potential for escalation, while fluctuating between dominant autocracy and Western liberal idea. These are the important strategic goals the President Putin has achieved and wishes to maintain.

The question is, which of the scenarios is more likely, as well as what consequences it will have for practical policy. None of them can be ruled out with full confidence and with “pluralism of thought” – there is no need for this.

I would prefer the cooperation scenario, but its implementation requires a certain amount of time. Russia and other countries, for example, the USA and China, while determining their mid-term and long-term political and strategic goals, need to realise that at the time of economisation and technologisation of the world, as global players, they can exist only in the environment of active and trustful cooperation with others.

The confrontation scenario is clearly the worst of all options, but we cannot rule it out. Its likelihood may be reduced in the situation of the strong Western front with a functioning NATO alliance, a capable European Union and a stronger Ukraine. Unfortunately, such indicators are not present everywhere. Yet, only a strong Western front can prevent Russia’s further expansion and start a constructive dialogue with the Russian Federation.

The third option – stagnation – is potentially the one with the highest likelihood. As demonstrated above, President Putin has already reached his goals and is now watching the further unfolding of events in the multipolar world – in the USA, the EU, as well as in China and Ukraine. We can hardly expect any concessions in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Russia’s approval of the UN peacekeeping mission is more than unlikely. It would already be a great success to start the prompt implementation of Minsk agreements in the part of ceasefire, in order to at least stop the ongoing everyday violence.

---

*– How real are the chances of organising a UN peacekeeping operation in Donbass taking into account the geopolitical dynamics and the positions of stakeholders? Is there a possibility of a compromise regarding the main parameters of the potential peacekeeping mission's mandate, and what concessions can Moscow and Kyiv make?*

The idea of introducing a UN peacekeeping mission has been in the works for several years – it was originally proposed by Ukraine and later picked up by Moscow. Yet, as of now, there are no signs of a consensus on the matter. What is the conflict of interests here?

For obvious reasons, after more than three years, Ukraine is very much interested in finally implementing the security provisions of the Minsk agreements – having major support from the UN and the OSCE missions. This concerns not only ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons from the contact line, withdrawal of all foreign troops and disarmament of all illegal formations, but also the reinstatement of full control over the state border between Russia and Ukraine. In addition, Ukraine, despite all the lawful principles of sovereignty, must be interested in the UN and the OSCE missions ensuring and supporting the process of restoring legitimate state institutions in Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts, as well as elections and the related follow-up activities. Implementation of all of these activities will have to involve separatists as well, even though, for obvious reasons, it will be hard for the Ukrainian side.

Contrary to the signals it sent earlier, Russia's interest in a UN mission in Donbass is rather small. With consistent implementation of a broad mandate, such a mission will significantly limit the scope of activity for Moscow. And it is clear that Russia would prefer a mandate limited to ensuring OSCE observers' security along the contact line. In case of such a mandate, Russia-supported separatists and Russia itself can continue to enjoy the full freedom of action in the rest of the conflict zone, including the border area along the Russia-Ukraine border. Russia's position regarding the UN mission remains rather vague so far. This is why it was so important, when Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel urged President Putin to clarify Russia's views on this issue in the May meeting in Sochi. Anyway, we should not bring our hopes too high expecting Russia to agree to the introduction of a UN Donbass mission with a broad mandate.

Europeans' position in this regard is rather important. This conflict is unfolding on their continent, so they are particularly responsible for its resolution. The Normandy format was created and made Minsk agreements possible, as well as EU sanctions, OSCE measures, and NATO's actions aimed at implementing the decisions of the Alliance's Wales Summit developed together with Europeans. Deployment of the UN

mission will certainly place additional responsibility on Europeans, connected both with mission's operation, as well as with the distribution of forces. This especially goes for Germany and France, as Western representatives of the Normandy Four.

Rather critical question that we have to ask is how ready are these states, as well as other European countries, to directly participate in this complicated and dangerous large-scale mission and assume further political responsibility for its realisation.

Thus, Ukraine is very interested in the UN mission with a broad mandate. Kyiv is unlikely to give up this idea, as it does not want to preserve the on-going – and unacceptable for Ukraine – situation in Donbass after the introduction of the mission. Moscow's interests are completely the opposite. We can hardly expect Kremlin's consent to the broad mandate. And the Europeans understand the responsibility and burden they will have to assume in the event of further risks. So, overall, there seems little prospect of a real compromise.

**THE MANDATE THAT REDUCES THE UN MISSION TO PROTECTION OF OSCE OBSERVERS SPEAKS OF THE DEGREE OF RUSSIA'S FRIVOLOUS ATTITUDE TO THIS MATTER**

*– In your opinion, how will (do) domestic political processes in Ukraine and Russia (Putin's new presidential term, future presidential elections in Ukraine) affect the Moscow-Kyiv conflict resolution?*

Domestic policy obviously plays an important role in both cases. On the eve of elections, Poroshenko will surely act cautiously, insisting more than usual on the Ukrainian position. At the same time, we should not give in to the illusion that the conflict can be resolved in 2019. Poroshenko essentially finds himself hostage to his own policy. Minsk agreements are based on the plan proposed by him in the summer of 2014, consisting of 14 paragraphs, and signed by Poroshenko. However, after at least 10,000 dead and more than a million – internally displaced in connection with hostilities, Ukrainian society is much less ready to agree to concessions in favour of the aggressor than, for instance, in May 2014. And this situation is not an easy one to resolve. Nevertheless, I believe that if Russians demonstrated their earnest readiness to implement Minsk agreements, Poroshenko would be able to find an opportunity for a domestic policy manoeuvre.

In Putin's case, internal politics aspect is much more pronounced than many people think. This is not just about the fact that war accomplishments, militarism and confrontation with the West ensure short-term stabilisation of the Russian



**Gustav GRESSEL**,  
Senior Policy Fellow,  
European Council on  
Foreign Relations

regime. I think that in the long-term perspective, this war will have more significant consequences for the Russian leadership. Russia's use of its military since the fall of 2014 has no mandate, i.e. it is illegal even from the point of view of Russia's constitutional law. Could it be possible, that Russia's potential presidential candidate for the 2024 elections is using this situation to put an end to Putin's regime and his power?

The situation surrounding the shooting down of MH17 flight is looking even worse for Putin. As the ultimate authority, he is the one responsible for sending a high-precision anti-aircraft missile to Donbass, which became the cause of death of 300 people, with 200 of them being EU citizens. At the moment, Putin can influence the MH17 discussion in the Netherlands and neutralise it through fascist parties loyal to him. But how long will this last? And is it possible that after 2024, his successor will decide to sacrifice him in order to improve Russia's relations with the West?

The story of Slobodan Milosevic, who went from the national hero and defender of Serbia in 1999 to being deported to the Hague in 2001, shows that the situation can change very quickly. This is why, I think, it is premature to talk about Russia after Putin. I believe that Putin will find a solution to remain in power after 2024. It is possible he will bluntly change the Constitution, or abolish the restriction on the possibility of only two consecutive presidential terms, or raise the status of another government position to obtain special powers (for instance, he could become the Chairman of the Security Council of the Russian Federation), and many other options.

And before that, he will keep all the options in Ukraine open and use the conflict (including the situation of confrontation with the West) to give the main factions as little opportunity as possible to escape from under his control or create forces that could become his competition. This is why, in the near future, he will be suppressing any attempts to achieve significant progress in ending the war in Donbass.

*– How real are the chances of organising a UN peacekeeping operation in Donbass taking into account the geopolitical dynamics and the positions of stakeholders? Is there a possibility of a compromise regarding the main parameters of the potential peacekeeping mission's mandate, and what concessions can Moscow and Kyiv make?*

I think, this is unlikely. Russia's proposal regarding the introduction of a UN mission was mainly a preventive step. It was made in order to prevent Poroshenko from making a proposal with his own conditions at the UN General Assembly meeting. However, the proposed mandate that reduces the UN mission to protection of the OSCE observers speaks to the degree of Russia's frivolous attitude to this matter. Forsaking direct control over these territories is off the table here, even despite the regular difficulties in selecting suitable staff to fulfil the "warden" role at least somehow.

**MOTIVATION OF THE RUSSIAN SIDE TO FIND A COMPROMISE REGARDING THE PEACEKEEPING MISSION IS PRESUMABLY LOWER THAN IT ORIGINALLY WAS**

*– In your opinion, how will (do) domestic political processes in Ukraine and Russia (Putin’s new presidential term, future presidential elections in Ukraine) affect the Moscow-Kyiv conflict resolution?*

It is unlikely that Putin’s new term as president will bring any major changes with regard to the various conflicts between Moscow and Kyiv. There is no indication that the goals of the Russian leadership with regard to Ukraine have changed, thus we can expect a continuation of the current approach.

It is possible that domestic problems will force Putin and other Russian political leaders to spend more time and resources on addressing internal issues, which could mean that their attention to Donbass would wane. However, considering the importance of control over parts of Donbass for Putin’s regime, with its goal of retaining a sphere of influence in neighbouring countries and preventing their further integration into western institutions and frameworks, it is hardly conceivable that Putin would be willing to pull out of the area entirely.

*More possible is that he could decide on an escalation of violence in order to serve domestic purposes, either to score points with part of the Russian population or to placate certain Russian political, economic and security actors with an interest in such escalation.* However, such a development is very difficult to predict and will depend both on future developments in Russia and Putin’s assessment of them. The most probable scenario remains a continuation of the status quo, to which those involved have largely become accustomed and from which a variety of elite actors and their subordinate networks are profiting.

As for the Ukrainian case, it is more complex. However, since the run-up to the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2019 has already begun, both the rhetoric and the actions of the various elite groupings will serve their respective campaign goals and tactics. For this reason, radical changes in the situation are unlikely, since they would involve risks the current ruling elite would hate to take in a pre-election context. Activities of the opposition criticising the current government with regard to the situation in Donbass will probably be confined primarily to rhetoric, so retention of the status quo is also the most likely option on the Ukrainian



**Susan STEWART,**  
Deputy Head of Eastern  
Europe and Eurasia  
Research Division,  
German Institute  
for International and  
Security Affairs, SWP

side. As for the Russian side, certain key actors are reaping profits from the existing situation and thus are reluctant to see it change significantly. Nonetheless, unexpected developments such as intervention by nationalist or populist groupings are possible, as it already happened during the trade blockade of the occupied areas of Donbass.

*– How real are the chances of organising a UN peacekeeping operation in Donbass taking into account the geopolitical dynamics and the positions of stakeholders? Is there a possibility of a compromise regarding the main parameters of the potential peacekeeping mission's mandate, and what concessions can Moscow and Kyiv make?*

The chances of reaching a compromise on a viable peacekeeping mission under the auspices of the UN are extremely low. If we assume that one of Russia's primary motivations for suggesting such a mission was to have an impact on the US debate and prevent further sanctions against Russia as well as the shipment of lethal weapons to Ukraine, this goal has obviously not been reached. Therefore, the motivation of the Russian side to find a compromise is presumably lower than it originally was. More fundamentally, the positions of the two sides are extremely far apart on key points such as the goals of the mission, the territory it should cover, and its composition. Even if Russia should be interested in transferring some responsibility for developments in the occupied areas to other actors, and may become more so if the domestic situation in Russia becomes more complicated, nonetheless it is hardly imaginable that the Russian leadership will develop a willingness to return control over the Russian-Ukrainian border in the occupied areas to Ukraine.

With regard to the geopolitical situation, it is also unlikely that actors external to the conflict, such as Germany, France and the USA, will be inclined to invest the necessary resources to force a change of approach on the Russian and/or Ukrainian side. This would require a show of military force against the Russian side, which Germany and France have made clear is not an option, and while the USA has been willing to sell certain defensive weapons to Ukraine, it is not likely to go further than that in the foreseeable future.

Inducing the Ukrainians to alter their position would involve both rhetorical and financial pressure which would require them to take further steps without guarantees that the Russian side will adhere to the Minsk agreements. This would not only appear to be an unjust approach due to its strong asymmetry but is also likely to cause political and societal turmoil in Ukraine and possibly even generate violence.

## THERE IS ZERO CHANCE OF A REAL PEACEKEEPING UN MISSION

*– In your opinion, how will (do) domestic political processes in Ukraine and Russia (Putin’s new presidential term, future presidential elections in Ukraine) affect the Moscow-Kyiv conflict resolution?*

I believe that regardless of who comes or stays in power in Ukraine – they have little room for manoeuvre. Unless it makes a bold, but hardly realistic in the political sense step and gives up Donetsk and Luhansk “People’s Republics”, concentrating on developing the rest of the territory. This would take away a major bargaining chip from Russia, as the real goal of Russia’s policy is not the potential expansion of its territory. Above all, it is using Donetsk and Luhansk as hostages to make Ukraine behave the way Russia wants.

In this regard, we can hardly expect any concessions on the Russian part. Russia is experiencing stable stagnation, major economic successes there are unlikely. This is mostly not due to the sanctions, but to the inability and unwillingness of the Russian system to implement reforms. As a result, this means that President Putin has to ensure his domestic legitimacy through implementing the policy of violence towards other countries. He is playing with fire, at the same time believing that his line of policy is rather good.

Causing pain to Ukraine (where people are dying every day), he crossed the line acceptable to the West, which, however, is becoming increasingly divided and unsystematic on the Russian issue. A good example is the recently created Italian coalition. Therefore, from Putin’s point of view, there is simply no reason to change his policy – hence, it is unlikely that anything will change here. Unless developments in other areas of tension compel Russia to stop ignoring the West, and accommodate its demands regarding Ukraine. Although, at the moment, this is not a scenario to be considered.

*– How real are the chances of organising a UN peacekeeping operation in Donbass taking into account the geopolitical dynamics and the positions of stakeholders? Is there a possibility of a compromise regarding the main parameters of the potential peacekeeping mission’s mandate, and what concessions can Moscow and Kyiv make?*

There are two types of peacekeeping missions – broad and mediation missions. Mediation missions’ role is to monitor stability of the situation that both parties



**Eckart  
STRATENSCHULTE,**  
*Executive Director,  
Deutsche Nationalstiftung,  
Berlin*



have agreed to. In this case, parties have to be ready to abide by the mediators' requirements, – just as in sports players abide by the judge's ones. OSCE monitoring mission currently present in Ukraine is such a mediation mission, although its work is ineffective – except for occasional articles in the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” newspaper.

Another type of missions – missions with a broad mandate, i.e. in the situation of a breach of rules, such peacekeeping mission is allowed to use force. In this case, this would mean a direct armed confrontation with Russia's armed forces, for which such a mission would be neither capable nor ready, as you can hardly achieve anything with a couple of Pakistani soldiers in blue helmets.

Conclusion: there is zero chance of a real peacekeeping UN mission.

### DEPLOYMENT OF A UN PEACEKEEPING MISSION WOULD PROVIDE KREMLIN A MORE OR LESS CONVENIENT WAY OUT OF THE CURRENT CONFRONTATION

*– In your opinion, how will (do) domestic political processes in Ukraine and Russia (Putin's new presidential term, future presidential elections in Ukraine) affect the Moscow-Kyiv conflict resolution?*

The 2018-2019 electoral seasons in Russia and Ukraine, i.e. the Russian presidential elections of March this year as well as the Ukrainian presidential and parliamentary elections in spring and autumn next year, will be changing Eastern Europe's political landscape. It may create new chances to end (or escalate) the war between Russia-led irregular separatists and Russian regular troops, on the one side, and Ukrainian governmental forces as well as some paramilitary units, in the Eastern parts of the Ukrainian Donetsk Basin, on the other. While the Russian and Ukrainian political leaders' behaviour is, in both cases, heavily guided by internal rather than external drivers, the domestic political implications of the war within Russia and Ukraine in both countries diverge. They contradict the widespread belief that the leaderships of Ukraine and Russia are equally big winners in the war, on both sides of the so-called “contact line”.

Vladimir Putin's Ukraine adventure since 2014 has been a principal source of his increased popularity ever since. It has even led sociologists to speak of a new “Crimea consensus” in Russian society – a largely manufactured, yet



**Andreas UMLAND,**  
Senior Fellow, Institute  
for Euro-Atlantic  
Cooperation in Kyiv

nevertheless widespread collective agreement, within large parts of Russia's population, about the rightfulness, justice and legitimacy of Moscow's various territorial, political, cultural and economic pretences towards Ukraine. The move of the 2018 Russian presidential elections to the date of the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Russian-Crimean annexation treaty on 18 March, and Putin's triumphant victory in the elections illustrate the importance of the aggressive anti-Ukrainian campaign to the support, cohesion and longevity of the Putinist regime.

This is in contrast to Ukraine, and the sudden rise of the once secondary political figure Petro Poroshenko, in spring of 2014, the prime contender for, and current holder of, the first post-Euromaidan presidency. Among other factors, Poroshenko's unexpected post-revolutionary prominence was connected to a political presumption, in large parts of Ukrainian society, that the experienced politician and negotiator would be the right choice to bring peace and security to the country, under the difficult conditions of increasing Russian aggressiveness towards and quick socio-economic decline of post-Euromaidan Ukraine.

Initially, the triumphant victory of the anti-oligarchic Revolution of Dignity in early 2014 had suggested a forthcoming new political era with statesmen and women from outside the old oligarchic system. Yet, this prospect changed under the impression of Russia's covert military annexation of Crimea and invasion in the Donets Basin or Donbass (a region named after its small Siverskyi Donets river, and neither after the city of Donetsk nor after the large Russian river Don, as sometimes wrongly assumed, in Western commentaries).

Under the shock of the loss of territory, escalating war in Eastern Ukraine, and resulting economic dislocations, the Ukrainian population gave its preference to an experienced former minister, long-term parliamentarian and industrial magnate. Poroshenko had and still has the principal defect of being one of Ukraine's leading oligarchs. Yet, he was, at least in spring 2014, widely assumed to be able to lead the Ukrainian state out of the quickly deepening foreign affairs crises, towards internal cohesion and industrial potential.

The recent steep fall in Poroshenko's popularity has more to do, to be sure, with the post-revolutionary President's failures in domestic affairs than with his inability to bring peace to the country and re-establish the government's full control, at least, over Eastern Ukraine (not to mention Crimea). Thus, Poroshenko is now seen very negatively by most Ukrainian voters mainly because of his ever more manifest unwillingness to fundamentally change the nature of Ukraine's oligarchic order – including his failure to fully disengage from his own business interests, in and outside Ukraine.

Yet, Poroshenko's political descent is also a function of his obvious incapability to fulfil the hopes of his 2014 voters to improve relations with Russia, end the war in the east, and bring back, at least, the territories of the so-called "People's Republics" in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts under governmental control.

Had Poroshenko delivered on this campaign theme, many voters may have been willing to partly forgive him the various inconsistencies in his conduct of domestic governance reforms. However, Poroshenko was neither able to solve the major foreign issue, i.e. Ukraine's bloody confrontation with Russia, nor sufficiently willing to push through a sufficiently deep domestic transformation.

As a result, Poroshenko seems now to be doomed to lose Ukraine's upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections. In the worst case, he may repeat the unglamorous fate of his former patron Viktor Yushchenko who, as an incumbent President, lost the 2010 presidential elections, in an embarrassing fifth place and with a miserable 5.45%.

*– How real are the chances of organising a UN peacekeeping operation in Donbass taking into account the geopolitical dynamics and the positions of stakeholders? Is there a possibility of a compromise regarding the main parameters of the potential peacekeeping mission's mandate, and what concessions can Moscow and Kyiv make?*

The anticipation is thus for 2019 that the imminent fundamental change of leadership within the Ukrainian executive and legislature could provide an international pretext for, and domestic impulse to, the solution of the Donbass conflict. In particular, it is hoped that a change in Ukraine's leadership will, in combination with cumulating effects of Western sanctions against Moscow, lead to a reset in Russian-Ukrainian relations, and motivate Putin to finally decide to pull out from the Donets Basin. In this connection, a UN peacekeeping mission – perhaps, aided by a EU civilian detachment to the Donbass – is a mechanism that provides opportunities for both, to either really implement or to merely fake a solution of the conflict – an ambivalence that all involved parties are keenly aware of.

For over four years now, there is lingering crypto-war between Europe's two largest countries, including almost daily shooting with heavy arms and weekly wounded or dead, in the immediate vicinity of Europe's largest nuclear power plant at Zaporizhzhia. In spite of the enormous stakes in either the solution or escalation of this consequential confrontation, European attention to this only seemingly

frozen conflict remains limited, and Western slack towards Moscow is the pre-eminent approach in the EU and most of its member states.

While some EU institutions and figures have invested considerable time and energy in the conflict's resolution, the majority of European politicians, diplomats and journalists suffer from a – what might be called a – post-geographical externalisation syndrome. The repercussions of a possible flaring up of the Russian-Ukrainian war and, in that case, likely collapse of the already battered Ukrainian state would be nothing less than catastrophic for the entire European continent.

Yet, Western political elites and public opinion remain surprisingly escapist or/and optimistic regarding Moscow's actions, instruments and intents in Ukraine. In the worst case, it may need another attention-grabbing major calamity on the Ukrainian-Russian "contact line", comparable to the July 2014 MH17 disaster, to finally let the EU become real about the explosive situation at its eastern border.

\*\*\*

In spite of the risks and complications of its realisation, the idea has been catching the imagination of many Western diplomats, politicians and experts dealing with Donbass conflict, since in September 2017 Putin expressed his willingness to discuss a UN involvement, in principle. The idea's pioneering as well as already surprisingly comprehensive and detailed public outline had been provided by the Nuremberg political analyst Andrej F. Novak already in November 2014. The Ukrainian government had submitted an official request for a UN peacekeeping mission in 2015. Since then, a number of prominent analysts of different countries have published more or less elaborate texts detailing the prospects and challenges of the plan. They included policy papers authored by, among others, Oleksiy Melnyk (Razumkov Centre, Kyiv) in 2016, Andrei Kortunov (Russian International Affairs Council, Moscow) in 2017, as well as Richard Gowan (Rasmussen Global, New York) and Alexander Vershbow (Atlantic Council, Washington, DC) in 2018. These and some other analyses outline the various mechanisms and hindrances of an implementation of the plan.

The beauty of a transitional UN peacekeeping mission in, and international civilian administration of, the Donetsk Basin is twofold. The first advantage of the scheme is that it means the introduction of a neutral third force into the Donbass conflict and of a conversion period into the solution process, by way of establishing

---

an international temporary administration supplanted by sufficiently large and well-armed foreign peacekeeping troops as well as a provisional multinational police force. This arrangement seems to be the only feasible way to realise in practice the transfer of power, over the currently occupied Donbass territories, from Moscow to Kyiv, and the re-establishment of elementary socio-political order in the area of the current so-called “People’s Republics”.

The various Minsk agreements of 2014 and 2015 are, by themselves, curiously deficient in that they foresee an unrealistically smooth transition from the Kremlin’s current de facto rule over the covertly occupied and heavily militarised eastern areas of Ukraine’s Donbass, to Kyiv’s reacquisition of full control over its lost territories. It remains, without a transitional third-party intervention from the UN, OSCE and EU, into the region, unclear how this can happen after the Russian state’s presumed removal of its crypto-regular troops, political emissaries and financial support from Ukraine’s Donets Basin.

Even after such a hypothetical withdrawal, it would – without armed peacekeepers and a transitional administration – take a full-scale Ukrainian liberation war to eliminate, capture, disarm or/and chase away the remaining various anti-Ukrainian local or invited irregulars, mercenaries, extremists, adventurers and agents who, to this day, are being, in one way or another, actively financed, armed, supported, trained or/and led by Moscow.

The second advantage of the plan is that once a sustainable solution becomes the preferable option for Moscow, it can be used by the Kremlin to save its face before the nationalistically agitated parts of its misinformed society. In as far as Russia will have to give its approval to an international armed peacekeeping mission within the UN Security Council, it can internationally influence the modus of the mission and internally spin the undertaking as a Russian pacifist initiative to help the suffering Russian speakers of Eastern Ukraine.

While the latter interpretation would be a gross distortion of the origins and nature of the conflict in the Donets Basin, deploying UN peacekeeping forces would thus provide the Kremlin a more or less convenient way out of the current confrontation – if and when Moscow starts defining, for itself, such an exit as principally useful or even necessary. To reach such a change of mind in the Kremlin, Western sanctions related to the Donbass conflict will have to not only continue, but – in view of their limited success so far – to further increase and be better implemented.

## UKRAINIAN EXPERTS

### POSITIVE RESOLUTION OF THE ISSUE OF DEPLOYING A UN PEACEKEEPING MISSION TO DONBASS DEPENDS ON RUSSIA CHANGING ITS POSITION

*– In your opinion, how will (do) domestic political processes in Ukraine and Russia (Putin’s new presidential term, future presidential elections in Ukraine) affect the Moscow-Kyiv conflict resolution?*

Today it is already clear that the ongoing Russia-Ukraine confrontation is going to be long-term. The conflict is tied to the fundamental issues connected, on the one hand, with Ukraine’s and Ukrainians’ desire to sever the centuries-old dependence on Russia, leave Russia’s zone of influence, and integrate into European institutions, including NATO and the EU. And on the other hand, – with Russia’s attempts to prevent such progress at any cost. Until these contradictions between Kyiv and Moscow are resolved – the confrontation will persist. And this does not hold promise for finding political solutions for Donbass conflict settlement, de-occupation and re-integration of the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in the near future.

In this connection, V. Putin’s new term as president is unlikely to bring any immediate drastic changes in key foreign policy approaches, including policy towards Ukraine. The protracted war in Donbass is not beneficial for Russia’s interests today: it prevents Russia from withdrawing from the escalating standoff with the West and having the sanctions against it relaxed. The ‘Besieged Fortress’ narrative chosen by the current Russian leadership allows for manipulating population in order to retain power, dictates the need to continue the anti-western course, even despite the fact of Russia’s unpreparedness for a long-term confrontation with the West, and the economy that is not resilient enough. So, if Russia was indeed to change its position – this could only happen as a result of the West consolidating its effort aimed at pressuring Russia, including, through extending the anti-Russian sanctions package.

It seems that the issues of conflict settlement and future relations with Russia will become the defining factor in the course of the upcoming 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine. Yet, the anti-Russian sentiment that is



**Kostiantyn  
KONONENKO,**  
*Deputy Director,  
National Institute  
for Strategic Studies*

---

now dominant in the Ukrainian society and political environment will likely prevent the future president, whoever that might be, from stepping too far outside the boundaries of Ukraine's current position.

At the same time, the newly elected leaders will be bound to respond to challenges related to the need to resolve the Donbass conflict. And this will be an objective impulse for seeking a compromise with Russia with best possible conditions for Ukraine. Surely, it will not be a fast and easy process. Its success will to a large extent depend on Russia's readiness for a real open dialogue as well (not a fake one, as the current), which, apart from the issues of achieving peace in Donbass and the status of Crimea, also needs to cover a much broader scope of issues, including the creation of a new post-conflict architecture of the Russia-Ukraine relations.

*– How real are the chances of organising a UN peacekeeping operation in Donbass taking into account the geopolitical dynamics and the positions of stakeholders? Is there a possibility of a compromise regarding the main parameters of the potential peacekeeping mission's mandate, and what concessions can Moscow and Kyiv make?*

Taking into account the current geopolitical developments, a prompt UNSC decision on the deployment of a peacekeeping mission to Donbass is unlikely.

The main difficulty in resolving this problem is the existence of Minsk agreements – a partial, but the only existing internationally approved document for de-escalation in the region. It is this document that the current international sanctions against Russia are tied to, even despite Russia's positioning of itself as a third party (not a party to the conflict) along with other mediators in the Normandy format – Germany and France. And it is this document that Russia refers to, claiming that there is no formal legal basis for a UN peacekeeping operation in Donbass.

At the same time, Minsk agreements are regularly violated by the pro-Russian forces in Donbass (that are essentially not even signatories to this document) in their first and key part – ceasefire. New agreements of the trilateral contact group in Minsk on establishing Easter truce in 2018 have been broken by the militants with the use of heavy artillery. Effectiveness of the OSCE monitoring mission, which is often sought to be used as means of political pressure on Ukraine, is very much to be questioned.

Clearly, in many aspects, positive resolution of the issue of deploying a UN peacekeeping mission to Donbass depends on Russia changing its position. Yet,

at the moment, Russia is not abandoning its attempts to destabilise the situation in Ukraine using hybrid warfare, while still denying its presence in Donbass. Russia's purpose is obvious – to pressure Ukraine into agreeing to implement the Russian version of Minsk agreements, which means defeat for Kyiv.

It is also clear that there is no more trust in this rhetoric in the international community with new facts and evidence surfacing daily testifying to Russia's military presence in Donbass and its full control of financing and civil administration in the temporarily uncontrolled Ukrainian territories. Russia, fully content with the current situation, will continue this line of confrontation policy, even despite the sanctions, unless it is offered a satisfactory compromise.

A possible compromise could be to review Minsk Package of Measures, amend it to include the approved provisions on the UN peacekeeping mission deployment to Donbass, as well as its mandate. This document would also include a number of Moscow's suggestions as to the instruments giving it certain means for legal protection of the rights of Russian-speaking Ukrainians residing on the currently occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in the course of these territories' re-integration into Ukraine. Moscow could agree to this scenario, hoping to gain additional levers for influencing the situation in Ukraine and preparing a pro-Russian revanche. Thus, Ukrainian government should be fully aware of the new challenges and calculate Ukrainian society's resilience to risks that may appear as a result of such compromise, as well as assess the law enforcement agencies' capability for effective counteraction.

### COMPROMISE REGARDING THE UN PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN DONBASS IS IMPOSSIBLE UNTIL AFTER UKRAINE'S PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

*– In your opinion, how will (do) domestic political processes in Ukraine and Russia (Putin's new presidential term, future presidential elections in Ukraine) affect the Moscow-Kyiv conflict resolution?*

Unless something extraordinary happens, domestic political processes in Russia will not have a major influence on the resolution of conflict between Kyiv and Moscow. Rather, negotiations may undergo tactical and stylistic changes, for instance, in case



**Volodymyr FESENKO,**  
Head of the Board,  
Centre for Applied  
Political Studies  
"Penta"



V. Surkov withdraws from the negotiation process and quits his position as the political coordinator for Donbass. Strategic decisions are made by President V. Putin exclusively, and his attitude to Ukraine and resolution of the conflict with Kyiv is unlikely to change. V. Putin's tactical actions regarding Ukraine will be influenced more by his relations with the West – the United States and European countries. Yet, here, rapid changes are also unlikely. In the USA, it seems, even Trump has been convinced that Russia is an adversary, towards which the US needs to take a hard line. Such hard-line policy will be supported by the new US Secretary of State M. Pompeo and National Security Advisor J. Bolton. After the Italian elections, Europe might get into the state of disarray once again, but A. Merkel and E. Macron's policy towards V. Putin is unlikely to make a 180-degree turn. ***There is a high likelihood that V. Putin will not undertake any extreme measures, even tactical ones, regarding Ukraine, until after our presidential and parliamentary elections.*** Various sources state that Russia's leadership is waiting for changes on Ukraine's political arena after the 2019 elections, and will be adjusting its tactics towards Kyiv depending on these changes.

Thus, Ukraine's domestic political processes can influence further relations between Moscow and Kyiv, and in particular, the resolution of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. However, one should not expect any "tectonic shifts" here as well. Pro-Russian candidates' (Y. Boiko or V. Rabinovych) chances of winning in Ukraine's presidential elections are slim. In case Y. Tymoshenko is elected as Ukraine's president, she can attempt to reach an agreement with V. Putin regarding ending the war in Donbass, but she will hardly agree to Russia's conditions for the rebel region's re-integration into Ukraine or any other major concessions in Russia's favour, otherwise, she will have to face strong opposition against this course from both, the Parliament and society.

Assuming A. Hrytsenko's victory in the presidential elections, Ukraine's position in negotiations with Russia is sure to even tighten. In case P. Poroshenko stays in power, there will be no fundamental changes in foreign policy. The newly elected Verkhovna Rada will be polarised regarding the issue of Eastern Ukraine's conflict settlement, yet, judging by sociological research data, the majority in the Ukrainian Parliament will be gained by forces with hostile attitude to Russia. If Moscow bids on destabilising Ukraine's domestic political situation, this is bound to heat up the confrontation both in Donbass and the Russia-Ukraine relations.

*– How real are the chances of organising a UN peacekeeping operation in Donbass taking into account the geopolitical dynamics and the positions of stakeholders? Is there a possibility of a compromise regarding the main parameters of the potential peacekeeping mission’s mandate, and what concessions can Moscow and Kyiv make?*

There is still a chance, although small, for a compromise regarding the UN peacekeeping mission in Donbass, but it is unlikely to be achieved in the nearest year and a half.

**First**, Russia is not planning to change its position. President V. Putin continues to insist that UN peacekeepers should only provide security for the OSCE monitoring mission, and not more than that. Such understanding of the UN peacekeeping mission’s functions is unacceptable for Ukraine and insufficient for other negotiation participants.

**Second**, the search for compromise regarding the UN peacekeeping mission in Donbass will be hampered by the exacerbation of US-Russia relations that has occurred in the last months. In this situation, Putin is unlikely to agree to any concessions, as he will perceive it as a demonstration of weakness. His style is to respond with similar actions to hard-line actions of his geopolitical opponents. Yet, along with this, he has to demonstrate constructive behaviour to his European negotiations partners (Germany and France). So negotiations will continue, but without any major concessions on the part of Russia.

**Third**, (and most important), approval of any compromise for a UN peacekeeping mission in Donbass is impossible until after Ukraine’s presidential and parliamentary elections. Ukraine’s election campaign will not facilitate the search for compromise on the part of Ukrainian negotiators. Even small concessions to V. Putin in the negotiation process can undermine the electoral standing of the current Ukrainian President or his potential successor.

During the election campaign, it will be impossible to pass any compromise decision regarding Donbass through the Ukrainian parliament. In this connection, there can be major risks for extending the term of the Law “On the Special Order of Local Self-Government in Separate Regions of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts”. This issue is scheduled to be voted on at the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in September - early October this year, with the presidential electoral campaign already under way. This situation, as well as elections to the highest government

bodies in the self-proclaimed DPR and LPR in the fall of 2018, which is in conflict with Minsk agreements, will be a major complication for the negotiation process aimed at peace settlement in Donbass.

The real negotiations will likely resume only after the announcement of the winner of Ukraine's presidential elections. Yet, before the end of the parliamentary election campaign, the potential new President of Ukraine will hardly go for any public deals with Putin. This is a risk in itself, and if these deals fail to bring peace, the situation could turn into an electoral catastrophe for the political force behind the new head of the Ukrainian state.



In order for the UN peacekeeping mission in Donbass to become reality, Moscow has to agree to the mission's deployment to the entire currently uncontrolled territory of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, including the sections of Ukraine-Russia border uncontrolled by Ukraine, as well as to the UN peacekeeping mission assuming law enforcement functions on these territories, which is necessary for the phased implementation of Minsk agreements.

In turn, Kyiv has to agree to separatist republics representatives' presence in provisional administrations, as well as to the full-scale implementation of the political part of Minsk agreements. The key idea of a compromise regarding the UN peacekeeping mission in Donbass that has to be approved by both parties is the agreement on establishing an international provisional administration. This administration's tasks should include: preparation of local elections in the conflict region (separate regions of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts), law enforcement, and provisional administration on this territory prior to its return under Ukraine's control. International administration and its main divisions have to be headed by representatives of the international UN mission, but it has to also include representatives of Ukraine and the current government of the self-proclaimed republics in separate regions of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (i.e., it has to be trilateral in composition).

**DUE TO THE ABSENCE OF VISIBLE  
POSSIBILITIES FOR MUTUAL CONCESSIONS,  
IT WILL BE LONG BEFORE PARTIES'  
POSITIONS ARE HARMONISED**

*– In your opinion, how will (do) domestic political processes in Ukraine and Russia (Putin's new presidential term, future presidential elections in Ukraine) affect the Moscow-Kyiv conflict resolution?*

Since the first days of V. Putin's new presidential term, it became clear that Russian leadership has not changed its position regarding Ukraine, which will be defining the Ukrainian direction of Russia's foreign policy in the near term. Russian leadership will continue asserting the "legitimacy" of Crimea's annexation, and the opening of Kerch Strait Bridge by Putin is quite a demonstrative confirmation of this. Russia will not cease its armed aggression in Donbass.

Putin's statement during the meeting with German Chancellor A. Merkel on May 18 in Sochi confirmed this – according to him, UN peacekeepers' area of action should be limited to the contact line area and the function of ensuring security of OSCE SMM monitors. In reality, this will help preserve the presence of the Russian military and weapons in Eastern Ukraine uncontrolled by the UN mission. Thus, Russia is clearly not planning to give up its goal of retaining Ukraine within its zone of influence and preventing its movement towards EU or NATO membership.

The topic of resisting Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic integration will be actively used in the information space in the course of the upcoming election campaigns in Ukraine. Indeed, this is already happening, and not just in Ukraine's information space. Information is already being disseminated that it will be possible to stabilise the situation in Eastern Europe only through NATO and EU's total abandonment of their expansion plans and giving Russia the right to consolidate the post-Soviet space as its zone of influence.

But, let us not forget that the fact of Ukraine and Georgia being refused MAP (NATO Membership Action Plan) not only failed to prevent Russia's



**Vitalii MARTYNIUK,**  
Head of International  
Programmes, Centre  
for Global Studies  
"Strategy XXI"

---

aggression against Georgia in August 2008, but also stimulated aggression against Ukraine 6 years later.

Kremlin will expect a victory of a politician loyal to Russia in Ukraine's presidential elections in spring 2019, who will be paid off for his loyalty by the termination of military activity in Eastern Ukraine, which, in turn, will create the image of a "peacemaker" for the said politician. Favourable terms for Russia's new contracts for gas supply to Ukraine and gas transit to Europe can become additional "bonuses" that will be presented as "Russian guarantees" for retaining Ukraine's transit. In turn, Kremlin will require that Ukraine gradually withdraw from the European and Euro-Atlantic integration programme, and recognise the Russian status of Crimea.

It should be noted that any presidential candidate that distances himself from the topic of Crimea, and attempts to act using the "let us resolve the Donbass issue and then deal with Crimea" tactic, will fail. In Ukraine, the issue of releasing Donbass prisoners and Ukrainian citizens imprisoned in Crimea, Sevastopol and Russia has gained utter importance.

In case presidential office is taken by the candidate that is ready to fully stand up for Ukrainian national interests and its complete independence, Russia can decide to go for escalating the situation in Eastern Ukraine, demonstrating said candidate's "inability" to bring peace and stability to the country and Eastern Europe in general. At the same time, Russia will jeopardise the new gas arrangements with Ukraine, imposing unacceptable conditions to demonstrate Ukraine's "inability to reach agreements". Such actions will have a double goal – to discredit the newly elected Ukrainian president in the eyes of the EU and the global community, and strengthen Russia's position of power to influence the upcoming parliamentary elections in Ukraine, which are scheduled to take place in the fall of the same year.

Thus, it should be expected that the electoral period in Ukraine in 2019 will include escalations in Donbass, information campaigns to discredit Ukrainian leadership, Russia's attempts to bring politicians that are loyal to it into the president's office and Ukraine's parliament.

---

<sup>1</sup> Current agreements between Russia's OAO Gazprom and NAK Naftohaz of Ukraine were signed in 2009 expiring on 31 December 2019.

*– How real are the chances of organising a UN peacekeeping operation in Donbass taking into account the geopolitical dynamics and the positions of stakeholders? Is there a possibility of a compromise regarding the main parameters of the potential peacekeeping mission's mandate, and what concessions can Moscow and Kyiv make?*

The prospects of deploying a UN peacekeeping mission to Donbass were undermined back when the Russian President V. Putin proposed deliberately unacceptable conditions in September 2017. It was clear from the very start that peacekeepers deployed only to the contact line and only with the mandate of ensuring OSCE monitors' security would not be effective in conflict resolution. And hardly any country will agree to send its military into the active military action zone (with the use of the full range of weapons), armed only with light weapons insufficient even for self-defence, unable to control the routes of arms, ammunitions and soldiers transportation into the region and curb this supply, which can lead to deterioration of the situation at any moment.

The unchangeable position of Russian leadership on this issue diminishes the possibility of UN peacekeepers appearing in Eastern Ukraine in the near future. Notably, Putin confirmed the stability of his position already after the US Special Representative for Ukraine K. Volker, in their January meeting in Dubai, handed him over the Germany, France and Ukraine-approved proposals for the deployment of peacekeepers to Donbass. Since that time, negotiators were expecting Russia's answer to these proposals. Yet, in late May, signals about Surkov's dismissal started coming in from Moscow, and Putin's position expressed in the meeting with Merkel can be viewed as Russia's expected negative answer.

Putin will not agree to US proposals, even those approved by other parties. He cannot allow for a demonstration of "weakness". At the start of his new term, he needs new "victories", such as the commissioning of the Kerch Strait Bridge, and not "defeats" in the form of concessions in resolving the conflict waged by Russia against Ukraine.

In turn, Ukrainian leadership cannot agree to the peacekeeping mission deployment conditions proposed by Russia, having the support of the US, France, Germany, UK and many other countries in this matter. Russian conditions are unacceptable because the UN mission organised within their framework will only imitate resolution of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, instead of re-establishing territorial integrity of Ukraine. Neither President of Ukraine P. Poroshenko, who has already started preparing for the upcoming presidential election, nor other Ukrainian politicians will risk making concessions to Russia and accepting such conditions.

Despite a number of differences, both the USA and the EU continue demonstrating their united position regarding the peacekeeping mission in Donbass. The parties have no more illusions as to the fact that the conflict was started by Russia and is completely controlled by it. Therefore, it is only possible to resolve it through the peacekeepers, deploying them between the belligerent parties – Russia and Ukraine, i.e., to the entire territory of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts currently uncontrolled by Ukraine’s government. Agreeing to Russia’s proposals may only prolong both, the conflict and the process of its resolution, as it will allow Russia to continue its hybrid war, the foundation of which is the concept of Russia’s professed non-involvement in the military actions, and conflict management through escalation and de-escalation on Kremlin’s signal. In this situation, instead of doing their job of establishing peace, peacekeepers will fulfil the role of observers, at best, and at worst – that of unwitting participants of actions planned by Russia and acted out by pro-Russian militants and Russian army under the direction of the latter.

Due to absence of visible possibilities for mutual concessions, the process of harmonising parties’ positions will be long and rather inefficient. Russia’s acceptance of the consolidated Ukraine-US-Germany-France position on the UN peacekeeping mission is possible only under the pressure of international sanctions and/or due to deterioration of domestic political or socio-economic situation in Russia to the level, where the Donbass conflict is pushed to the background as second or even third most important issue.

### MAIN SIGNAL IS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FIRST PROVISION OF MINSK AGREEMENTS

*– In your opinion, how will (do) domestic political processes in Ukraine and Russia (Putin’s new presidential term, future presidential elections in Ukraine) affect the Moscow-Kyiv conflict resolution?*

The ongoing political processes in Russia are not contributing to Moscow changing its approaches to the Russia-Ukraine conflict resolution. Domestic political situation in Russia – presence of a strong vertical of power, broad mandate of the security forces, operational and legislative framework for persecuting political opponents and suppressing the activity of civil society, as well as rather strong support of the president’s course from



**Olena SNIHYR**,  
Chief Analyst, Centre for  
International Studies,  
Hennadii Udoenko  
Diplomatic Academy  
of Ukraine

the Russian population, – the entire range of these factors create sufficient conditions for Moscow to continue its policy of confrontation with the allied West, and aggressive treatment of Ukraine and other neighbouring states.

The focus of Russia's foreign policy on confrontation with the West in general, and the US in particular, defined by President V. Putin in his address to the Federal Assembly on 1 March 2018, demonstrates the absence of preconditions for Russia changing its foreign policy strategy within V. Putin's current presidential term.

On the other hand, at the moment, sanctions are not a factor that can fundamentally change Russia's approaches to resolving the conflict with Kyiv. Currently, Russian government is dealing with the pressure of sanctions rather successfully due to Russia's social sector and oil market conditions. Additional stimuli for Moscow's continued aggressive expansion are expectations that: (1) Europe's unity will erode under the pressure of unfavourable political processes in separate EU countries; (2) ways to evade sanctions will be found and "impunity" conditions will be created for European partners (for instance, supply of Siemens turbines to the occupied Crimea); (3) in the medium term, additional instruments of influencing political processes in the EU countries will be gained as political forces loyal to Putin's policy come to power, and major European companies become more interested economically in expanding their cooperation with Russia.

Russia's strategy of maintaining military action in Eastern Ukraine and occupation of Crimea will remain unchanged in the next two years. Moscow will continue its attempts to legitimise the "done deal" of Crimean occupation through: (1) creating extended international horizontal ties; (2) pushing out Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians, who disagree with the occupation and annexation from the Crimean peninsula, and replacing them with newly arrived Russian citizens to create a homogenous socio-political environment, loyal to the Russian government.

The commissioning of the Kerch Strait Bridge has signified a new stage of Russia's aggression against Ukraine – driving Ukraine out of Azov Sea waters and blocking the work of Ukrainian ports in Berdiansk and Mariupol. In the future, Russia's domination in the Sea of Azov and the fading of activity of two



major Ukrainian ports will lead to a decline of economic activity in the region, a decrease in the Ukrainian citizens' standard of living, and increased social tension. All of this together, will lead to a drop in the level of stability and safety in Ukraine's South and may provoke Russia to make another attempt at occupying the region.

Russia's policy regarding the conflict in Donbass also remains unchanged, which means the continuation of low-intensity military activity. Along with this, lately, Russia-supported combatants have been using the tactic of displacing civilians from their places of residence in the territories next to the contact line currently controlled by Ukraine. This is evidenced by the increased frequency of attacks against civilian targets and civilians' houses in territories under Ukraine's control. Judging by previous experience of this conflict, such actions are a sign that illegal armed groups are preparing for further escalation and potential offensive action. *There is a high probability of escalation during Ukraine's electoral campaign and at the time of elections. The beginning of intensive military activity in Eastern Ukraine is also possible in case Moscow decides to occupy the Ukrainian part of Azov Sea coast.*

Russia is anticipating changes in Kyiv's political position as the outcome of the future presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine. We need to expect Moscow's active interference with the electoral campaign in Ukraine aiming to push through its preferred candidate into the President's office and loyal political parties – into the Ukrainian Parliament. Given the high toxicity of contacts with Moscow for the reputation of any politician attempting to win over the majority of people in Ukraine, Russia will not openly demonstrate its support for any convenient politician or political party.

Another suitable scenario for Russia regarding Ukraine is internal destabilisation of the country. In the next two years, Moscow will focus its main efforts on supporting radical left- and right-wing movements in Ukraine, instigating armed clashes between representatives of opposing ideologies and between radical forces and police.

The lack of prospects of Russia ending its aggression against Ukraine will stimulate an increase of anti-Russian sentiment in the Ukrainian society. For Ukraine, an especially dangerous political scenario would be the election of a

president loyal to Russia and termination of the Allied Forces Operation amidst the continued Russian aggression. This scenario is bound to lead to internal destabilisation and civil strife. At the same time, this scenario is extremely advantageous for Russia, as it would create a reason for an armed invasion under the pretext of “humanitarian intervention”, which, in turn, would provoke a large-scale military conflict in Eastern Europe with all the catastrophic consequences.

Taking into account the results of latest sociological studies in Ukraine, a change of Ukrainian government’s policy regarding the resolution of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine is possible only in case the Russian aggression factor disappears, conflict de-escalates and comes to an end, and Moscow declares its readiness for the deployment of a full-scale international peacekeeping mission. That said, the issue of Crimea’s occupation will remain on the agenda and will require resolution in line with the norms of international law.

*– How real are the chances of organising a UN peacekeeping operation in Donbass taking into account the geopolitical dynamics and the positions of stakeholders? Is there a possibility of a compromise regarding the main parameters of the potential peacekeeping mission’s mandate, and what concessions can Moscow and Kyiv make?*

Involvement of a UN peacekeeping mission in the resolution of the Russia-Ukraine conflict was first proposed back in April 2015 by Ukraine. Ukraine’s official position involves mission deployment to entire territory of the conflict, including mission’s full control of the Russia-Ukraine border. A key requirement is prior withdrawal of all Russian armed forces from the occupied territories and no presence of the Russian military in the peacekeeping force.

For two years, Russia has been discarding the very idea of involving UN peacekeepers. Today, Moscow is using the topic of UN peacekeepers’ involvement in resolving the conflict in Eastern Ukraine as a bargaining chip to strike deals and conduct negotiations. The vision of the mission’s mandate currently proposed by Russia demonstrates its intention to implement its old scenarios of re-integrating the occupied territories back into Ukraine, and, consequently, continue its expansion and aggression against Ukraine.

Essentially, Moscow is offering to exchange its approval of the UN peacekeeping mission deployment to the East of Ukraine for Kyiv’s recognition of the so-called DPR and LPR as parties to the conflict, and the legitimisation of illegal government formations on the occupied territories through conducting elections. It is planned to achieve these tasks through phased mission deployment with the mandate

proposed by Russian political experts: (1) mission deployment is to begin from the contact line between the Ukrainian army and illegal armed groups; (2) phased (if necessary) mission deployment to the entire occupied territory, elections are to be held and “formation of legitimate government bodies in Eastern Ukraine to be completed”; (3) according to Russian politicians, deployment of the UN peacekeeping mission to the Russia-Ukraine border is possible “after all parties have executed Minsk agreements, as well as on condition of successful execution of the peacekeeping mission on the contact line between the warring parties and adjacent sections”.

It is clear that there is no way that such “phased” deployment of the mission and legitimisation of power of the illegal armed groups in Eastern Ukraine can lead to stabilisation and security in the temporarily occupied territories. To say nothing of the fact that the more frequent shelling, illegal armed groups re-deploying heavy weapons to the contact line and Russia regularly providing them with arms demonstrate Russia’s true intentions to continue the low-intensity military conflict, where there is no place for an international UN peacekeeping mission.

Nevertheless, the peacekeeping mission as the subject of negotiations with Russia is currently almost the only direction Russia is willing to discuss. In all other issues, Kremlin has adopted a position of ignoring the proposals addressed to it, which is vividly demonstrated by the problem of political prisoners and captives.

We can assume with a high degree of probability that in the next two years it will be extremely hard to reach an agreement as to the mission’s mandate, as Moscow hopes for new possibilities in connection with presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine. It is very possible, that progress will never be reached regarding this issue, and Russia will continue using the peacekeeping mission topic to give the appearance of participating in negotiations and gain some additional time to strengthen its influence.

However, involvement of a UN peacekeeping force to end the conflict in Eastern Ukraine could be very real – this would be a perfect option for V. Putin, should he develop a desire to withdraw from Donbass and “save face” in doing so. In this case, Russia could present itself as a constructive party. The positive effect from partially lifted sanctions would be multiplied through reputational and political bonuses obtained by Russia on the international arena.

Unfortunately, at the moment, Russian leadership believes that it is more advantageous to continue its Besieged Fortress strategy and proving itself as a “super power” through aggressive expansionism. The first and main signal

that Moscow is changing its foreign policy strategy will be the execution of the first provision of Minsk agreements – cessation of mortar attacks on Ukrainian territory. In this case, UN peacekeeping mission in Eastern Ukraine will become a reality, not just a topic for discussion. Real talk about mutual concessions and the search for compromise can begin, when Moscow presents its vision of the mandate for a real UN peacekeeping mission in Eastern Ukraine (not the one supporting OSCE SMM).

**AT THE MOMENT, A UN MISSION  
TO DONBASS IS THE ONLY POSSIBLE  
OPTION FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION,  
ALBEIT HARD TO IMPLEMENT**

*– In your opinion, how will (do) domestic political processes in Ukraine and Russia (Putin’s new presidential term, future presidential elections in Ukraine) affect the Moscow-Kyiv conflict resolution?*

Presidential campaign in Russia has essentially become a prerequisite to the new cycle of confrontation between Russia and the West. Russian President’s Federal Assembly address<sup>2</sup> that has exceeded even his Munich speech by its stringent and belligerent character, has dispelled any illusions as to potential liberal shifts in Russia’s foreign and domestic policy (including those connected with the possibility of new government composition).

The overall tone and content of the Address, as well as the statements and actions of the Russian leadership that followed, generally answer the question, what Kremlin’s foreign policy during Putin’s next term in office will be. Overall, the following principles can be defined. **First.** Unequivocal readiness to stand against the West and readiness to pay the social price of this opposition. Russia has the capacity and resources for a rather long period of stagnation in the “solitude of a half-blood” mode. Moreover, according to Levada Centre data, as of March 2018, the level of protest sentiment in the Russian society is quite low. Only 8% of citizens expressed readiness to participate in protests. **Second.** Support of the Besieged Fortress philosophy and the Third Path ideology of a self-standing “civilisation state” of neither western, nor eastern type. (This ideology found its literary interpretation



**Mykhailo PASHKOV,**  
Co-director for Foreign  
Policy and International  
Security Programmes,  
Razumkov Centre

---

<sup>2</sup> Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, 1 March 2018. – Official web-site of the Russian President, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56957>.

in the momentous article by V. Surkov “Solitude of a Half-Blood”<sup>3</sup>). Unfortunately, the anti-Western sentiment is essentially becoming the sign of patriotism, a marker of the sense of nationhood. Third. Further political-ideological and socio-cultural militarisation of the country with the focus on the “middle class with shoulder marks”, security agencies, government machine, large pro-government business and affiliated media.

In fact, the beginning of V. Putin’s new term was followed by the arrival of the entire flock of “black swans” (the Salisbury poisoning and the subsequent mass diplomatic demarche, American sanctions, missile strikes against Syria, etc.). All of this, together with the existing “briefcase of negativity” is deepening the Russia-West crisis of trust. However, the downward dynamic does not rule out the possibility of dialogue. Moreover, internal political tendencies inside the EU indicate increased activity among the supporters of dialogue with Russia. Yet, this dialogue will obviously be of different nature – without the previous illusions regarding Russia’s “Europeanisation” and “liberalisation”.

Ukraine is already getting drawn into the electoral campaign. The incumbent president P.Poroshenko’s standing is rather vulnerable – on the one hand, the “success story” in the European policy (visa-free travel, the launch of implementation of the EU Association Agreement) has not transformed into tangible social results in the daily lives of citizens. On the other hand, there is neither notable progress, nor any promising prospects regarding the annexed Crimea, or the military conflict in Donbass. As the elections approach, there will be appearing and already have appeared different plans, recipes and models of resolving the situation in Donbass (for instance, Avakov’s plan “The Tactics of Small Steps...”), plans for de-occupation of Crimea, concepts of policy towards Russia, etc. It is clear that the current political environment largely provides for populist, radical approaches.

Another thing is also clear, – prior to Ukraine’s presidential elections (or even prior to the parliamentary ones), any fundamental shifts in resolving the Donbass conflict are unlikely. (Recall the long pause in the Normandy process caused by the elections in Germany and France). So, the most likely situation is preservation of the status quo with any results being postponed until 2019. Also, we cannot exclude the threat of escalation with “severe consequences for Ukraine’s statehood in general”.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> The article was published on 9 April 2018 in the “Russia in Global Affairs” journal, <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/global-processes/Odinochestvo-polukrovki-14-19477>.

<sup>4</sup> Direct Line with V. Putin on 7 June 2018. – Official web-site of the Russian President, <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57692>.

There are reasons to believe that Russia's tactic towards Ukraine will boil down to: (a) absolute refusal to consider the topic of the annexed Crimea in any form; (b) maintaining the conserved conflict in Donbass with "neither war, nor peace" and imitating peacekeeping initiatives while insisting on absolutely unacceptable conditions; (c) preparation and creation of conditions for a hybrid strike at "H-hour" – during Ukraine's presidential election campaign (and the subsequent parliamentary one).

**Kremlin will hardly remain a passive bystander in the fight for the presidential office in Ukraine.** The entire lengthy history of the Russia-Ukraine conflict allows to predict that the period of the late 2018 – early 2019 will be the time when Russia launches its campaign of comprehensive, targeted measures of interfering with Ukrainian elections. Unlike in the USA, or, for instance, in France, Kremlin has much more extensive and effective range of levers to influence Ukraine's elections. The main instruments of the "pre-election" phase of Russia's expansion will likely include:

- eroding and undermining the stability of domestic political situation via information operations, including, through the network of "agents of influence". Provoking separatist sentiment in the regions. Conducting large-scale cyberattacks (which have already taken place on numerous occasions) against critical infrastructure facilities – administration, energy, banking, transport;
- political, informational, financial support of pro-Russian political forces, media, civil society organisations, religious groups, individual activists;
- launching an information campaign aimed at discrediting Ukrainian government, pro-European and Euro-Atlantic course, internal reforms in Ukraine's media environment, social networks. Implanting the values and content of the "Russian world" ideology in people's consciousness.

These actions can have a critical effect given the complicated socio-economic situation in Ukraine and extreme vulnerability of national information space.

It can be assumed that the Russia-Ukraine conflict has not reached its absolute bottom yet.

**Out of the entire range of types of intergovernmental relations, currently, the only possible option is hostile confrontational co-existence with the threat of permanent escalation.** At least, in the medium term.

*– How real are the chances of organising a UN peacekeeping operation in Donbass taking into account the geopolitical dynamics and the positions of stakeholders? Is there a possibility of a compromise regarding the main parameters of the potential peacekeeping mission's mandate, and what concessions can Moscow and Kyiv make?*

At the moment, a UN mission to Donbass is the only possible, although hard to implement, option for resolving the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. This year, organisation of a peacekeeping operation in Donbass is unrealistic, next year – problematic, due to a number of reasons. **First**, as noted above, presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine are an obstacle to this process. Russia and the West will be solving peacemaking issues already with the new Ukrainian government.

**Second**, the very procedure of analysis, assessment, planning and organising a UN operation is rather complicated and multi-phased. We are talking about preparation of an overall strategic assessment, deployment of an advance technical assessment mission, drafting cost estimates, preparation of UNSC Resolution, UN General Assembly approval of operation budget, development of operation roadmaps by UN departments, staff recruitment, etc.<sup>5</sup> By the way, the financial element is quite important here, as, according to different estimates, Ukraine will need a large-scale operation involving at least 20 thousand people as part of the military, police and civil contingent.

**Third**, the chances for organising this mission will greatly depend on the state of affairs between Russia and the US. In the event of a hypothetical warming of ties between Moscow and Washington D.C., a UN mission in Eastern Ukraine could become one of the mutual concessions in the package of compromises. Yet, this option does not seem to realistic.

**Fourth**, parties' positions are drastically different. Russia's proposed option of using UN blue helmets as escort for OSCE monitoring mission is essentially a scenario for freezing the conflict, as guarding the mission that does not resolve anything – is a road to nowhere. On the other hand, phased deployment of a multi-functional mission into the occupied territory in exchange for political decisions made by Kyiv is only possible on condition of lasting and irreversible ceasefire, demilitarisation of the entire conflict area (withdrawal of foreign troops and mercenaries) and establishing of control over the border. Thus, political steps will be implemented by Kyiv within the framework of the current Constitution and national legislation.

Russia's demand for direct negotiations between Ukrainian government and DPR/LPR leaders seems unacceptable. That is as good as coming to a puppet

<sup>5</sup> As of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2018, 15 peacekeeping operations are led worldwide by the UN, with the total budget of \$6.8 bln.

theatre and making agreements about producing a play with puppets, instead of the puppeteer. However, as a compromise, a trilateral contact group model could be chosen for the discussion of peacekeeping issues, with involvement of official UN representatives.

There are reasons to believe that DPR/LPR militants are, to put it mildly, not interested in broad international presence on the occupied territories, as this will uncover the facts of their crimes: from unnamed burial grounds and flooded mines, to pillaged and displaced factories (by the way, Crimea is also closed off for international observation missions and human rights organisations).

Today, the prospects of peacemaking in Donbass are uncertain. It seems that all parties support the idea of peacekeepers' deployment to Eastern Ukraine, yet, as the saying goes, "the devil is in the detail" of the hypothetical UN mission's mandate. There are grounds to talk about at least year-long negotiation marathon taking place on different platforms with an uncertain outcome. So far, the conflict has resulted in 10 thousand dead, 24 thousand wounded, and approximately 1.5 mln displaced persons. A year-long "pause" means new victims and new losses for civilians. The first urgent task of key importance is to stop the "assembly line of death" in Donbass.

**So we should be talking about swift action to minimise tensions, dial back the confrontation, prevent the escalation of aggression.** This is the obvious minimum. The five years of war is a rather convincing proof that there is no "express solution" to the Donbass conflict.<sup>6</sup>

I believe that the idea of temporarily "freezing" the conflict proposed by the author of this material in the expert meeting in February 2017 in Berlin is still relevant.<sup>7</sup> The idea is to single out the first three provisions of the Minsk agreements (ceasefire, withdrawal of arms and effective monitoring of the warring parties' compliance with these provisions), compile them as a separate peace agreement (memorandum), and approve it in the Normandy format, without any additional political requirements or conditions. Goals – termination of military activity, disengagement of conflicting parties, establishment of a 400-km buffer zone along the frontline. Stable lasting ceasefire will definitely influence the atmosphere, tone and character of negotiations in both formats, Minsk and Normandy. On the other hand, this is a key condition for the peacekeeping operation.

---

<sup>6</sup> As an illustration, let us remember the four conflicts in the post-Soviet space that have been "frozen" for a quarter of a century. The control panel for these conflicts that regulates their temperature and intensity is in Kremlin's office No.1.

<sup>7</sup> See: Russia-Ukraine Conflict in the Context of Geopolitical Change. Kyiv, 2017, p.15.



## RUSSIAN EXPERTS

**THE PEACEKEEPING MISSION  
SHOULD NOT FREEZE THE CONFLICT,  
BUT FACILITATE ITS RESOLUTION**
**1. Background Factors**

I would not exaggerate the importance of election cycles in Russia and Ukraine. Not because they do not affect the resolution process, – of course, they do. Here, as always happens in political affairs, there are crossroads, different options to choose from and points of no return. But there is no determinism or fatalism in this regard. Resolving this conflict, if deemed possible and desirable, may well become a strong prospective programme of the incumbent political leader, if he is confident in the success of this undertaking.

Lack of confidence in the possibility of settlement, unwillingness or even fear of reaching it, will clearly work against such settlement in the pre-election period, and, consequently, will increase tensions in the course of the election campaign. Both alternatives are possible.

But I believe that another aspect is more important. Resolution of the Ukrainian crisis is now increasingly affected by other complications and obstacles that are not related to domestic political processes, including the elections in Ukraine and Russia. While in the past four years, Russia's relationship with the West in general, and the US in particular, has been a hostage to the unresolved conflict in Ukraine, currently the situation is exactly the opposite: *settlement of the conflict is becoming increasingly dependent on relations between Russia and the West, which are deteriorating for various reasons that are not related to the conflict* (the alleged Russian interference in the US elections, mystical "Skrripal case", disputes over Russia's and US's compliance with the 1987 Treaty on intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles, the Syrian knot, etc.).

These disputes overshadow the Ukrainian issue, and push it further to the background of the US-Russia relations. New American sanctions against Moscow are no longer connected with implementation of the Minsk agreements and resolving the conflict in the East of Ukraine. A year ago it seemed that a



**Andrey ZAGORSKY**,  
Head of the Disarmament  
and Conflict Resolution  
Department,  
Primakov National Institute  
of World Economy and  
International Relations,  
Russian Academy of  
Sciences

distinct progress in establishing an effective ceasefire in Donbass could become the first step towards a gradual improvement of relations between Russia and the West. This is what prompted interest in deploying a UN peacekeeping operation there.

At the moment, this solution will not prompt the US to relax sanctions on Russia, and only partially – the EU. This cannot but reduce the incentive to resolve the conflict and deploy a peacekeeping operation. While a year ago, a progress in conflict settlement could contribute to improving Russia's relations with Western countries, *today, it becomes increasingly more dependent on the improvement of relations between Russia and the West, mainly – the US-Russia relations.*

As a result, the chances of reaching an agreement on the deployment of a UN peacekeeping operation in the East of Ukraine and the establishment of an effective ceasefire regime here, seem even more unrealistic than six months ago.

## 2. Peacekeeping Operation

Nevertheless, if we consider a potential deployment of such an operation in the future, we need to bear the following aspects in mind.

Concept-wise, the available scenarios for a peacekeeping operation<sup>1</sup> have a lot in common. Even though they have some discrepancies, they are not fundamental. They propose, among other things, reasonable and workable compromises between the initial positions of Kyiv and Moscow, which seem to directly contradict each other. In the course of discussion of these proposals, bottlenecks have also emerged that require further elaboration.

Almost all schemes are based on two fundamentally important ideas. **First**, the peacekeeping operation is not meant to substitute the 2015 Minsk agreements, but to facilitate their implementation, unlock the stalemated Minsk process and secure its further progress by ensuring the cessation of hostilities in the conflict zone.

---

<sup>1</sup> See, i.a.: Arbatov A., Voitlovskii F., Dynkin A., Zagorskii A., Trubnikov V. Peace for Donbass. Russian Newspaper. Federal Issue No. 7470, 2018, 16 January. URL: <https://www.rg.ru/2018/01/15/kak-prodvinutsia-v-uregulirovanii-konflikta-na-iugo-vostoke-ukrainy.html>; Kortunov A. The Price of Peace: Parameters of Possible Donbass Compromise//RIAC (Russian International Affairs Council), 2017, 27 September. URL: <http://russiancouncil.ru/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/tsena-mira-parametry-vozmozhnogo-kompromissa-v-donbasse/>; Kortunov A. Will Donbass Finally See UN Peacekeepers?//RIAC, 2017, 6 December. URL: <http://russiancouncil.ru/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/dozhdyetsya-li-donbass-mirotvortsev-oon/>; Gowan R. Can the United Nations Unite Ukraine? Washington, D.C.: Hudson Institute, 2018.

*Second*, the peacekeeping operation should be planned in such a way that it does not lead to freezing the conflict, instead of its settlement. Freezing the conflict and turning Eastern Ukraine into another (larger) Transnistria for an indefinite period is not in Russia's interest.

### **Mandate**

We believe that the primary task of the peacekeeping operation should be to guarantee the implementation of the Minsk agreements on the ceasefire that are constantly violated by both sides. Therefore, as a first step, it seems reasonable **to deploy peacekeeping forces on both sides of the contact line in the safety zone**, where heavy weapons should be withdrawn in accordance with the Minsk agreements. Special attention should be paid to disengaging the parties' forces in the areas, where armed clashes occur most often and where critical infrastructure facilities are located, the disabling of which could further aggravate the humanitarian crisis.

In order to effectively achieve these tasks, it will not be enough to simply deploy military observers or disengage the forces, which, on numerous occasions in the UN history, had to helplessly watch the outbreaks of confrontation and, in the best case scenario, register them, as is currently done by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission.

Apart from investigating armed incidents in the safety zone and maintaining channels of communication between parties to the conflict in order to prevent further escalation of such incidents, the mission must have the right and possibility to end ceasefire violations on any side, prevent the return of heavy weapons into the safety zone, ensure, if necessary, the safety of civilians and critical infrastructure facilities, suppress attempts to prevent it from fulfilling its mandate. Starting from 1999, these elements, which are based on provisions of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, are included in the mandates of most of the UN peacekeeping operations.<sup>2</sup>

The peacekeeping mission must have a sufficient number of staff and armaments to carry out its mandate. Since its mandate should allow for a limited use of force, such an operation can only be approved by a decision of the UN Security Council. OSCE documents do not provide for it to carry out operations with such a mandate. This is why shifting the discussion on a peacekeeping mission in Eastern Ukraine to the UN Security Council is a step in the right direction.

---

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the doctrine and international peacekeeping practices, see: Zagorsii A.V. *Peacekeeping and International Management of Regional Security*. M.: IMEMO RAN (Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences), 2015.

## Composition

The United Nations peacekeepers should be impartial. They cannot show support for any of the parties to the conflict, although they can and should curb any attempts to disrupt ceasefire or actions that threaten the security and life of civilians.

Moscow's desire to guarantee the security of the population in the Eastern Ukraine by deploying its own peacekeepers under the UN flag makes sense. But it is unlikely to succeed in convincing the UN Security Council of the impartiality of Russian peacekeepers. Moscow's sympathy for Donetsk and Luhansk and animosity towards Kyiv authorities are too obvious. Moreover, the most probable outcome of deploying Russian peacekeeping forces would be the "transnistriation" of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, which, as we believe, is not in Russia's interest and does not contribute to the settlement of the conflict.

It would be equally unacceptable for Russia to have the United States or other NATO countries' troops included in the peacekeeping mission. Given the fact that it is preferable to staff the mission with the forces of OSCE member-states, the choice is not too large. *Possibly, forces of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Serbia (if they agree to provide them), neutral European states, including neutral EU member states such as Austria, Finland, Sweden, could be perceived as unbiased peacekeepers by all parties.*

However, it should be borne in mind that neutral European states, as a rule, abstain from participating in peacekeeping operations that provide for the possibility of even limited use of military force, and, moreover, have limited number of troops that can be made available to the UN.<sup>3</sup> Due to this, we should not exclude the possibility of involving forces from countries located in other regions that have diverse experience of participating in operations under the UN flag, such as Brazil. The ability to expand geography in order to generate forces for the operation is another comparative advantage of the UN.

In order to compensate for the shortcomings associated with the inability of Russian and Ukrainian forces to participate in the peacekeeping operation, additional measures could be incorporated that would ensure that all interested parties are sufficiently satisfied with the transparency of the said mission's work and guarantee its impartiality. *For instance, there is a possibility of including unarmed*

---

<sup>3</sup> According to different, yet largely coincident preliminary assessments that require further confirmation, the size of the peacekeeping mission that needs to be deployed in Eastern Ukraine is approximately 20 thousand people. See: Gowan R. Can the United Nations Unite Ukraine? pp. 4, 24.

*observers from Russia and Ukraine into the mission, expanding the mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to include monitoring of UN peacekeepers' performance of their tasks.* There is also an option of cooperation between the peacekeepers and the Russia-Ukraine Joint Centre for Control and Coordination created in the fall of 2014, which work however is currently at a standstill.

### Parties Essential to the Agreement

Russia and Ukraine have directly opposite views on Donetsk and Luhansk joining the discussion on defining the framework of UN peacekeeping operation. While Moscow insists on their inclusion, Kyiv stands against it and considers Russia (not DPR and LPR) a party to the conflict. ***At the same time, the peacekeeping operation, which is based on the existing UN doctrine and practices, requires official approval of the operation's mandate by DPR and LPR leaders,*** and reaching standard agreements with them, in particular, on the issues of safety of international staff, cooperation in the course of operation deployment and execution of its mandate.<sup>4</sup>

We believe that given sufficient political will, this issue can be resolved without waiting for Russia and Ukraine to agree on this matter. The UN Security Council is responsible for drafting the mission's mandate, whereas involving DPR and LPR representatives at this stage is not required. Neither is any new agreement between parties. Minsk agreements alone are enough for the Security Council to make a decision on the deployment of a mission, as they contain ceasefire provisions, which are to be ensured by the future mission.

Ukraine's approval alone (as the host country) is also not sufficient. UN peacekeeping doctrine requires approval of all parties concerned, especially those, who ensure the security of mission staff. ***Without signing a standard memorandum with representatives of DPR and LPR (and Ukraine), no state will send its forces to the conflict zone.***

To deploy the operation, signing a memorandum with DPR and LPR (and Ukraine) will suffice the UN representatives. Such memorandums should capture all parties' agreement with the peacekeepers' mandate, as well as the necessary guarantees. Otherwise, DPR and LPR will not be bound by any obligations towards the peacekeepers. According to international practices, the signing of such memorandums does not mean the recognition of the self-proclaimed republics.

<sup>4</sup> See: Gowan R. Can the United Nations Unite Ukraine?

## Further Steps

As the ceasefire regime sets in and the situation in the safety zone stabilises, the peacekeeping mission's geographical scope could be gradually expanded. This could be accompanied by a growing international presence that *would serve as an international provisional administration, and whose task would be to assist in implementing the political aspects of the Minsk agreements*. Expanding the peacekeeping mission, one of the tasks of which is to ensure the security of its personnel, would help to establish control over the Ukrainian-Russian border after the elections and complete the process of forming legitimate government agencies in the East of Ukraine.

Expanding the geographical scope of a peacekeeping mission should run parallel to a phased implementation of the Minsk accords.

In order to avoid creating a “frozen conflict” after a peacekeeping operation is deployed along the contact line, it is important that the UN Security Council decision incorporates a sequence of steps to ensure the process including the establishing of control over the Ukrainian-Russian border in the conflict area, and specific criteria (military and political) for transitioning between the stages. A special representative of UN Secretary-General and OSCE Chairperson-in-Office (see below) should be responsible for monitoring the compliance with the relevant requirements (in consultations with interested parties).

## International Provisional Administration

Besides deploying a peacekeeping mission to consolidate the ceasefire regime, it would be appropriate to increase international presence in the Eastern Ukraine to assist in resolving the political aspects of the Minsk agreements (apart from those that depend exclusively on Kyiv, including the adoption of relevant laws and constitutional acts).

We believe that such presence would be required for the entire special status period of separate regions in the Eastern Ukraine. Its purpose is to coordinate the work of different international structures aimed at solving post-conflict reconstruction tasks, including preparation and conduct of elections, formation of legitimate government institutions, return of refugees and internally displaced persons, law enforcement, ensuring independent justice, economic recovery, delivery of humanitarian aid, reintegration of territories affected by conflict into Ukraine and other tasks.

Several options for deploying an international provisional administration in the conflict zone are possible. Option one: a comprehensive multifunctional United Nations peacebuilding mission could be deployed to the area on the basis of a UN peacekeeping mission, replacing the OSCE.

Option two: deploying an OSCE peacebuilding mission, the security of operation of which would be ensured by UN peacekeepers.

Option three (hybrid): a multicomponent international presence with division of duties between different international organisations, each of them serving a special purpose.

Option three seems to be the best one due to a number of reasons. First, we believe it is undesirable to remove the OSCE from resolving a wider range of peacebuilding tasks. OSCE's advantage is that it is already stationed in the conflict area, knows the situation from the inside, and has established contacts with the opposing sides. This experience should be used to the maximum, not to mention the fact that deploying a multicomponent UN peacebuilding mission would require a lot of time, both from a financial perspective and in terms of its staffing.

At the same time, we believe it is ill-advised to simply expand the mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) – not only because certain tasks even within the organisation are being addressed by its specialised units (the issues of observing elections and their conduct in any case will be dealt with by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), not the SMM), but also because any attempt to open the SMM mandate and renegotiate it, under current conditions, can result in the closure of this mission.

For this reason, the best scenario for expanding international presence in the conflict area most likely involves various organisations, including the UN (peacekeepers), OSCE (SMM, ODIHR and, possibly, additional missions), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Committee of the Red Cross and others that are, as a matter of fact, already carrying out their activity in the conflict zone. In this situation, the main task will be to coordinate the work of different organisations. Given that the UN and OSCE missions will be the basis of international presence in the conflict zone, it is recommended to merge the positions of the special representative of the UN Secretary-General and OSCE Chairperson-in-Office into one.

**ANY NEW SETTLEMENT INITIATIVES  
AND PROPOSALS CAN BE CONSIDERED  
ONLY WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK  
FORMULATED BY RUSSIA**



**Dmitriy DANILOV**,  
Professor of MGIMO  
University of the Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs of the  
Russian Federation, Head  
of the European Security  
Department of the Institute  
of Europe, Russian  
Academy of Sciences

*– In your opinion, how will (do) domestic political processes in Ukraine and Russia (Putin’s new presidential term, future presidential elections in Ukraine) affect the Moscow-Kyiv conflict resolution?*

After Putin’s re-election for the next presidential term (2018-2024), given the high voter turnout and the President’s rating, basic characteristic of Russia’s foreign and security policy will be its consistency and a step-by-step promotion of long-term interests and priorities. We will continue working on consolidating Russia’s foreign policy positions embedded in the overall strategic line defined by Putin earlier, which has a general support of the Russian society, despite the existing domestic issues. Not even a proof of it, rather – an illustration, is the fact that key leadership positions in Russia are occupied by the same people, first of all, D. Medvedev as the Prime Minister as well as the head of security forces.

For Russia’s partners/opponents this means two things.

**First** – sanctions did not force the “regime” either to surrender or to change. If the sanctions indeed are working, – from the point of view of their goals, – they are working in the opposite direction. Sanctions not only failed to make Kremlin change its course, but made Russia ever more focused, activating the support of the Russian society. At the same time, anti-Russian sanctions are becoming an increasingly problematic issue in internal European and transatlantic relations, eroding the Western camp fighting against Russia’s “aggression” and “revisionism”.

**Second** – the newly elected Russian president will rely on this foundation and defend Russia’s positions even more rigorously. Changes in the external environment, even if they are viewed as unfavourable and anti-Russian, will be an additional motivation to strengthen Russia’s endurance – deterring opponents and adversaries, on the one hand, and strengthening government’s internal socio-political platform, on the other. Readiness for compromise in the new electoral cycle is increasing, but only within the limits of sovereignty as outlined by Moscow, key concerns and fundamental positions, including “red lines” in relations with the West.



---

In this connection, the conditions of the “Ukraine conflict” equation look unalterable in its Russian part. **Any new settlement initiatives, proposals and potential progress in the South-East can be considered only within the framework of the constants that have been formulated by Russia: Crimea is an inseparable part of the Russian Federation; full implementation of the Minsk agreements in line with the algorithm they provide for; Russia is not a party to Ukraine’s internal crisis; political settlement cannot happen until Kyiv fulfils previously reached agreements, and, particularly, until the lawful interests of DPR and LPR are taken into account, including a direct dialogue between the conflicting parties in the South-East; a UN peacekeeping mission is only possible as a support operation for the OSCE mission.**

In other words, chances for the Russian position to change depend not on the mission’s key parameters, but on a political and diplomatic tactics in a changing environment.

One of these changes is the start of a new electoral cycle in Ukraine, i.e. the upcoming 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections. Russia has confirmed that it views Kyiv’s reluctance and inability to implement Minsk agreements as the main barrier to a conflict settlement. In this connection, Moscow is not expecting any breakthrough or change during the campaign period in Ukraine that is narrowing down the ruling party’s range of options and ability to negotiate a crisis settlement.

Thus, Ukrainian elections in 2019 are turning into a stumbling block in exploring options to resolve the conflict on the one hand, and a problem that complicates maintaining the status quo in the conflict zone and the Minsk process itself, on the other.

In this situation, Moscow will affirm its position, according to which the settlement process should not depend on the struggle for power aggravating inside Ukraine, and it is necessary to contain potentially destabilising effects of the electoral factor. According to State Secretary, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Grigory Karasin, “Minsk agreements should be fully executed regardless of what happens in Ukraine”.<sup>5</sup>

Seeking (and finding) a Russian hybrid “footmark” in the course of Ukrainian elections can hardly have any objective grounds, although the use of such political

---

<sup>5</sup> Interview of State Secretary, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Grigory Karasin to RBK news agency on 1 June 2018 – РБК, <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/01/06/2018/5b1001269a79477217facd35>.

technologies for the sake of propaganda is very likely. Conspiracy schemes about Kremlin's meddling with future Ukrainian elections clearly contradict the actual motivation Moscow has. Moscow is interested in demonstrating, and, moreover, preserving its detached restraint and waiting for the outcomes of Ukraine's domestic political developments and election results.

*First*, after the Russian elections, Kremlin is making an effort to improve its positions in relations with foreign partners at this new stage, and lay the foundation for positive dynamics. Moscow does not need new problems. It will work on cementing and promoting the achieved results and preventing any accusations of "provocative behaviour".

*Second*, the main thing for Russia, and, apparently, for other foreign stakeholders as well, is the Ukrainian government's willingness to negotiate. In this regard, P. Poroshenko is already seen as a president that is "going down"; he has proved unable to "live up to expectations", that is why his current ratings are low not just inside the country, but also on the international scene.

*Third*, playing the "Russia's interference" card (or levers of influence) in elections is not only pointless, but also counterproductive, as this could only exacerbate Ukraine's domestic political struggle and significantly complicate the position of any future government and its ability to achieve relative stability in the next five years.

Under current conditions, Moscow is obviously not likely to show preference for any political forces in Ukraine; rather, it expects a future Ukrainian government to have a more realist approach and to restrict the influence of radical forces. The change of government and arrival of new leaders will start a new political and diplomatic cycle opening a new window of opportunities, and it is important that Kremlin, as well its future partners, takes up an advantageous position.

Moscow does not rule out the possibility of P. Poroshenko's re-election, despite his small chances of getting to the second round, and minimal chances of actually winning the election. Tellingly, V. Putin is prepared to maintain direct contact with the Ukrainian President – they had a telephone conversation prior to the Normandy Four meeting on 11 June 2018. The unlikely option of "rising from the dead", if Poroshenko's declining ratings for some reasons do not prevent his re-election, is a challenge for Ukraine, not Kremlin. In this situation, Kyiv will become even weaker, as the internal strife will intensify and absorb all the energy of competing political groups and factions.

It is likely that we need to consider other potential risks connected with Poroshenko's attempts to remain in power. According to latest public opinion, the incumbent president does not possess sufficient electoral resources to win the

---

2019 elections – Poroshenko Bloc is behind Y. Tymoshenko’s “Batkivshchyna” and slightly ahead of the two or three “catching-up” parties. This means that Poroshenko has to work hard to retrieve the situation. However, the “domestic front” remains unchanged, reforms are stalled, and there is nothing to offer the constituents. Therefore, it is essential to demonstrate a successful foreign policy by securing the support of foreign partners; and to continue resisting the “aggressor” as well as ensuring that “de-occupation” and “re-integration” policies are effective.

Yet, securing foreign support has been problematic. Many Western partners have shifted their focus: even though the West still disapproves of Russia, this no longer means showing a consolidated support for Ukraine and even less so for Poroshenko. The hardest line is still that of the US government, but the worsening relationship between the US and Europe does not allow Kyiv to count on America’s leading role in terms of Western policy on Ukraine.

Relying on the “frontline success” has been even more problematic, although, it would seem – even more motivated – after the adoption (on 18 January 2018) of the Law “On the peculiarities of state policy on ensuring Ukraine’s state sovereignty over the temporarily occupied territories in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts” and the subsequent transformation of the SSU anti-terrorist operation (on 30 April 2018) into the allied forces operation under the command of Ukraine’s Armed Forces. Such a transformation has to be supported by results and military achievements. Moreover, the Supreme Commander is now directly responsible for the situation in the conflict area and activity of the Armed Forces. It was P. Poroshenko (to whom the Supreme Allied Commander is accountable) who has set the task for “allied forces to be capable of not only defending, but also liberating the occupied territories”. So far, this has been demonstrated by increasing combat readiness and manoeuvrability, not only as part of local tactical actions, regrouping and strengthening positions, including in the “gray areas”, but also via allied forces exercises in Donbass, including aviation exercises (on May 28) – “to achieve high-level operational interoperability between aviation units and allied armed units”. Starting from May 15, the allied forces are already operating based on the “active defence” principle that contains execution of strategic tasks and goals.

However, at the time, when Ukraine’s Normandy format partners are investing significant effort in strengthening the political dimension of conflict resolution (i.e. in the framework of Normandy Four meeting on 11 June 2018); when the Security Council has agreed on and approved the Presidential Statement on June 6 (Russia – on 1 June 2018); when parties have been successful in avoiding the politicisation of the World Cup held in Russia that the UN Secretary-General

is planning to attend the event, etc. In these conditions, any attempts to resort to force or take any destabilising steps that contradict efforts of the Security Council and Normandy format would be viewed as irresponsible and provocative.

Such actions would not only be disastrous for P. Poroshenko, but, as V. Putin has warned, would also jeopardise the Ukrainian statehood. In turn, DPR leaders talk about a possible response to the allied forces' actions i.e. to cancel the withdrawal of troops and weapons to one out of three pilot areas, and their overall readiness to provide an adequate military response. Simultaneously with Ukrainian Armed Forces' exercises in the Azov Sea (with a number of sea basin areas closed off until September 1), DPR has organised first large-scale 11-day military exercises. The exercises involved over 20,000 military and administrative personnel and were aimed at practicing defensive and counter-offensive actions and ensuring the security of civilians. V. Putin assured that Russia will continue to support the self-proclaimed republics, and the Minsk agreements have been the only way to resolve the conflict.

P. Poroshenko is fully aware that the situation has changed and has already declared that the idea of a reckless allied forces offensive in Donbass is “unacceptably extreme”, and “will take lives of millions of Ukrainian heroes” and is not “the way to peace” (as well as the other extreme option – capitulation and “surrender of the Ukrainian land”).

An alternative scenario for Ukraine is “Avakov’s plan” on conducting a police operation without the involvement of the armed forces. However, this scenario is closely tied to the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission that is viewed as a support operation for Kyiv’s integrated police, border and legal measures to ensure a phased “de-occupation” of TOTDLO – “temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts”, in line with the law on reintegration.

Clearly, this algorithm is unacceptable, first of all, for DPR/LPR. Such proposals create additional obstacles to a productive discussion on the UN peacekeeping mission. Russia, which in fact has initiated the talks on the deployment of a UN mission in September 2017, is not ready to support “the overall discourse on launching an operation for ‘peace enforcement’ and forceful ‘return’ of Donbass republics using UN ‘blue helmets’ with broad military administration powers (including border control) on top of everything”.<sup>6</sup> According to Grigory Karasin, “this is being done amid Kyiv declaring its plans for a ‘clean up’ operation in Donbass as a priority task preceding political regulation”.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Interview of State Secretary, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Grigory Karasin to RBK news agency on 1 June 2018 – <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/01/06/2018/5b1001269a79477217facd35>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

---

*– How real are the chances of organising a UN peacekeeping operation in Donbass taking into account the geopolitical dynamics and the positions of stakeholders? Is there a possibility of a compromise regarding the main parameters of the potential peacekeeping mission’s mandate, and what concessions can Moscow and Kyiv make?*

The above-mentioned statement by Grigory Karasin represents Russia’s position quite clearly: the UN peacekeeping mission should not undermine or blur the boundaries of the Minsk process, it can only be organised in the framework of Minsk agreements in order to support their full execution. As V. Putin said in the meeting with A. Merkel on 2 May 2017, “we cannot make new plans without having achieved at least some basic results in what we have agreed to in the previous years”. This is why the draft resolution that Moscow sent to the UN Security Council for consideration says that the mission would protect the OSCE monitors on the contact line.

Until now, Germany’s and the United States’ attempts to convince Moscow that a UN mission should cover the entire territory of Ukraine, including parts of the border that are not controlled by Ukraine, have not yielded any results. V. Putin disagrees with A. Merkel’s position, which is to “ensure that Ukraine has access to its state border that is also a part of the Minsk agreements, and then ensure a political settlement aimed at holding local elections”. Moscow is aware of unacceptable risks, including for civilians, connected with Kyiv’s attempts to use a UN mission to block Russia’s support for DPR and LPR and to implement a “military operation” scenario.

Potentially, there is a possibility to discuss options for a phased operation, with each of its stages being tied to the progress and results of political settlement, and requiring a separate mandate approval for each phase. For instance, EU’s naval Operation Sofia in the Mediterranean is organised in this way. It includes a step-by-step implementation of goals and objectives in three phases.

Yet, again, this would be extremely difficult in the face of significantly different or antagonistic interests of the “developers”, as tying together the settlement process and the process of negotiating a UN peacekeeping mandate, instead of contributing to the settlement, would become another powerful obstacle for the Minsk process. At the same time, parties could consider a compromise: adopting the Russian proposal, but with the prospect of further gradual mandate expansion – its geographical scope, political goals and practical tasks.

If such actions on the Russian part were indeed possible, it would be on the terms that Kyiv strongly refuses to accept – recognising Donbass as a party to the conflict. Putin’s position is perfectly clear and Kremlin will be persistent in upholding it: it is necessary to “make representatives of Kyiv government and representatives of these unrecognised republics sit down at the negotiating table. It is impossible to achieve conflict resolution without a direct dialogue between the conflicting parties. This has never happened. And I hope that one day it will”.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, Moscow believes that recognising DPR/LPR as a party to the conflict is impossible exactly because Kyiv is not willing to implement the Minsk agreements and, consequently, the necessary conditions for organising a peacekeeping mission will not be created. As Grigory Karasin said, “Kyiv authorities must be ready to start a productive dialogue with Donetsk and Luhansk. As soon as Kyiv realises that implementing the Minsk Package of Measures does not mean Ukraine’s capitulation, but rather its chance to emerge from a prolonged crisis, we can hope for progress”.<sup>9</sup>

So when Moscow stresses that it is ready “despite obvious differences in approaches to the UN role in Donbass, [...] to continue with consultations in order to find mutually acceptable solutions”, it is throwing the ball to the Ukrainian side of the court. After the meetings between V. Putin with A. Merkel and E. Macron in May 2018, the discussion of the UN peacekeeping mission was set as one of the key issues on the agenda of the Normandy Four meeting (along with the exchange of “detainees” and “ceasefire”). Kyiv probably realises that recognising DPR/LPR as a party to the conflict, which is a challenge for Ukraine’s current leadership, is a necessary precondition for adopting a UN mission mandate, but not a sufficient one. In case Kyiv is unprepared to start a dialogue with today’s ORDLO (separate districts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts), there should be guarantees regarding this for the introduction of the UN peacekeeping operation to support the settlement (re-integration) process.

Without going into the organisational and technical detail of establishing a UN peacekeeping mission, we should also take into account the “electoral” constraints that we have discussed above. It is hardly realistic to expect that Moscow and Kyiv will invest political capital and diplomatic resources in resolving the

---

<sup>8</sup> Materials from V. Putin and A. Merkel’s meeting in Sochi on 2 May 2017. – <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54430>.

<sup>9</sup> Interview of State Secretary, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Grigory Karasin to RBK news agency on 1 June 2018.

issue that will outlive the incumbent leadership in Ukraine, which in turn treats the topic of a UN peacekeeping mission as part of the upcoming elections and the on-going electoral campaign.

In connection with this, the participants of the June “Normandy Four” meeting in Berlin have mismatched expectations. E. Macron believes that without progress in the matters of security, policy, in the humanitarian sector and economy, the credibility of the current peace process becomes questionable. On June 8, French foreign affairs ministry reported in a briefing that during the June 11 Berlin meeting “France and Germany will present Ukraine and Russia with options for actions in each area in order to stimulate the positive dynamics of progressing towards full implementation of Minsk agreements”.

Shortly before that, the head of Russia’s MFA Sergey Lavrov noted that the “Normandy four” meeting in Berlin will be a “caricature” meeting unable to solve the two issues – withdrawal of troops from Stanytsia Luhanska and the discussion of the “Steinmeier formula”. His deputy A. Grushko made it clear that Moscow does not have high expectations for the upcoming meeting: “Our expectations are always connected with the fact that such meetings, especially high-level and summit meetings, have to bring specific results. They have to lead to specific steps towards the execution of Minsk agreements, even if these steps are small”<sup>10</sup>.

## UN MISSION PROSPECTS LOOK RATHER VAGUE

*– In your opinion, how will (do) domestic political processes in Ukraine and Russia (Putin’s new presidential term, future presidential elections in Ukraine) affect the Moscow-Kyiv conflict resolution?*

The domestic political situation in Russia and Ukraine does not compel the two sides to resolve the conflict.

The outcome of the presidential election in Russia has once again demonstrated that Russian people support this type of foreign policy that President Putin has conducted since 2014, and that the majority of Russian population do not see



**Tatiana PARKHALINA**,  
Deputy Director,  
Institute of Scientific  
Information for  
Social Sciences,  
Russian Academy of  
Sciences

<sup>10</sup> Grushko: Russia expects the “Normandy four” meeting to bring specific results. TASS, 4 June 2018 – , <http://tass.ru/politika/5262192>.

the connection between foreign policy aimed at confrontation with the West and bringing Russia's neighbours back into the Russian zone of influence, and the current economic situation in the country that directly affects the life of citizens. According to different surveys, politicians with steadily high ratings besides Putin include Minister of Defence S. Shoygu and Minister of Foreign Affairs S. Lavrov. According to the majority, these are the politicians that take a hard line in advancing Russia's interests in the world.

Thus, at the moment, there are no political motives to change the situation in the South-Eastern Ukraine, and if such a possibility does present itself due to a slight reformatting of the political landscape – it may only happen in a distant future.

Of course, the sanctions (especially the latest US sanctions) have a rather serious impact on the Russian economy, essentially, impeding its growth. The term “stable stagnation” is now being used even by the newly appointed government, which is a sign that despite any declarative and populist claims that Russian economy is improving, the real situation (previously, according to A. Kudrin, sanctions reduced Russia's GDP by 0.2% of the GDP, and the latest ones will take another 0.5%)<sup>11</sup> is a matter of concern for public officials and experts still more or less capable of thinking realistically.

The new US sanctions can have even more significant effect on the state of the Russian economy, in case they are extraterritorial, and joined in by the Europeans. This matter is not definite yet. Given the current nature of transatlantic relations, it can be expected that EU members will attempt to change Trump's mind. Yet, so far, their undertakings to dissuade the US from making this step (Macron's and Merkel's visits to Washington have not yielded any positive results for European industrial companies and financial structures, in this sense) have failed.

As for Ukraine, the start of the electoral campaign is also not creating any motivation for resolving the conflict, as the incumbent President Poroshenko has no alternative but to demonstrate a hard line in relations with Russia due to domestic policy circumstances. Both, Kyiv and “DPR/LPR” accuse each other of increasing aggression, using artillery, tanks, and multiple rocket launchers prohibited by the Minsk agreements, while the OSCE monitors cannot determine who began firing first in each specific situation. The situation looks very much like in 2014-2015.

---

<sup>11</sup> Speech at St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF). Cited from: “Nezavisimaya Gazeta”, 25 May 2018.



---

On 3 January 2018, US Special Representative for Ukraine K. Volker referred a number of proposals to Russian Special Representative V. Surkov that contained a compromise: they talked about a possibility of combining the deployment of peacekeepers to the entire territory of Donbass – potentially, phased introduction – with implementation of Minsk agreements, and not necessarily in the order, on which Kyiv insists: i.e. military agreements first, political decisions – afterwards. Yet, as we know, there has been no answer from Russia so far. It is possible, that Russia has decided to pause until the presidential elections in Ukraine. We can assume that until then, the Russian leadership will be carefully listening to what is proposed in the Normandy Four and Minsk contact group, and by whom.

As of now, several “settlement plans” were made public in Ukraine: Tymoshenko’s plan, Avakov’s plan, “Opposition Bloc” plan. All of them include the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission and a phased execution of Minsk agreements. Yet only “Opposition Bloc” representatives have expressed readiness to enter into direct negotiations with “DPR/LPR” representatives.

Obviously, in order to resolve the conflict, an ongoing dialogue is required that is not there so far. There is no dialogue in either the Normandy Four (the latest meeting of the leaders of states was in 2016), the Minsk group, or the Surkov–Volker format.

For different reasons, at the moment, neither Russia, nor Ukraine are interested in maintaining a dialogue required for resolving the conflict.

*– How real are the chances of organising a UN peacekeeping operation in Donbass taking into account the geopolitical dynamics and the positions of stakeholders? Is there a possibility of a compromise regarding the main parameters of the potential peacekeeping mission’s mandate, and what concessions can Moscow and Kyiv make?*

Outside of the conflict, the problem is that Germany and the EU have essentially transferred their peacemaking responsibilities regarding Ukraine to Washington. This is explained by a number of factors: the fact that Europe is tired from a protracted conflict and a current state of transatlantic affairs, when Europeans have no idea what to expect from the most unpredictable US president in each situation (i.e. complicated situation with Iran’s nuclear profile) that affects major European business interests, and a number of other factors.

Along with this, both Europe and the US support Poroshenko's proposal on the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces to Ukraine. The problem is that the Russian and the Ukrainian President have different views regarding this process. Russia's position is that the UN peacekeepers' mandate should be limited to ensuring safety of OSCE Special Monitoring Mission staff, and the peacekeepers should be deployed to the contact line between Kyiv and Donetsk/Luhansk forces. Although later, the Russian President agreed with Merkel, who noted that OSCE monitors move around the entire territory of the conflict and must have protection wherever they go. V. Putin always insists that Kyiv must come to an agreement with Donetsk and Luhansk, claiming that never in the world's history have such conflicts been resolved exclusively through intermediaries.

Kyiv leadership insists on a full-fledged UN peacekeeping mission in Donbass, stressing that its ultimate goal is not to freeze the current situation, but to ensure stable peace in separate regions of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine, as well as restoring Ukrainian state's territorial integrity. Kyiv believes that the UN mission should be deployed to the entire territory of Donbass, including the uncontrolled section of the Russia-Ukraine border.

At the moment, these approaches contain irreconcilable differences as to conflict origins, as well as resolution mechanisms. It is clear that Ukrainian proposals supported by the US and Europe will be vetoed by Russia at UNSC. Russian proposals will not bring anything new to the process of the region's demilitarisation and moving forward in the context of Minsk agreements (even in their Russian interpretation). Russia is unlikely to moderate its position even if threatened by additional sanctions by the US (with the EU being against them). It is possible that Kremlin is waiting for a different president to be elected in Ukraine (e.g. Tymoshenko), with whom it will be psychologically easier to negotiate.

Until the presidential election in Ukraine, chances for successful negotiations on the peacekeeping mission are slim, as, ultimately, for various reasons, no one is interested in resolving the Ukrainian conflict. Thus, the prospects for a mission are rather faint. Both, the US and Russia have their reasons for being interested in preserving the smouldering conflict as is. Europe will not risk having another conflict with Washington D.C. over Ukraine. As for Kyiv, the main task that the current elite is trying to accomplish is to remain in power after the elections.

**IF UKRAINE DOES NOT ATTEMPT TO MAKE PROGRESS TOWARDS RESOLUTION, OTHER STAKEHOLDERS WILL ADOPT THE WAIT-AND-SEE APPROACH**

*– In your opinion, how will (do) domestic political processes in Ukraine and Russia (Putin’s new presidential term, future presidential elections in Ukraine) affect the Moscow-Kyiv conflict resolution?*

The new political cycle in Russia essentially remains the extension of the previous one. No group, either public or secret, is disputing V. Putin’s central role in the political system. Thus, the President has wide discretion in the matters of domestic and foreign policy. The limits of this discretion are determined not so much by external factors, as by the perception of Russia’s national interests as seen by the nucleus of the Russian political elite, as well as economic and social boundaries.

The president seems to be satisfied with the ongoing foreign policy course, although this does not mean that all international developments were to his liking. The combination of circumstances and deliberate decisions have created a certain momentum in a number of areas, a kind of a track, which Russia will try not to diverge from without a particular need, even if the above-mentioned leader’s wide discretion allows for such actions.

In the context of the Ukrainian crisis, such “track” is obviously the Minsk agreements and the negotiations connected with them. Similar to a number of other conflict situations, having defined its position, Russia is not trying to make it any more acceptable for partners, assuming that this highlights the futility of any external pressure. Minsk agreements, given the variety of opinions on conflict regulation in the Russian and Ukrainian political rhetoric, are seen as a compromise, a middle ground, which does not satisfy any of the parties, but is potentially acceptable for both.

The rejected by Ukraine’s government official Russian thesis regarding the internal character of Ukraine’s conflict, forms a framework for resolution, as seen in the Russian political discourse. Ukraine’s sovereignty over Donetsk and Luhansk is not officially contested. Thus, because harmonisation of positions of all stakeholders is key to the settlement process, the end result – a political resolution model – has to be approved by Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk.



**Sergey UTKIN,**  
Head of Strategic  
Assessment Section at  
Primakov National Institute  
of World Economy and  
International Relations,  
Russian Academy of  
Sciences

A common point in the discussion is the recognition of significance of the upcoming 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine. Although Moscow does like to talk about Ukraine as an actor that is completely dependent on its Western partners, realistically, the evolution of the Ukrainian political scene is the process that can create or block the possibilities for moving towards resolution. In turn, this evolution is affected by the events in the conflict area.

Whatever the dynamics of the conflict – escalation, stagnation or progress towards resolution – there will be attempts to use the situation in their interest by the Ukrainian government, as well as moderate and radical opposition groups. As usual, the distance between the pre-election promises and real actions of the winner, as well as their effectiveness, will be an important factor. Given the fatigue with the old political faces and personas, newcomers are potentially likely to succeed.

Thus, a year before the elections, they remain the uncertainty factor, which is quite healthy for a democratic system, but rather worrisome in the situation of the ongoing conflict. If the Ukrainian leadership does not come forward with initiatives to make progress towards resolution, other stakeholders will likely adopt the wait-and-see approach, intending to work with political forces and leaders that come to power in Ukraine after the elections.

*– How real are the chances of organising a UN peacekeeping operation in Donbass taking into account the geopolitical dynamics and the positions of stakeholders? Is there a possibility of a compromise regarding the main parameters of the potential peacekeeping mission's mandate, and what concessions can Moscow and Kyiv make?*

Russia's current official position regarding the use of the UN forces is defined by three ideas:

1. The forces are to ensure the safety of the OSCE monitoring mission;
2. A mission that would assume administrative and security responsibilities in the uncontrolled territories would violate Minsk agreements, which provide for these responsibilities to be assumed by the local governments formed on the basis of elections;

3. Parties that do not agree with the content of the Russian proposal, but support the very idea of using the UN forces, should submit official amendments to the Russia-drafted UNSC resolution.

The proposal on ensuring security of OSCE monitors by the UN forces is presented by Russia as the response to concerns raised by other negotiation partners about the safety of OSCE mission's working conditions. This wording leaves broad possibilities for a compromise. Ultimately, almost any form of UN presence can be interpreted as ensuring safe working conditions for the OSCE monitoring mission.

From the point of view of preventing incidents, using “blue helmets” for accompanying mobile teams of observers could be purely symbolical. The danger for both, observers and the local population mostly comes from land mines and the unexploded shells, as well as long-distance shots fired with low precision. In order to resolve these issues, the UN mission would require broad powers for control and, possibly, expropriation and liquidation of weapons and ammunition.



Russia is worried that replacing armed groups in Donetsk and Luhansk with international forces may create conditions for a unilateral resolution of the conflict by force on the part of Kyiv. Potentially, deploying peacekeepers to the contact line could provide certain guarantees against a forced resolution. Kyiv's argument against such decision was the potential consolidation of this line as the de facto border. Yet, the dead-end situation that persists for a number of years is turning this line precisely into the latter. A major argument against such deployment is the length of the contact line, which makes efficient control of the entire territory by the peacekeeping force problematic.

It is unlikely that parties can be convinced that deploying a symbolic mission can be a step towards resolution. Whatever the mission's mandate, it should be sufficiently large to ensure real presence in the entire conflict zone. This, in turn, means major expenses for its maintenance and complications with staff recruitment. These issues can be solved for a rather brief period of time, in case mission

deployment and withdrawal are tied to Minsk agreements. If progress towards resolution is not guaranteed, approval of a UN mission for an indefinite period of time risking to remain in the region for decades, is extremely unlikely.

I believe that for Ukraine, participation of the Russian military in the mission would be unacceptable. A possible compromise could be Russia's participation in the work of mission administration bodies. In turn, Russia will try to prevent on-the-ground presence of staff from NATO countries, even those, with whom Russia still has a trusting relationship. A number of experts have already made reasonable remarks that in this connection, neutral countries that are not part of any military bloc and representatives from other regions of the world can play a special role. Participation of CSTO countries, with the exclusion of Russia, can be a topic of political discussion. There is a possibility that CSTO membership per se would not be regarded as unacceptable in Ukraine, and CSTO countries could be interested in playing a major role in strengthening regional security.

Given the need for the mission's approval by the UNSC, a special role belongs to the Russia-US dialogue. A situational merger of the Normandy Four with the Russia-US format is not completely out of the question, but it is less important than the targeted cooperation of the Russian and American negotiators. In the early 2018, many observers were under the impression that K. Volker and V. Surkov's negotiations reached a dead end, due to Russia's conservative position and excessive public presence of K. Volker, who essentially assumed the role of Kyiv's advocate on the international stage.

Both, mission deployment and its coordination with the Minsk agreements require Ukrainian Parliament's support. Until now, Ukrainian law-makers have been drifting towards abandoning Minsk agreements and explicit definition of the conflict as confrontation with Russia. Definitions captured in the Ukrainian legislation obviously cannot be used in UNSC decisions that require Russia's approval as the Council's permanent member.

Even if after the 2019 Verkhovna Rada elections there was a majority of moderate forces that support Minsk agreements, the process of approval would be extremely difficult and would almost inevitably suffer attacks by radical forces. Negotiators would need to provide substantial guarantees, possibly tied to international assistance programmes for Ukraine in general and restoration of Donbass in particular, that would create incentives for Ukrainian politicians.

## PROGRESS OR CRISIS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS WILL AFFECT RUSSIA AND UKRAINE AND THE STATE OF CONFLICT BETWEEN THEM

*– In your opinion, how will (do) domestic political processes in Ukraine and Russia (Putin's new presidential term, future presidential elections in Ukraine) affect the Moscow-Kyiv conflict resolution?*

History has numerous examples when a change of power did not change anything in the country's foreign policy, or vice versa, the “unchanging leader” made a dramatic turn in his foreign policy due to different circumstances. Ultimately, politics is nothing more than the art of possibility.

Domestic political processes are always tied to external political and external economic events, to formation of different political and economic coalitions in the world. Both, Ukraine and Russia are experiencing major international pressure. One is expected to deliver on the promised reforms and alignment with the EU standards, the latter is under sanctions that are becoming increasingly more stringent. The resolution of the conflict between these two countries directly depends on the nature of world's top countries' actions and how coordinated these actions are. There is a question of time required to determine the appropriate means of pressure, which, on the one hand, have to be effective, and on the other, have minimal impact on the countries that apply them. Essentially, this is what we are seeing.

Current international political-economic situation concerning Moscow and Kyiv was summarised by the German Chancellor A. Merkel in the joint press conference with US President D. Trump on 27 April 2018 in Washington D.C.: “No one is interested in not having good relations with Russia. But wherever there are conflicts, wherever there are things happening, as for example in Ukraine, we have to call a spade a spade... We discussed Ukraine and here we worked very closely against the illegitimate actions of Russia... I am very pleased to say that we work very closely with the American administration complementing the Minsk format, and will continue to do so... As for the sanctions, we work together with the representatives of the administration, in particular, with the Treasury. We exchanged views on what sort of secondary effects they [sanctions] may have”.<sup>12</sup>



**Mikhail SUBBOTIN**,  
Senior Fellow,  
Primakov National Institute  
of World Economy and  
International Relations,  
Russian Academy of  
Sciences

<sup>12</sup> Merkel: “No One Is Interested in not Having Good Relations with Russia, but the Differences Need to Be Discussed.” – TASS, 27 April 2018, <http://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/5166026>.

This is not a new issue – countries that are introducing sanctions or counter-sanctions need to be aware of the “shoot oneself in the foot” effect. In 2014, President of France F. Hollande warned that the *BNP Paribas*<sup>13</sup> precedent could be a threat to the entire European financial system’s stability: “Everyone should be conscious of the risks of unfair and totally disproportionate sanctions that could have consequences reaching beyond the problems of just one French bank. There are other banks that could also be targeted, creating a risk and a doubt over the solidity of the European financial system”.<sup>14</sup>

Then again, the matter reaches beyond economics and finance. The Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA, PL 115-44) adopted on 2 August 2017, defines Russia as an adversary to the United States, which should be actively opposed through the use of sanctions. The Act made the existing sanctions more stringent, introduced new restrictions and a more complex procedure for lifting the sanctions; also, PL 115-04 made it incumbent on the US government to act as a protector of the sovereignty and security of all Eurasian countries that are or may become “victims” of Russian influence. The Department of State is the key agency responsible for this group of issues.

Notoriously, Russia was included in the CAATSA, PL 115-44 Act along with Iran and DPRK, therefore, sanctions against these two countries cannot but be perceived as a sort of training, field-testing of different ways to apply sanctions, including, against Russia.

Sanctions are dangerous due to three main consequences: the very threat of sanctions and the uncertainty as to the timeline of their introduction, toxicity, i.e. their impact on the unlimited scope of economic entities, and the possibility of their further escalation. The sanctions policy and the numerous problems caused by it (political, economic) demand a new set of international rules. They are being developed and adopted in the search for acceptable solutions, yet revised straight after that, and sometimes, dropped altogether. A simulation of a possible attack is being demonstrated along with its consequences for the country’s economy, separate companies and persons, against whom these sanctions are introduced.

“The war of sanctions keeps isolating the Russian economy, solidifies its technological backwardness and low growth rate”.<sup>15</sup> The events concerning

---

<sup>13</sup> French Bank BNP Paribas to Pay a Record \$9 Billion Fine to the US over Sanctions Violations. – RBC, 23 June 2014, <https://www.rbc.ru/economics/23/06/2014/57041e939a794760d3d3f81e>.

<sup>14</sup> *Deutsche Bank* Is Looking at Multi-Billion Dollar US Penalties for Iran and Syria Deals. – Interfax, 4 July 2014, <http://www.interfax.ru/business/384071>.

<sup>15</sup> Lomskaya T., Bazanova E. Higher School of Economics Experts Evaluated Russian Economy Losses Due to Sanctions. – Vedomosti, 16 April 2018, <https://www.vedomosti.ru/economics/articles/2018/04/16/766814-iz-za-sanktsii>.



O. Deripaska and V. Vekselberg with the “rollercoaster” of their companies’ share prices depending on the version of US sanctions legislation is a typical example of recent developments. At the same time, stories like Rusal’s can redirect Russian government’s focus to economic issues and have it adjust its foreign policy accordingly.

Once the sanctions are imposed, it is extremely hard to come out of their shadow, even if all the necessary actions have been taken and a corresponding agreement has been reached. Thus, on 8 May 2018, US President D. Trump announced America’s withdrawal from the Iran deal and the reimposing of economic sanctions against this country.

The unilateral decision to stop US participation in the Iran “nuclear deal”, as well as recent developments concerning DPRK, can prove to be much more than just another failure or triumph of major powers in resolving specific nuclear issues, such as multipolarity, transatlantic relations, America’s isolation, European integration, etc. Already on May 9, the EU has expressed its regrets regarding the United States withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and confirmed its commitment to the UNSC Resolution 2231 and willingness to fulfil its obligations as long as Iran fulfils its obligations.

After the White House talked about the possibility of introducing restrictive measures against European companies that continue working with Iran after the US withdrawal from the nuclear deal, the EU has started preparations for counter-measures. As a result of the meeting of European leaders on May 16 in Sofia, a decision has been made to ensure support and protection for European companies working with Iran, and the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker mentioned the need to update the list of US sanctions affected by the Blocking Regulation No. 2271/96 of 22 November 1996 protecting companies against the effects of the extra-territorial application of legislation adopted by a third country.

Progress or crisis of international relations in connection with Iran’s and North Korea’s nuclear programmes, Syrian war, practical application of the US sanctions legislation and many other global political and economic events – all of this will imminently affect the world’s attitude to Russia and Ukraine and the state of the conflict between them. Regardless of political changes (or lack thereof) in both countries.

## DOMESTIC POLICY PROCESSES IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION: DYNAMICS AND PROSPECTS



**Lev GUDKOV,**  
Director of Levada Centre

*Russian presidential election in March 2018 can essentially be called “Putin’s acclamation” – a demonstrative approval of a dictator without an alternative. The goal of “elections” was not Putin’s “victory” as such, which no one doubted, but the demonstration (as in the Soviet times) of the “overall nation’s support” for Putin and the expression of approval of Putin’s political course by an absolute majority of Russians.*

The propaganda-moulded image of Putin as a charismatic politician would be impossible to create without “**patriotic**” **mobilisation** and the euphoria (2014-2016) caused by chauvinistic anti-Western and anti-Ukrainian propaganda and the annexation of Crimea. Each time his rating reached its peak was during the military campaigns (1999, 2004, 2008, 2014). Having dropped by the end of 2013 to 60-63% after large street protests, the rating hit 87% after Crimea, and have not gone down below 76% since then. Frustration and social discontent are being channelled to other tiers of government; responsibility for the domestic situation is transferred from “the nation’s leader” that represents the symbolic values of grandeur and power of the “Russian State” – to the government, Duma, “bureaucracy”, “enemies”, etc.

The Crimean mobilisation wave has consolidated the cycle of institutional changes in 2012-2017, which followed as a response to mass protests in major

cities and the weakening of Putin's legitimacy. Toughening of legislation, court and enforcement practices are aimed against any forms of self-organisation within the society, suppressing civil society initiatives and independent non-profit organisations that are not controlled by the Kremlin and regional authorities. Increasing the powers of political police was combined with tightening of censorship (Roskomnadzor – Russian service for supervision of communications) and establishing monopolistic control of presidential administration over the information space, turning media into a powerful and efficient machine for propaganda and manipulating public consciousness with the use of latest developments in social sciences. Today, 20 of 22 federal TV channels have been united into three media holdings and are pursuing a coordinated propaganda policy. Alternative information outlets cover only 5-7% of audience.

The regime of “managed democracy” or manipulating electoral processes (control of vertical mobility and selection for government jobs) developed over the four electoral cycles (1999-2012) has created a closed corrupt political class that ensures an exclusive character of institutional dominance, immunity from any attempts of civil society to control the government, and subordination of economy to the interests of the ruling class. The ideological framework for this kleptocratic authoritarian regime was developed only in the past 4-5 years, although its separate principles and ideas were voiced already in the early 2000s. The new political course was announced by Putin in Munich in February 2007: confrontation with Western states, “stability”, “managed” or “sovereign democracy”, fighting the “export of colour revolutions” to Russia. This means that the key message is the rejection of values such as the rule of law, democracy, human rights and free market economy that are perceived as alien to Russian culture; the need for stability and protection of the state.

Public consciousness is very realistic about the nature of the Russian government: according to the majority of Russians, Putin's power rests on security forces (mostly, political police, special forces, generals), oligarchs, top-level bureaucrats, and represents interests of these particular institutions. The image that Russians have of different tiers of government accurately represents a combination of repressive structures and oligarchy, hierarchic government. The intensifying ideological exploitation of the idea of being part of a Grand nation (or uniting with the Grand Nation) removes, destroys any idea of the need to represent interests of various groups, and thus, the very idea of “society”,

democracy, accountability of authorities for their actions and policies, and the need for civil control over the government. The anti-Western rhetoric (enemies, militarism, the glory of the Russian Empire and its colonial wars, discrediting western values) is displacing the notion of inalienable human rights in the public consciousness, the idea of a law-based state and the possibility for a small ordinary man to resist the abuse of state authority, is neutralising or discrediting any values and ideas that contradict the spirit of the authoritarian rule.

The enemy concept is a constitutive element of understanding the policy and ideology of the state. If in 1994 (before the start of the First Chechen War), 41% believed that Russia had enemies, in the spring of 2014 – this number was 84%, but along with decreasing mobilisation, this indicator gradually decreased – reaching 66% in 2017. Keeping the population in the state of permanent agitation and readiness for mobilisation not only eliminates liberal or democratic, and rule-of-law ideas from the public consciousness, but also strengthens the protective isolationism.

As Putin's regime takes root, these ideas ("Russia is a special civilisation" exceeding the West in terms of its spirituality and morality; "our path is special"; Western democracy is not suitable for us, etc.) have gathered the support of an absolute majority of Russians. Starting from the mid-2000s, the public opinion supported the statement that "Russia is not a country of European culture". Yet, this isolationism is rather ambiguous – when it comes to their everyday lives, elements of youth culture, family morale and sexual behaviour Russians align themselves with European lifestyle.

Distancing and alienation from developed countries was achieved through imposing ideas that the West (developed democracies) treats Russia with contempt and fear (the latter is allegedly due to Russia's "growing power"). Propaganda has accentuated the old layer of stereotypes and myths deeply rooted in the Russian culture: the ideas of Russia being underdeveloped and barbarian. The trick of the anti-Western demagogy, however, was in attributing Russia's own insecurities, typical of any "catch-up modernisation" country, to European countries. Besides, a cultivated patriotic pride for the "rising Russia" neutralises a depressing awareness and shame for the state of affairs inside the country, a clear realisation of state corruption, selfishness and greed of the ruling class. There are no illusions as to the morality and decency of the political class, but there is also no particular indignation about its actions.

The U-turn from a weak proto-democracy to secondary totalitarianism should be viewed as the regime's reaction to desire of the former Soviet republics and Eastern European countries – former members of the socialist camp to integrate into EU and NATO structures. Georgia's desire to follow this path, followed by manifestation of similar plans in Ukraine caused a strong negative reaction from the Russian leadership, which was reflected in corresponding campaigns and measures aimed at discrediting these countries. After 2004, the Baltic States, Georgia, Poland, and later – Ukraine and the US top the list of enemies. Anti-Ukrainian and anti-Georgian propaganda tends to increase during electoral cycles in these countries.

We are dealing with a revival of totalitarianism. The anti-Western rhetoric has not yet been able to completely destroy the significance of Western values (associated with modern culture, civilisation, consumption); despite all the confrontation, Russian public consciousness preserves readiness to “normalise” relations with the West, weaken the confrontation and tensions in relations between Russia and Western countries (the US, EU).



What can be expected in the nearest future after the elections?

1. The most likely scenario is that in the nearest future the government will operate by inertia. Domestic policy will be reduced to strengthening of repressions (against the elite dissatisfied with Putin's line of action, against civil society and the opposition), tightening of censorship, and continuing army and police modernisation. The approved composition of the new “old” Medvedev government is only reinforcing this opinion. There are no grounds to believe that Putin, having received a majority approval, will introduce any institutional reforms or change his policy. For his regime, any changes of democratic nature would be a political suicide and contrary to his ideology and way of thinking. Any reforms in Russia can

be conducted only in a situation when the dictator is forced to implement them, under the pressure of circumstances. At the moment, there are no such circumstances.

2. Foreign policy will continue to combine confrontation with leading countries, blackmail and incitement of regional conflicts, maintaining permanent instability and tensions in Ukraine, the Middle East, break-up attempts and support for the ultra-right, anti-democratic forces and movements in Europe; at the same time, Russia will seek opportunities to ease sanctions, and to stop the escalating risk of international isolation. Kremlin is ready for a trade-off, but with an obligatory condition to preserve its conquered positions, and consideration for its claims to influence and participate in resolution of global problems. It is crucial for Putin to retain the significance of a symbolic Grand State status as the basis for his legitimacy.

The situation can drastically change in two cases: (a) a new global economic crisis that will have a much greater impact on Russia's weak economy, than on the economies of other developed countries; a sharp or prolonged decline in living standards of the Russian population that will undermine Putin's legitimacy; (b) unpredictable development of an accidental local conflict into a confrontation between Russia and the West leading to a military and diplomatic defeat of Russia, which will have the most negative impact on the legitimacy and support for the regime.

In the situation of a long-term crisis (a prolonged decline of daily consumption or loss of hope for an improvement of living standards, military failure), an isolated incident is enough to cause irreversible processes of regime erosion and its collapse. It can be a major technological or social accident with a strong reaction from the public. In any case, events can develop quickly and uncontrollably only if they split the elites, which Putin is trying hard to prevent, intensifying repressions against top government officials, as the increasing number of court trials against the elite show.

Domestic political processes in Russia will not affect the resolution of Kyiv-Moscow conflict. The sanctions-related deterioration of the situation for large businesses affiliated with Russia's government will not make Putin exit a clandestine war. On the contrary, any, even weak attempts to express discontent

or concern regarding Russia's growing isolation and the continued economic stagnation will lead to immediate repressions against their initiators. The existing regime is characterised by primitiveness and rigidity, which will only increase due to "sclerotisation" of the system.

I am not fully aware of the balance of political forces in the upcoming presidential election in Ukraine, but I am sure that Kremlin will pay close attention to them, accompanied by extremely negative and hostile coverage in the Russian media. In any case, I believe that the outcome of elections will not have a significant impact on Russia's policy in Donbass, as it is determined by the interests of the most conservative and revanchist groups in the country's top leadership.

In my opinion, top military leadership does not support an open military action and direct involvement of the Russian army, being aware of the huge risks this gamble entails and resorting to quiet sabotage of such plans. Yet generals cannot oppose the geopolitical preferences of security officers. I would like to be mistaken, but I fear that the most likely scenario has been a simmering micro war on the contact line in Donbass, interrupted by recurring shellings and escalations, which however does not translate into large-scale clashes.

The chances of deploying a UN peacekeeping operation to Donbass are slim. Russia will be creating an illusion and semblance of being interested in negotiations on these matters, while at the same time carefully building insurmountable obstacles to real conflict resolution. EU will not risk its interests, fragile stability in Europe and its relations with Putin's regime.

Ukraine's problems mainly concern European countries due to their long-term consequences, and, besides, the EU does not possess real means to influence the Russian government. Putin will try to wear everyone down, hoping that his opponents and adversaries get tired of constant tensions and futility of the conflict, and give it the status of a "frozen" one.

A compromise on basic parameters of a UN peacekeeping mandate is possible in theory, but it is unlikely that such an agreement will be made and will not be broken under some pretext. The source of the conflict is in Moscow and it is Moscow that will define its outcome. Yet, so far, nothing indicates that any change is likely there.

## CONFLICT IN EASTERN UKRAINE: IS THERE ANY HOPE FOR COORDINATED EFFORT?

**Vladislav INOZEMTSEV,**  
*Director of the Centre for Research  
on Post-Industrial Societies*



*When in 2014, Russian-backed separatists in Eastern Ukraine proclaimed independence of the so-called “Donetsk” and “Luhansk” “people’s republics”,<sup>1</sup> which has resulted in a conflict with a death toll of over 10 thousand people, many thought that the involvement of international observers in conflict settlement would put out the fire of war. Now, four years since then, hopes to implement the infamous “Minsk scenario” are hardly alive; most politicians and experts realise that this format is unlikely to ensure peace in the region that has been turned into a chaotic borderland between Ukraine and Russia.*

Precisely because hopes for a resolution are gradually melting, each new initiative attracts commentators’ attention. As we know, in February 2015, Petro Poroshenko had proposed an idea to deploy UN peacekeepers or EU police mission to Donbass<sup>2</sup> but no real action followed. Two years after that, Kremlin explained that it will not oppose such an operation, if international peacekeeping forces are deployed to a contact line between the separatists and Ukrainian army, with any other locations limited to “places, where the OSCE is conducting its inspection visits in line with the Minsk Package of Measures, and establishing control over the entire territory of “new republics” is out of question.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: *Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine*, 16 August to 15 November 2017, Geneva: UNHCHR, p.29.

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see: [www.president.gov.ua/ru/news/rnbo-na-choli-z-prezidentom-prijnyala-rishennya-pro-zaproshe-34760](http://www.president.gov.ua/ru/news/rnbo-na-choli-z-prezidentom-prijnyala-rishennya-pro-zaproshe-34760).

<sup>3</sup> See: <https://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55593>.



Nonetheless, the format of peacekeepers' involvement is still being discussed (a year after V. Putin's statement, former NATO Secretary General discussed the possibility to deploy peacekeepers from non-NATO allies to Donbass<sup>4</sup>) – and I believe this phased “dialogue” requires a sober view of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The original goal that Moscow pursued in 2014 is now hard to determine. At the time, creating the so-called “Novorossiia” extending from Luhansk to Odessa had been an option, but in my opinion, only very inadequate people could have hoped to implement this scenario. The start of the Minsk process signified that Kremlin has abandoned the attempts to seize a major part of Ukraine's territory and limited itself to creating a situation that turned Ukraine into an incapacitated state, prevented it from joining NATO and the EU, and is constantly undermining the effectiveness of its institutions.

Minsk agreements that ended the most intense phase of the conflict have been, in my opinion, unacceptable for Ukraine from the very start as they entail a loss of sovereignty after incorporating quasi-states run from Moscow into its political framework, while agreeing to these quasi-states' right to veto key issues that determine the country's future. I am not even talking about the fact that “re-integration” of Donbass under the “Minsk” conditions would drain the Ukrainian budget, restore the influence of pro-Russian, Donetsk oligarchs on Ukrainian politics, and severely damage the domestic political situation as this de facto surrender to Moscow will infuriate the right-wing forces and ATO veterans. In other words, Kremlin has orchestrated an ideal situation which Ukraine cannot resolve without major losses, – and has been creatively using it for the past four years.

The reason for all of this is quite clear. Kremlin is not interested in preserving peace, and even less so in the restoration of Ukrainian statehood (note: Moscow has been using such a policy of “managed instability” since the beginning of the post-Soviet period in many countries: from Moldova to Georgia, from Ukraine to Syria – but right now, it is not just the implementation of its geopolitical aspirations that is at stake, but using enemy image for the purpose of brainwashing its own citizens).

However, the fact that current Ukrainian leadership does not want peace in the East of the country only exacerbates the problem: the military operation allows

---

<sup>4</sup> See: [https://www.nrk.no/urix/fogh-rasmussen\\_-\\_vil-ha-20.000-fredsbevarende-soldater-til-ukraina-1.13912030](https://www.nrk.no/urix/fogh-rasmussen_-_vil-ha-20.000-fredsbevarende-soldater-til-ukraina-1.13912030).

to position the country as the victim of aggression and put aside any positive elements on the agenda (the fight against corruption, formation of an efficient law enforcement system, market reforms, progress on the path to European integration, not to mention the fact that the ongoing war is generating profits for many representatives of Kyiv's current ruling elite).<sup>5</sup> Despite a high death toll and huge economic losses, the conflict in Eastern Ukraine benefits both Moscow and Kyiv, and the situation is unlikely to change in the near future.

I think that the war in Donbass is not a “negative-sum game” worthy of experts’ attention,<sup>6</sup> but a clash between captured states, each run by an elite group, whose task is to maximise their benefits from regulating budget finances and to create special preferences for businesses affiliated with its members.<sup>7</sup> In Russia, this group is less inclined to resort to democratic procedures, while in Ukraine it has a more democratic appearance. In Russia, everything revolves around one authoritarian leader, who has ruled the country for almost twenty years; in Ukraine, leaders are changing without significantly modifying the essence of the established regime.

I think this situation is the key reason why there are no chances for finding a mutually acceptable solution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict in the near future. Western observers and politicians, unfortunately, cannot fully grasp this very particular nature of power in both countries and keep generating new initiatives for conflict resolution that are all equally pointless.

None of the proposed initiatives on the deployment of peacekeeping forces to Eastern Ukraine look very promising.

*On the one hand*, the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine undoubtedly will require the political elite not only to toughen its rhetoric, but also to conduct a demonstrative and possibly some real military activity in the ATO area to convince voters that everything possible is being done to resolve the situation. Neither making peace with Russia, nor seeking an agreement with puppet leaders of the “people’s republics” is not on the agenda of any Ukrainian politician. Thus, the Ukrainian side will either seek opportunities to intensify the military operation in the ATO area, or will insist on unrealistically broad mandate and scope

---

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g.: [https://censor.net.ua/news/459080/pronizannaya\\_korrupsieyi\\_vlast\\_najivaetsya\\_daje\\_na\\_voyine\\_batkivschina\\_o\\_zaderjaniyah\\_v\\_minoborony](https://censor.net.ua/news/459080/pronizannaya_korrupsieyi_vlast_najivaetsya_daje_na_voyine_batkivschina_o_zaderjaniyah_v_minoborony).

<sup>6</sup> See: Charap, Samuel and Colton, Timothy. *Everyone Loses: The Ukraine Crisis and the Ruinous Contest for Post-Soviet Eurasia*, London: Routledge, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> See: Inozemtsev, Vladislav. Russia's Loss, Whos Gain? – The American Interest, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2017/07/26/russias-loss-whos-gain>.

of powers for a peacekeeping mission. In other words, the electoral campaign period is obviously a bad time to look for compromise.

*On the other hand*, the informational space that is being formed around Russia will not stimulate Kremlin to make deals. The UN does not support Russian position on Syria; international courts and organisations also blame Russia for downing of the Dutch Boeing over Donbass; the EU and NATO continue developing joint plans and scenarios for counteracting Moscow's aggressive plans. In this situation, it will be hard for Kremlin to reach a compromise with international organisations: agreeing to peacekeepers with a serious mandate will mean "surrender" and, just as importantly, will reveal too many details of what was and is happening in the regions controlled by pro-Russian separatists in front of the international community.

It seems that the deployment of UN peacekeepers or other forces with an international mandate to Donbass can be implemented only in one of the two cases.

**Firstly**, efforts to ease tensions between Russia and the West (that do not involve Ukraine) can be an adequate "background" to launch a new initiative. If as a result of some events (something similar to 9/11, unexpected actions by other actors, etc.) Moscow and Washington will decide to improve relations and all types of dialogue and cooperation, then Ukraine will become a serious obstacle on this way, and Donbass will be used as a "bargaining chip" that Moscow can easily ditch as part of the bigger game. In this case, Kremlin will have to find a way out that would allow it to save face and stop participating in the conflict. Unfortunately, so far, this option seems very unlikely: deteriorating relations between Russia and the West continue; Moscow is not prepared to admit to any previously made mistakes or cooperate on investigating the crimes attributed to it; sanctions are being tightened, etc. In my opinion, it would be difficult for Kremlin to explain any softening of its anti-Western rhetoric to its own people – therefore, it seems that the earliest such a scenario can be implemented is after 2024, if Putin is no longer a Russian leader (which I personally doubt).

**Secondly**, an alternative opportunity may be available in a situation, if for some reason Russia suffers several major foreign policy losses; the global economic situation causes a drastic drop in export earnings, which will result in a deteriorating national economy; at the same time, the West intensifies its support for Ukraine, and Ukraine itself demonstrates significant progress in developing both, its economy and army. If all of these circumstances enable Ukrainian forces to start the offensive in Donbass, while annihilating Russia's ability to counterstrike, a peaceful resolution

under the control of international forces can become the only acceptable option for Moscow. Unfortunately, this option does not look overly realistic: Russia's economy has sufficient reserves to cope with serious economic problems for at least a few years; the international community has no intentions to take a hard line against Russia's foreign policy escapades; Ukraine is more absorbed by the in-fighting between oligarch groups at the moment rather than promoting its accelerated economic growth and deep integration with Euro-Atlantic structures. So, in the next five to ten years, this scenario remains strictly hypothetical.

Besides, all those supporting the deployment of a peacekeeping mission to the conflict area need to realise that the Donbass case is very atypical for international relations of the past decades. After 1991, peacekeeping forces have been deployed 52 times – 16 cases of deployment to the contact line in interstate or ethnic wars, and 36 cases of establishing control over the entire territory of the conflict. In all 36 cases, international peacekeeping forces were deployed to countries that were plunged into chaos (e.g. 6 missions in Haiti from 1993 to 2017, two in Sierra Leone in 1998 and 1999, Liberia from 1993-1997, etc.) or to the territories of separatist formations trying to achieve independence from the metropolis and demanding the introduction of such forces for protection from the central government (Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, East Timor in 1999 and 2002, Eritrea in 2000-2008 and Kosovo from 1999).

Today, there are only two cases in the world more or less similar to the Donbass case: Northern Cyprus and Nagorno-Karabakh. There, we are dealing with a conflict between a separatist ethnic group and central government, followed by fast interference of an ethnically related third party that supported the separatists and the formation of a “quasi-sovereign state” with a different degree of recognition by those, who supported the separatist movement (Turkey and Armenia, respectively). In both cases, the peacekeepers failed to establish control over the entire territory of the conflict – even in the situation when neither side was a nuclear state, or had veto power in the UN Security Council (unlike Russia).

Another aspect that seems even more important: international experience shows that *deployment of international peacekeeping forces to disputed areas has never led to their re-integration into the state*, from which they sought to break free (or from which they were seized). International presence is mostly supposed to achieve humanitarian goals (responsibility to protect<sup>8</sup>), not political tasks of reinstatement

---

<sup>8</sup> See: The Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, Ottawa: IDRC, 2001.

of the violated border (in the latter case, we are talking not about a peace keeping force approved by conflict parties, but about an armed operation with a UN mandate aimed to punish the aggressor – here, as a failed attempt, we can remember the Korean War of 1950-1953, and a successful one – the liberation of Kuwait campaign in 1990, yet, neither of them have anything to do with the situation in the Donbass). All of the above leads me to believe that deployment of international peacekeeping forces to Donbass, as seen by Kyiv, is not only unrealistic, but also hardly desirable.

Assessing the situation that has developed in Crimea and Donbass after 2014, I would like to turn to other analogies provided by the events that have emerged in the course of wars and annexations of previous decades. I am talking about a temporary recognition of occupation or separation of territory while retaining the official sovereignty over it and providing for the procedure of its re-integration in constitutional laws and international agreements. A classical example would be the situation caused by Germany's division into occupation zones by the Allies, formation of GDR, followed by adoption of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany, Article 146 of which legitimised the possibility of including lands, which were temporarily a part of GDR into the Federal Republic.

The scenario of 1949 was eventually implemented 41 years later after the collapse of the Communist regime in Central Europe. A similar but more rapid process took place in 1918-1921, when Soviet Russia, unable to resist an offensive launched by German troops had agreed to sign the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty, which was followed by collapse of the German Empire and RSFSR returning a significant part of its alienated territories in the course of a civil war, and later – almost all of them. Since the first days of the critical stage of the Donbass conflict, I said on numerous occasions both in Russia and Ukraine<sup>9</sup> that in the current situation, the best thing for Ukraine is to unilaterally recognise the separatist republics and amend the Constitution by analogy with the Basic Law of the FRG with the possibility of their unreserved re-integration if appropriate conditions present themselves.

This solution, as opposed to the introduction of peacekeeping forces, would help achieve two goals.

On the one hand, a definitive segregation of separatist regions would turn them into Moscow's client states, causing considerable expenses for Russia and shifting the responsibility for their future to the aggressor state. At the same time,

---

<sup>9</sup> See: Inozemtsev Vladislav. "Loss of Eastern Regions – A Chance for Ukraine" in: *RBK-Daily*, 2014, May 12, p. 5; Inozemtsev, Vladislav. "Donbass Secession from Ukraine Is Unacceptable for Kremlin" in: *Country*, 2014, May 20, No. 20, pp. 6–5, et al.

Russia would have to seriously think about neutralising a significant number of rebel fighters and ensuring basic security on its Southwest border. In this case, official definition of a new interstate border would put an end to the rhetoric of the so-called “civil war” in Ukraine, and would turn any armed provocation on the part of separatists into aggression against the sovereign state with a possibility for an adequate response (note, that this time, it would not be restricted by the “humanitarian” considerations, which limit operations against “civilian population” on your own territory). In this case, deploying UN troops on the new border could become an additional peace guarantee.

On the other hand, Ukraine would gain obvious advantages, including: consolidation of its nation state due to the loss of a significant part of the Russian-speaking population sympathising Moscow; reduction of expenses for subsidising eastern territories; undermining the positions of pro-Russian oligarchs; removing preparations for a military re-integration operation from the agenda and, as a result, discontinuing the present emergency situation, and – most significantly – turning attention to sustainable economic development, and promoting the rule-of-law and European integration as the main goals of the Ukrainian society and Ukrainian elite. The aggression that Russia waged against Ukraine brought an important result: it expressly disengaged Russian and Ukrainian development trajectories. Yes, so far, it was unable to ensure the fulfilment of another, more important goal – it has not turned Ukraine from a post-Soviet state into something that can be defined without the “post-” prefix.

Russia’s annexation of Crimea, and the seizure of parts of Ukraine’s eastern oblasts is a major challenge for a young Ukrainian statehood, and a Ukrainian nation in the making. De facto, Russia has defeated Ukraine in a military and partially, political sense, in retaliation for the Revolution of Dignity and a clear pro-European choice that Ukraine and the people have made. At the moment, the overwhelming majority of Ukrainian politicians and intellectuals are concerned about ways and means to compensate for this defeat. I think that in the near future this task is impossible to achieve – either through a military response, political sanctions, or a peacekeeping operation. Ukraine should accept this defeat (as, for example, Japan and Germany did<sup>10</sup>) and concentrate on multiplying its achievements instead of trying to diminish Russia. Because these achievements, not the UN voting, will determine the destiny of Ukraine’s alienated territories...

---

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g.: Dower, John W. *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, New York, London: W.W.Norton & Co., 1999.

# THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT: ASSESSMENTS AND OPINIONS OF UKRAINIAN CITIZENS

The results of Razumkov Centre's sociological studies conducted in 2014-2018 provide grounds to talk about a rather stable tendency among Ukrainian citizens of not trusting Russia, alienating and distancing themselves from it.<sup>1</sup> These changes in the respondents' opinions and attitudes became apparent in 2014 in connection with Russia's aggression – annexation of Crimea and military expansion in Donbass. For more than four years of war, Ukrainians have developed a stereotypical thinking about Kremlin's policy towards Kyiv, Russian government institutions, and prospective contacts with Russia.

Overall, Ukrainian citizens' opinions and assessments can be summarised as follows: Russia is an aggressor state unable to accept an independent Ukraine moving towards the EU and NATO; Ukraine must distance itself from Russia, limiting any possible contacts. During Putin's next term in office, normalisation of ties with Russia is unlikely. It is predicted that this "mental alienation" will be a defining factor in bilateral relations, at least in the medium term.

In the most recent sociological survey (June 2018), citizens assessed the state of relations between Russia and Ukraine, determined the causes of Kyiv-Moscow conflict and its repercussions, evaluated Russia's policy towards Ukraine, expressed their opinions on the UN peacekeeping mission in Donbass, and forecast future development of relations between the countries.

## KYIV-MOSCOW RELATIONS, CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONFLICT

**Since April 2014, a stable majority of Ukrainian citizens assess Ukraine-Russia relations as hostile or bad.** Almost every seventh respondent (15%) believes that they are unstable, and only a small portion classified them as

<sup>1</sup> Razumkov Centre study results of several years are being used here. Most recent study was conducted by the sociological service of the Razumkov Centre together with the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation on 1-6 June 2018 in all regions of Ukraine, except Crimea and the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Number of respondents – 2018, age – from 18 y.o. Theoretical error does not exceed 2.3%.

good. Western and Central regions were the most critical of bilateral relations.<sup>2</sup> The reason for such negative perceptions are the annexed Crimea, no prospects for the settlement of the armed conflict in Donbass, and the overall state of relations between Kyiv and Moscow entering the fifth year of an undeclared war.

**The main causes of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, according to the respondents, are: Ukraine's attempt to leave Russia's zone of influence, Moscow's inability to accept Ukraine as an independent state and its willingness to head towards European and Euro-Atlantic integration.** (Note that it was Russia's aggression that resulted in a growing number of European and Euro-Atlantic integration supporters in Ukraine. For instance, 60% of the country's citizens would have taken part if a referendum on joining NATO were to take place, and 73% of them would have voted for joining the Alliance).

Only each fifth respondent sees a connection between the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the coming to power of nationalist forces in Ukraine, while an insignificantly small share believes that the cause of the conflict is violation of rights of the Russian-speaking population in Eastern Ukraine. Although in the Eastern region this reason is mentioned more often, it is not the main explanation of the confrontation between Kyiv and Moscow.

**Traditionally,** citizens name the destruction of economic ties, deterioration of political contacts and negative relations between Russian and Ukrainian citizens **as the most negative consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.** This is the situation typical for all regions and all age groups.

**The relations between Ukrainian and Russian people have deteriorated over the last year.** The majority of respondents note this deterioration for the fifth year in a row. Moreover, the number of those, who say that these relations (which are currently hostile or bad) have not changed, is increasing. Percentage of citizens, who believe that relations have improved is statistically insignificant and does not exceed 1%.

**Most Ukrainians have experienced alienation between the citizens (societies) of Ukraine and Russia.** About a third of the respondents have an opposite opinion. The feeling of alienation between Ukrainians and Russians is predominant in the West, Centre, and East of Ukraine, while in the South – a relative majority (44%) of the respondents do not feel such alienation.

---

<sup>2</sup> Regional distribution is as follows: **West:** Volyn, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil, Chernivtsi oblasts; **Centre:** Kyiv City, Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Kirovohrad, Poltava, Sumy, Khmelnytskyi, Cherkasy, Chernihiv oblasts; **South:** Mykolayiv, Odesa, Kherson oblasts; **East:** Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk oblasts (except for the occupied territories).



**During the 2014-2018 conflict, Ukrainian citizens have developed a stable negative attitude towards the Russian leadership and its government institutions.** In June 2018, the share of the respondents with a negative attitude towards the Russian President was 76% (in June 2017 it hit 79%). Similar negative dynamics is also observed in relation to other state institutions – the Russian Government and the State Duma.

**The attitude towards Russian citizens is more reserved, mostly neutral.** However, in June 2018 (compared to April 2014), the number of Ukrainians with positive attitude towards Russians has dropped from 45% to 29%, while negative attitude has increased from 17% to 23%, and the share of respondents with neutral attitude grew from 33% to 37%. Overall, such a dynamics can be perceived as tendency towards distancing, mistrust and alienation between Ukrainian and Russian peoples.

The regional distribution of assessments is rather predictable. The most critical assessments of the Russian leadership were expressed in the West and the Centre (in Western Ukraine, the level of negative attitude towards V. Putin has reached its peak – 91%).

## PROSPECTS OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONTACTS

**Most often, Ukrainian citizens predict stagnation or deterioration of the bilateral relations in the near future.** Equal shares (36%, each) of respondents believe that relations will either remain unchanged (which cannot be viewed as a positive sign in the context of the Russian aggression), or will deteriorate, as respondents foresee the possibility of conflict escalation. Since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the level of optimism has dropped. (While in April 2012, 36% of the respondents expected Kyiv-Moscow relations to improve, in June 2018 – this share was 5%). The most pessimistic predictions are in the Western region; the South and the East of the country are more reserved.

**The majority of Ukrainians do not expect Russia's policy towards Ukraine to change for the better in the near future.** 72% of respondents do not believe in positive changes over the next three years, and 52% – in the next 3-5 years. In the long term (5-10 years), almost half (47%) of the respondents expect positive changes in Kremlin's foreign policy. Apparently, Ukrainians associate the possibility of positive changes in Russia's foreign policy with the end of V. Putin's presidential term.

**Most citizens expressed their support for reducing or curtailing contacts with Russia.** In the pre-war period, the majority of respondents supported enhancing cooperation with Moscow. Since the beginning of the conflict,

public sentiment has fundamentally changed. In June 2018, 32% supported the reduction of cooperation with Russia and 30% – curtailing contacts. In the West and Centre of Ukraine, a significant number of people prefer to reduce contacts with Russia, while in the South and the East – the situation is less definite – there, compared to overall numbers for Ukraine, slightly more respondents support enhancing cooperation with Russia (22% and 25%, respectively).

### **PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN DONBASS**

Recently, the idea to deploy a UN peacekeeping mission to Donbass has been widely discussed in the Ukrainian media space. Peacekeeping has been presented as the best possible political and diplomatic option for settling the protracted conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Ukraine and Russia, however, strongly disagree on the parameters of the UN mission mandate – its goals, tasks, functions, composition and deployment area.

**Most (59%) of Ukrainian citizens support the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force to the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.** A quarter of the respondents consider peacekeepers’ presence in Donbass inappropriate for various reasons.

There are some regional differences. In the West and the Centre, the majority (68%, each) of citizens support the deployment of a peacekeeping force to Donbass. In the South, 47% of residents support this idea (27% are against it). And in the East, the region adjacent to the conflict zone, people’s positions are mixed – 42% support the deployment of UN’s “blue helmets”, and 46% oppose the mission.

**Most Ukrainian citizens believe that there is no need to seek “DPR/LPR’s” approval to deploy the UN peacekeepers.** 42% of respondents are against such consultations with the “republics”, 34% – support this idea. Note that negotiations between Ukrainian government and “DPR/LPR” are what Russia has been insisting on. A significant part of respondents (23%) found it hard to answer this question. Residents in the West, Centre and East mostly believe that there should be no negotiations with the “republics” regarding the peacekeepers. Moreover, the largest number of those opposed to the idea is in the East – 49%. In the South, 39% of respondents support coordination with DPR/LPR, and 26% – oppose it. 35% were undecided.

**UN forces should take the entire occupied territory under their control, including the Ukrainian-Russian border.** This idea is supported by the majority (43%) of respondents. 15% agree with the Russian position – UN mission should be deployed to the contact line and ensure safety of OSCE monitoring

mission. 12% believe that peacekeepers should ensure the safety of OSCE monitors across the entire occupied territory. About a third (31%) of respondents found it hard to answer this question.

In the West and Centre, the majority of citizens support the idea of UN control over the entire occupied territory and the section of Ukraine-Russia border, while in the South and East – the positions diverge.

## SUMMARY, OR THE MATRIX OF ATTITUDE TO RUSSIA

Russia's intervention has drastically changed the attitude of Ukrainians towards the neighbouring country, its policy, leadership and citizens. One can hardly consider it a situational mood swing. Without a doubt, the general pattern of assessments (particularly, in the regional perspective) is complex and controversial. Yet, the surveys conducted by the Razumkov Centre in 2014-2018 give reasons to talk about certain relatively stable trends in the public opinion.

Summarising the respondents' opinions and assessments, one can identify a number of principal components, a conditional matrix of the respondents' attitude towards Russia (Table "*Do you agree with the following statements?*", pp.239-240). Generally, this matrix can be summarised as follows:

**One.** Russia is the aggressor state. Its goal is to liquidate Ukraine's independence and sovereignty. Normalisation of relations with Russia during Putin's presidency is impossible.

**Two.** Realistically, it is possible to minimise Russia's threat, but not completely neutralise it. In this situation, it is only possible to resist Russia's aggression through a coordinated international effort.

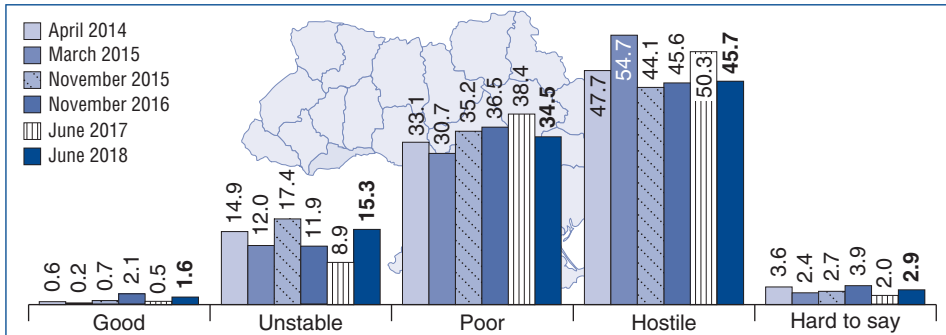
**Three.** Ukraine will not take part in integration projects in the post-Soviet space led by Russia. European integration has no alternative and is irreversible.

**Four.** "Strategic partnership", "good-neighbourly relations", "sister nations" concepts are currently not acceptable for Ukraine, neither is the Russian model of political system.

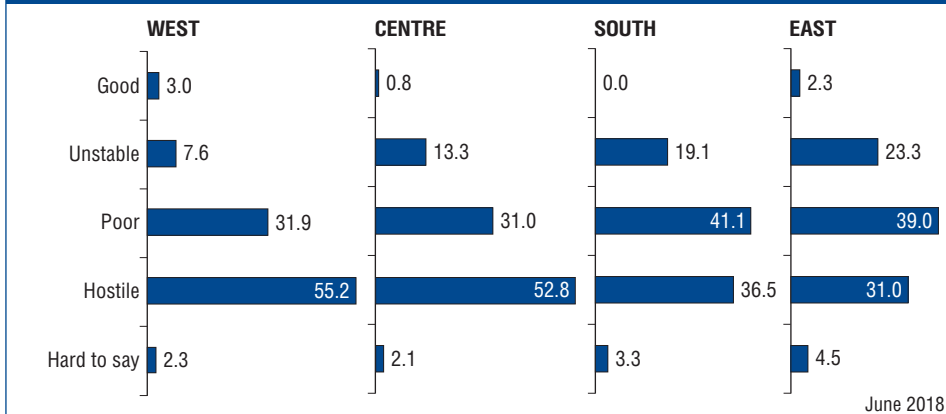
**Five.** There are a number of issues, where a compromise with Russia is impossible. These include the issue of Crimea, Ukraine's state structure, its European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

**Six.** The conditions for normalisation of relations between Kyiv and Moscow should include: termination of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, de-occupation, compensation for damages incurred during the annexation and military action, Russia abandoning its practices of interfering in Ukraine's domestic affairs.

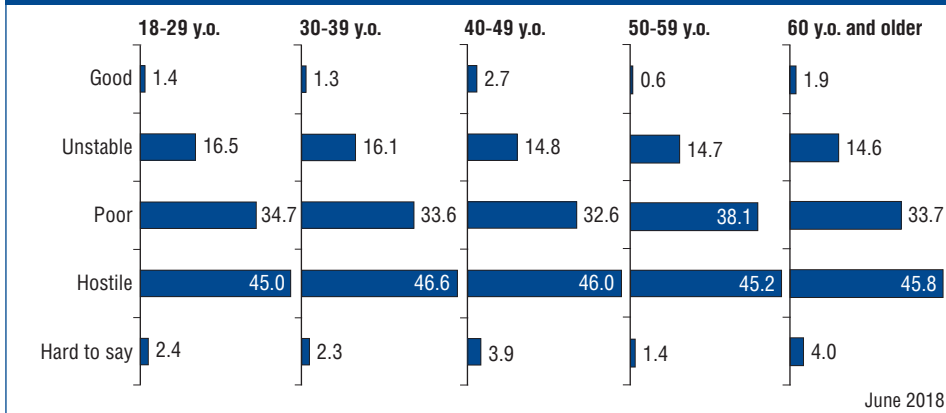
**How would you describe current relations between Ukraine and Russia?**  
% of respondents

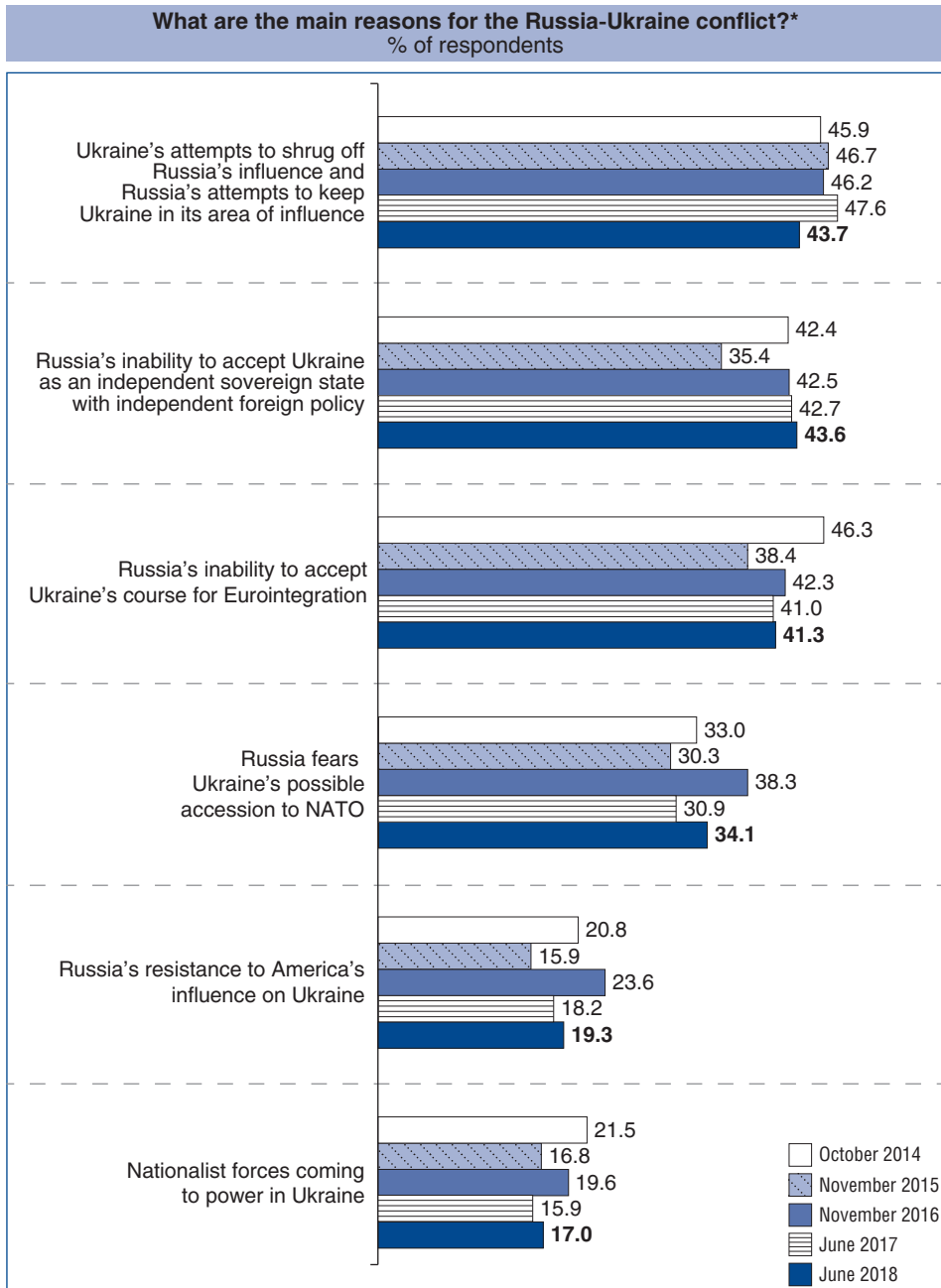


**REGIONS**



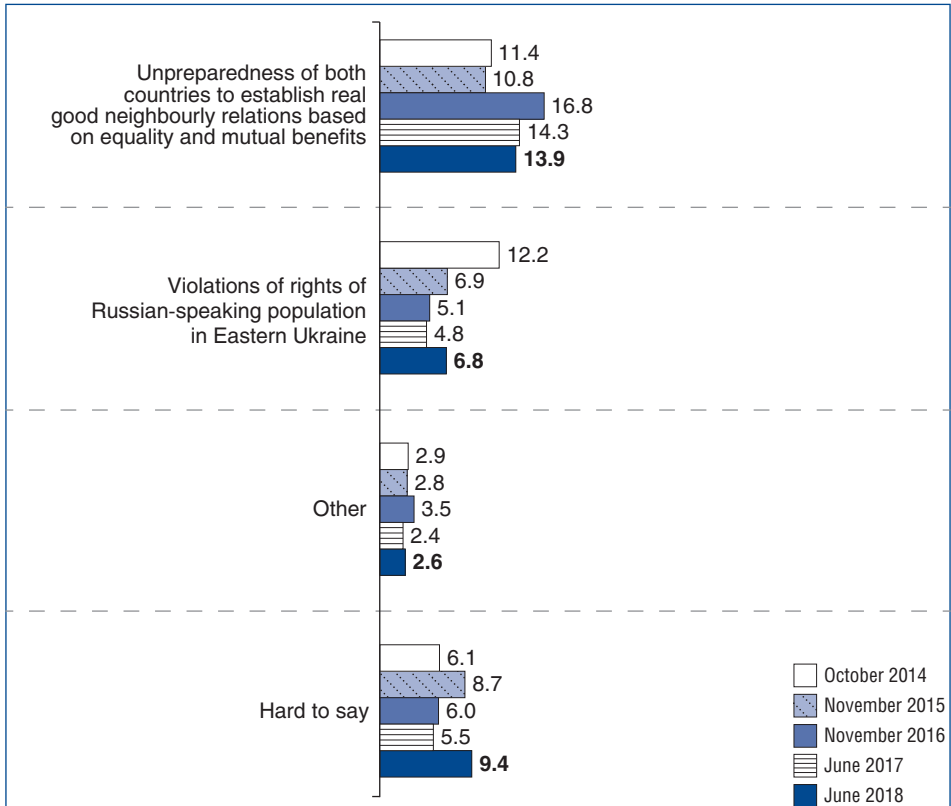
**AGE**





\* Respondents were asked to select all acceptable answers.

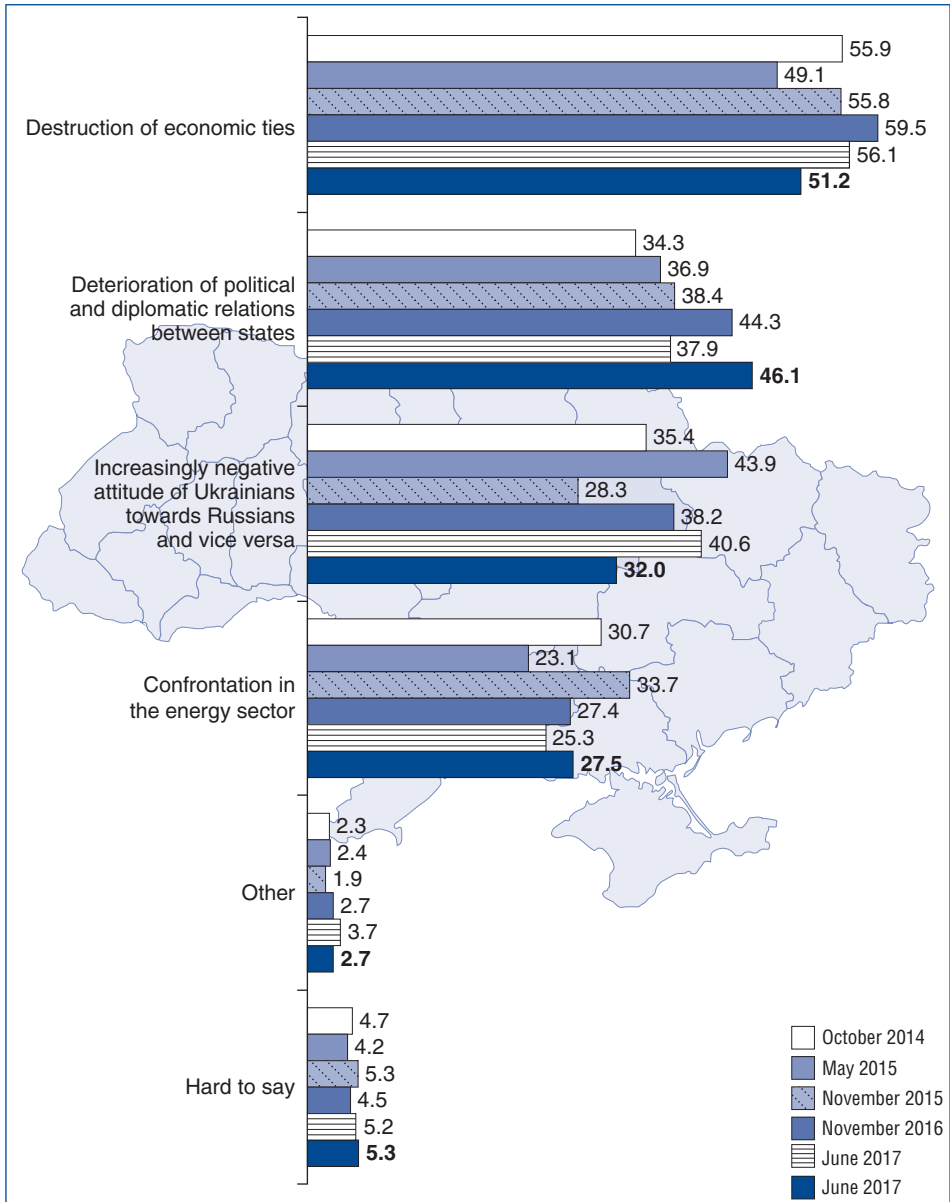
**What are the main reasons for the Russia-Ukraine conflict?\***  
 % of respondents (Continued)



REGIONS (June 2018)				
	West	Centre	South	East
Ukraine's attempts to shrug off Russia's influence and Russia's attempts to keep Ukraine in its area of influence	56.7	49.4	32.0	29.3
Russia's inability to accept Ukraine as an independent sovereign state with independent foreign policy	60.7	51.0	29.5	24.1
Russia's inability to accept Ukraine's course for Eurointegration	49.9	46.0	24.0	35.0
Russia fears Ukraine's possible accession to NATO	31.3	37.5	39.3	29.3
Russia's resistance to America's influence on Ukraine	11.4	24.6	19.1	18.8
Nationalist forces coming to power in Ukraine	7.6	11.8	30.7	26.5
Unpreparedness of both countries to establish real good neighbourly relations based on equality and mutual benefits	6.6	13.2	26.1	16.0
Violations of rights of Russian-speaking population in Eastern Ukraine	1.9	2.9	8.7	15.9
Other	0.8	4.0	3.3	1.5
Hard to say	6.6	7.9	10.4	13.3

\* Respondents were asked to select all acceptable answers.

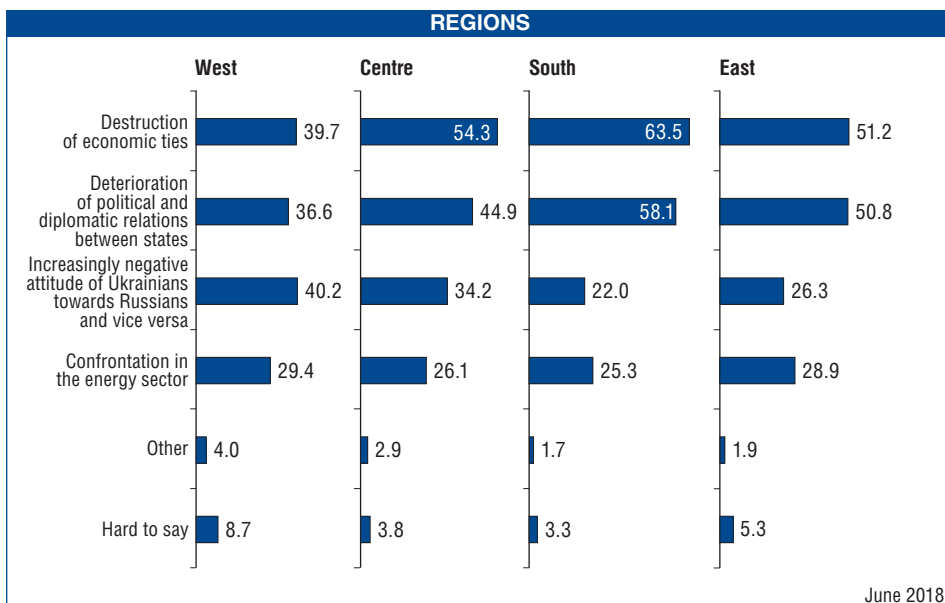
**What are the most negative consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict for bilateral relations?\***  
% of respondents



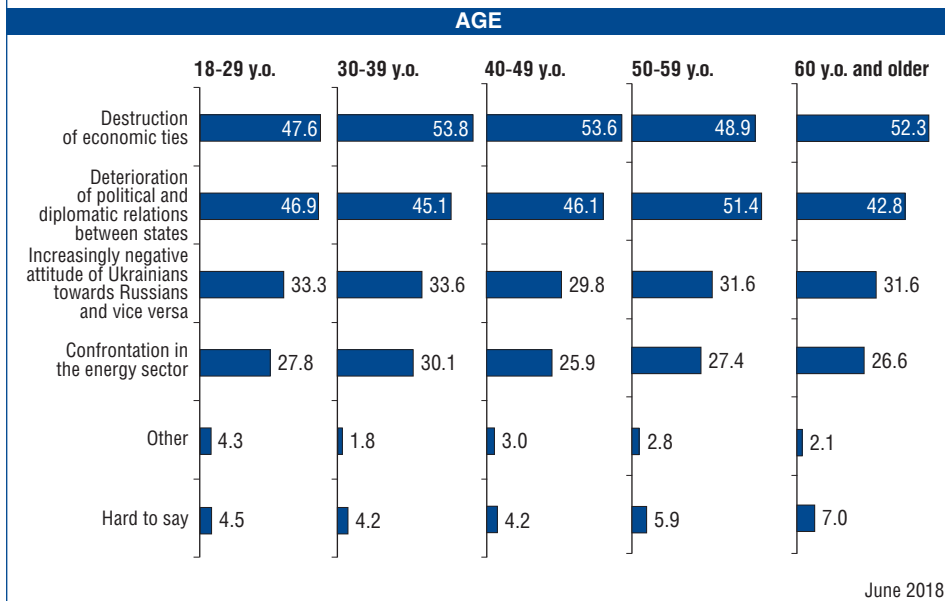
\* Respondents were asked to select two acceptable answers.

**What are the most negative consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict for bilateral relations?\***  
 % of respondents

(Continued)



June 2018

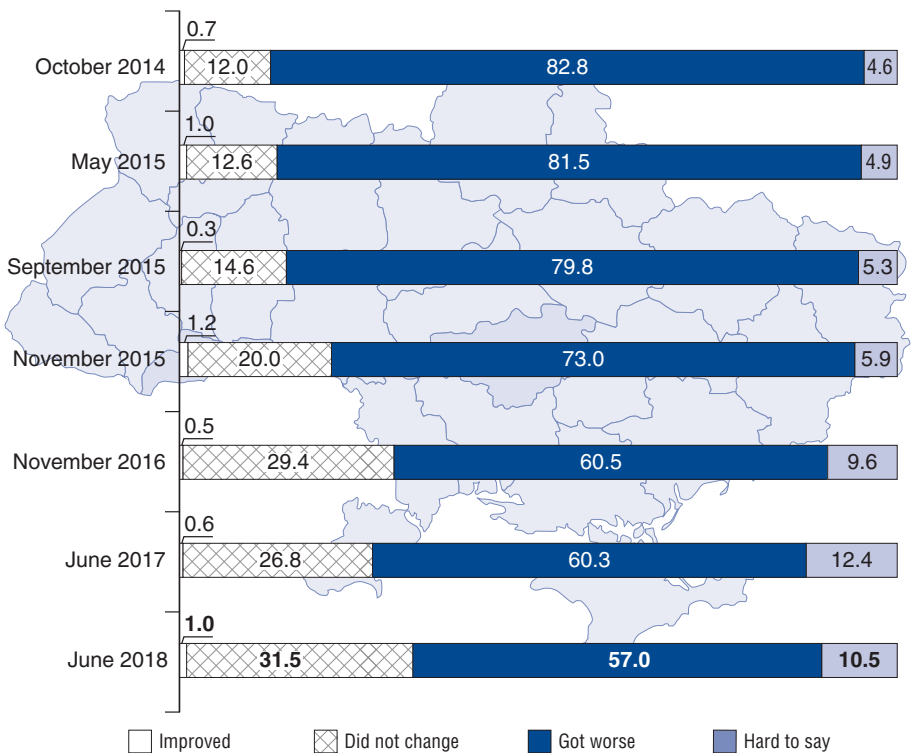


June 2018

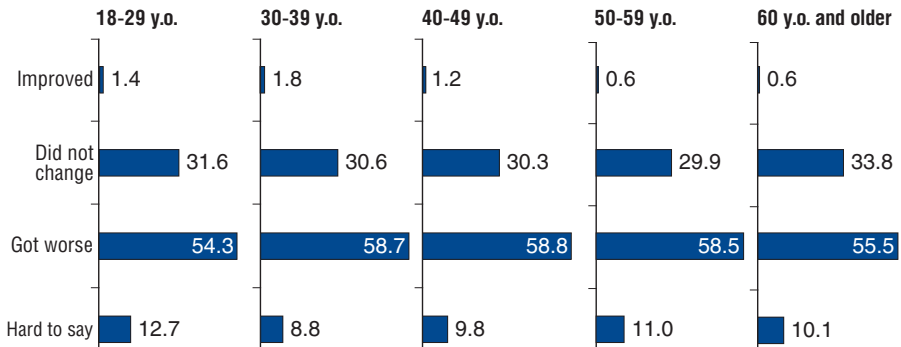
\* Respondents were asked to select two acceptable answers.



**How did relations between the peoples of Ukraine and Russia change in the past year?**  
% of respondents



**AGE**

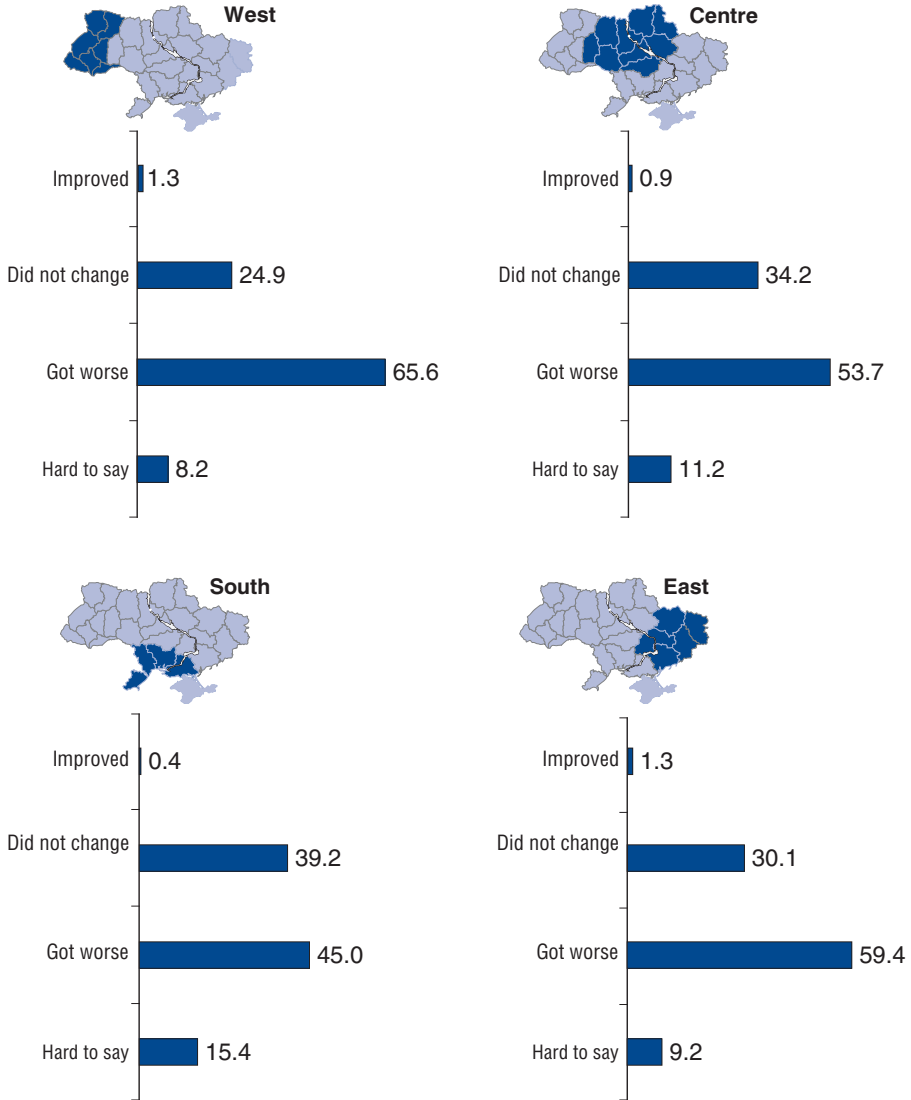


June 2018

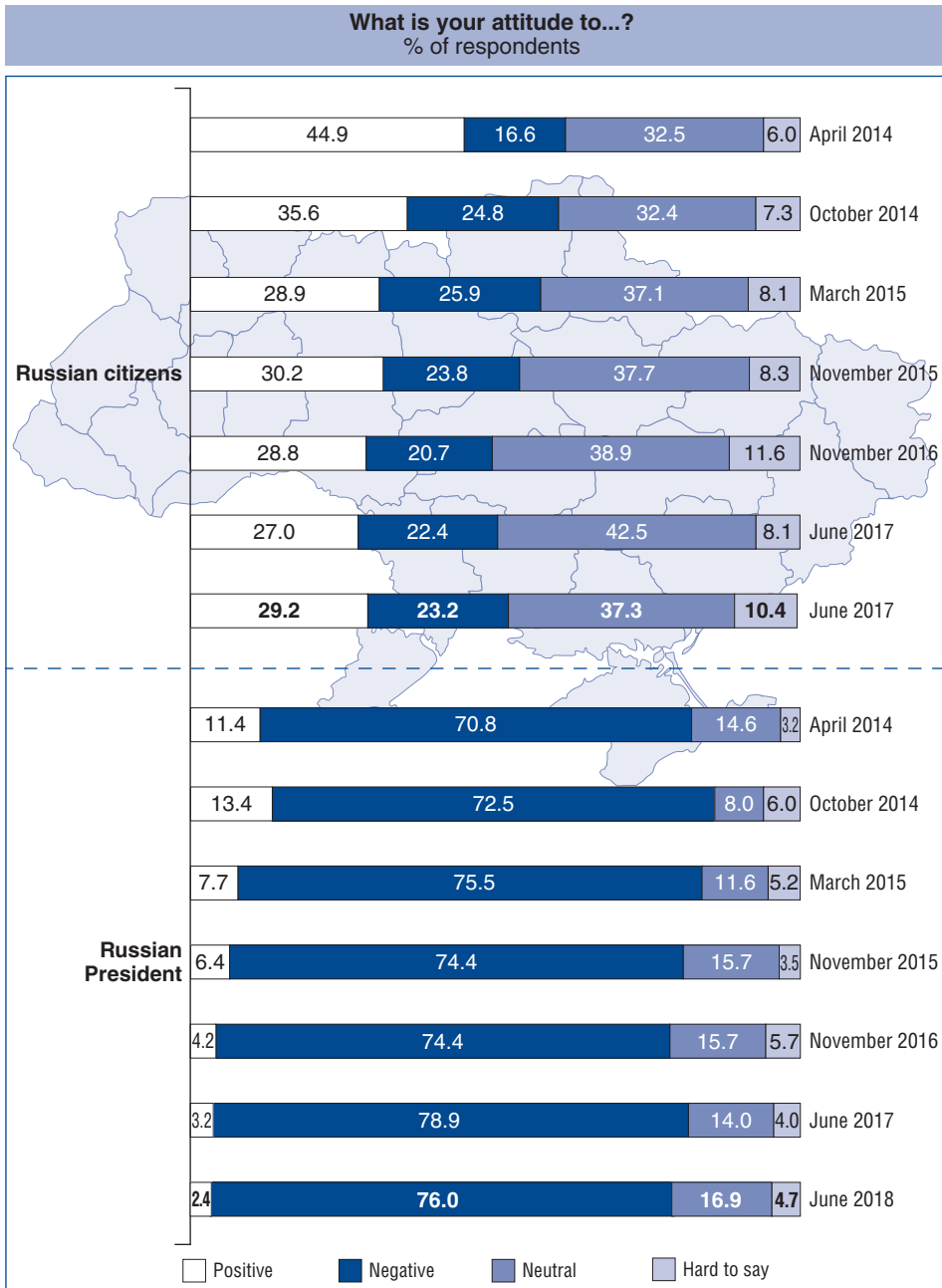
**How did relations between the peoples of Ukraine and Russia change in the past year?**  
 % of respondents

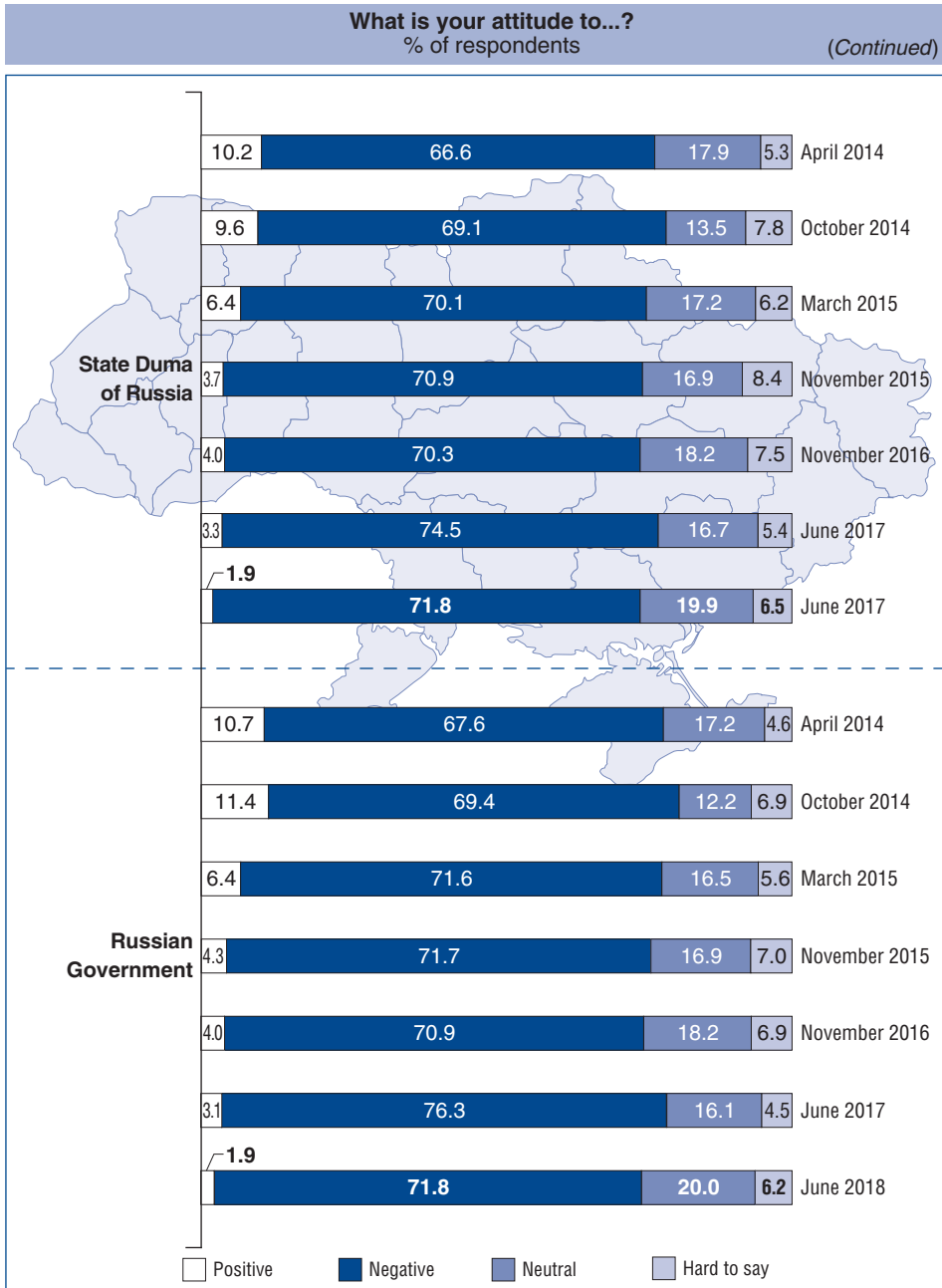
(Continued)

**REGIONS**



June 2018

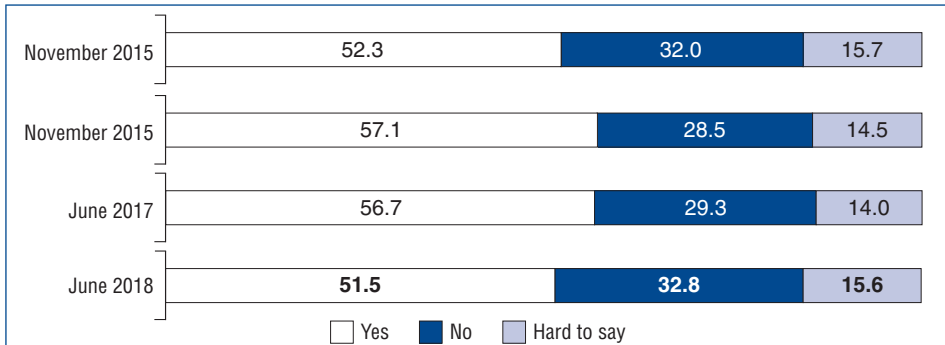




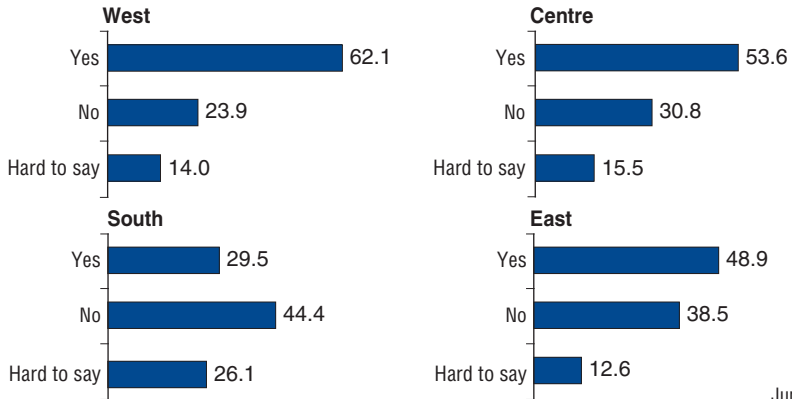
<b>What is your attitude to...?</b>				
% of respondents				
<i>(Continued)</i>				
<b>REGIONS (June 2018)</b>				
<b>Russian citizens</b>				
	<b>West</b>	<b>Centre</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>East</b>
Positive	15.2	25.6	36.0	43.7
Negative	32.3	25.6	9.9	17.6
Neutral	41.9	38.5	39.3	30.4
Hard to say	10.6	10.2	14.9	8.3
<b>Russian President</b>				
	<b>West</b>	<b>Centre</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>East</b>
Positive	1.1	1.4	1.2	5.5
Negative	90.9	87.5	65.1	50.9
Neutral	5.7	8.2	26.6	35.3
Hard to say	2.3	2.9	7.1	8.3
<b>State Duma of Russia</b>				
	<b>West</b>	<b>Centre</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>East</b>
Positive	1.1	1.4	0.0	4.1
Negative	86.9	83.1	58.9	47.9
Neutral	7.6	12.2	29.5	37.4
Hard to say	4.4	3.2	11.6	10.5
<b>Russian Government</b>				
	<b>West</b>	<b>Centre</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>East</b>
Positive	0.6	1.7	0.0	4.1
Negative	86.7	83.0	60.2	48.0
Neutral	8.2	12.1	29.0	37.9
Hard to say	4.4	3.2	10.8	9.9

<b>What is your attitude to...?</b>					
% of respondents					
<i>(Continued)</i>					
<b>AGE (June 2018)</b>					
<b>Russian citizens</b>					
	<b>18-29 y.o.</b>	<b>30-39 y.o.</b>	<b>40-49 y.o.</b>	<b>50-59 y.o.</b>	<b>60 y.o. and older</b>
Positive	20.8	25.7	30.4	32.5	35.3
Negative	26.1	27.8	22.3	21.2	19.7
Neutral	41.9	37.1	37.5	36.2	34.2
Hard to say	11.2	9.4	9.8	10.2	10.8
<b>Russian President</b>					
	<b>18-29 y.o.</b>	<b>30-39 y.o.</b>	<b>40-49 y.o.</b>	<b>50-59 y.o.</b>	<b>60 y.o. and older</b>
Positive	1.0	2.1	3.3	2.8	2.9
Negative	78.3	78.9	75.7	75.1	73.0
Neutral	15.8	15.4	16.6	18.1	18.3
Hard to say	5.0	3.6	4.5	4.0	5.9
<b>State Duma of Russia</b>					
	<b>18-29 y.o.</b>	<b>30-39 y.o.</b>	<b>40-49 y.o.</b>	<b>50-59 y.o.</b>	<b>60 y.o. and older</b>
Positive	1.2	1.6	1.8	1.7	2.5
Negative	73.7	75.5	73.5	70.0	67.9
Neutral	17.9	18.2	19.0	23.2	20.9
Hard to say	7.2	4.7	5.7	5.1	8.7
<b>Russian Government</b>					
	<b>18-29 y.o.</b>	<b>30-39 y.o.</b>	<b>40-49 y.o.</b>	<b>50-59 y.o.</b>	<b>60 y.o. and older</b>
Positive	1.0	1.8	2.1	1.7	2.5
Negative	75.8	75.5	72.5	70.5	66.9
Neutral	17.0	18.3	19.4	23.2	21.9
Hard to say	6.2	4.4	6.0	4.5	8.7

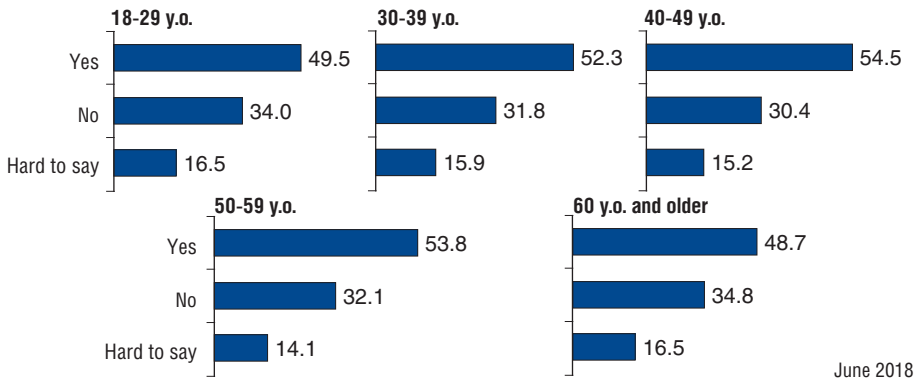
**Do you feel the alienation between the citizens (societies)  
of Russia and Ukraine?**  
% of respondents



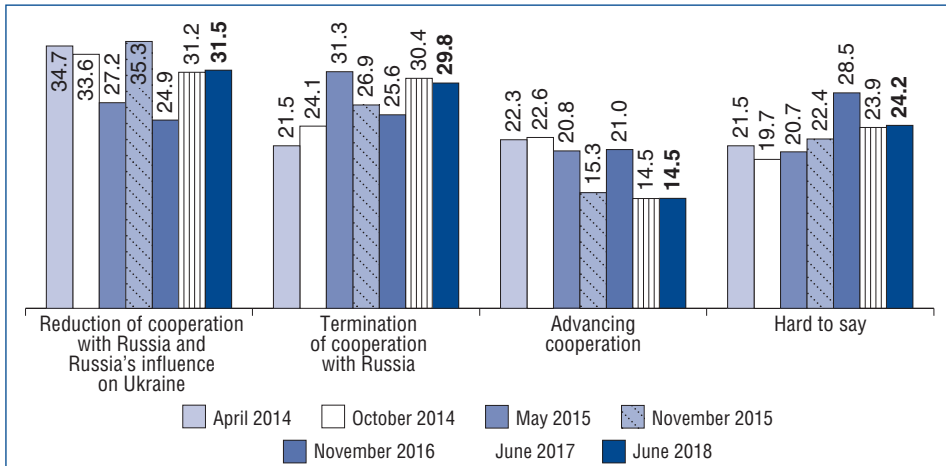
## REGIONS



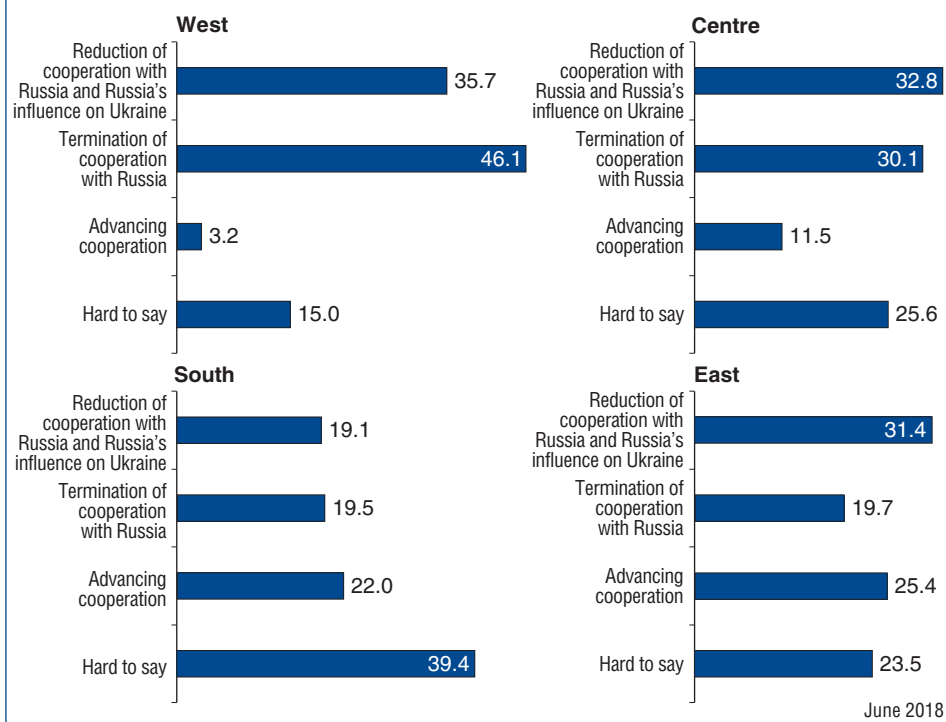
## AGE



**What should Ukraine's policy towards Russia?**  
% of respondents



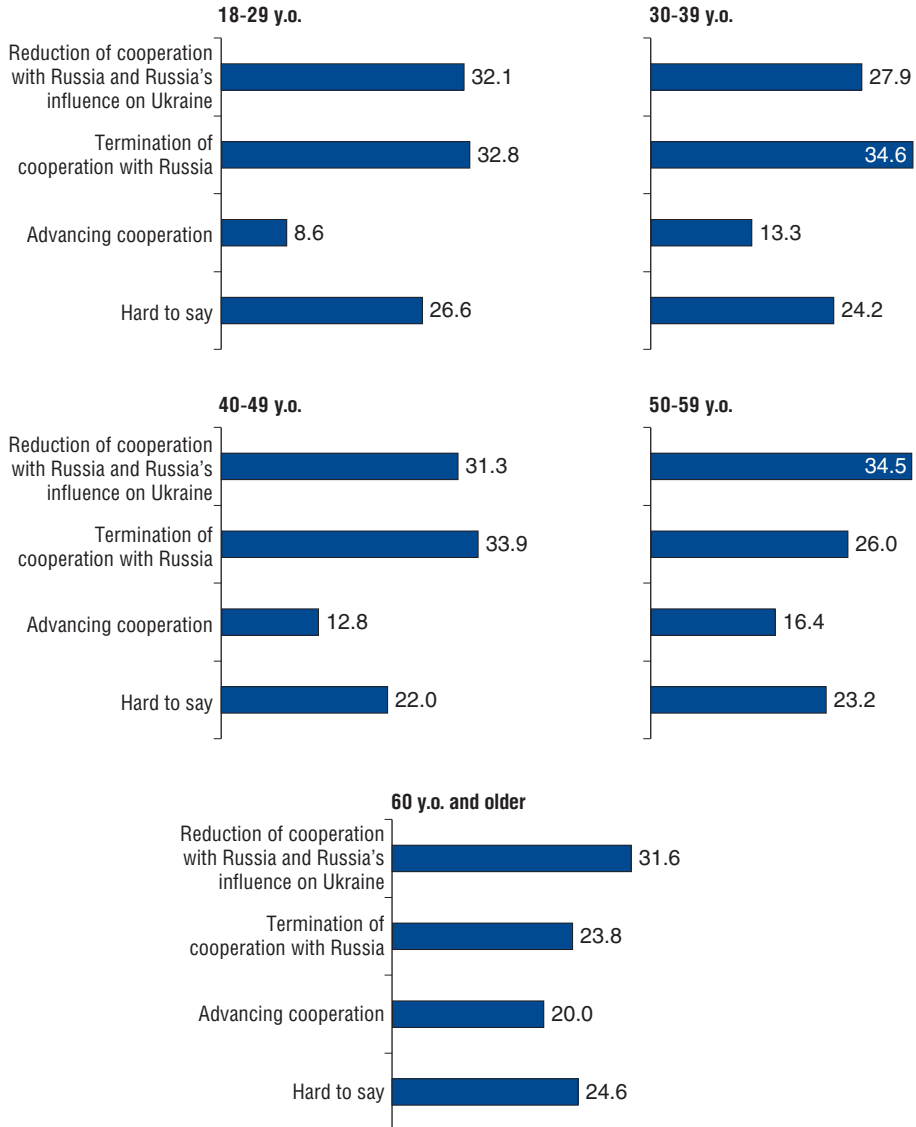
**REGIONS**



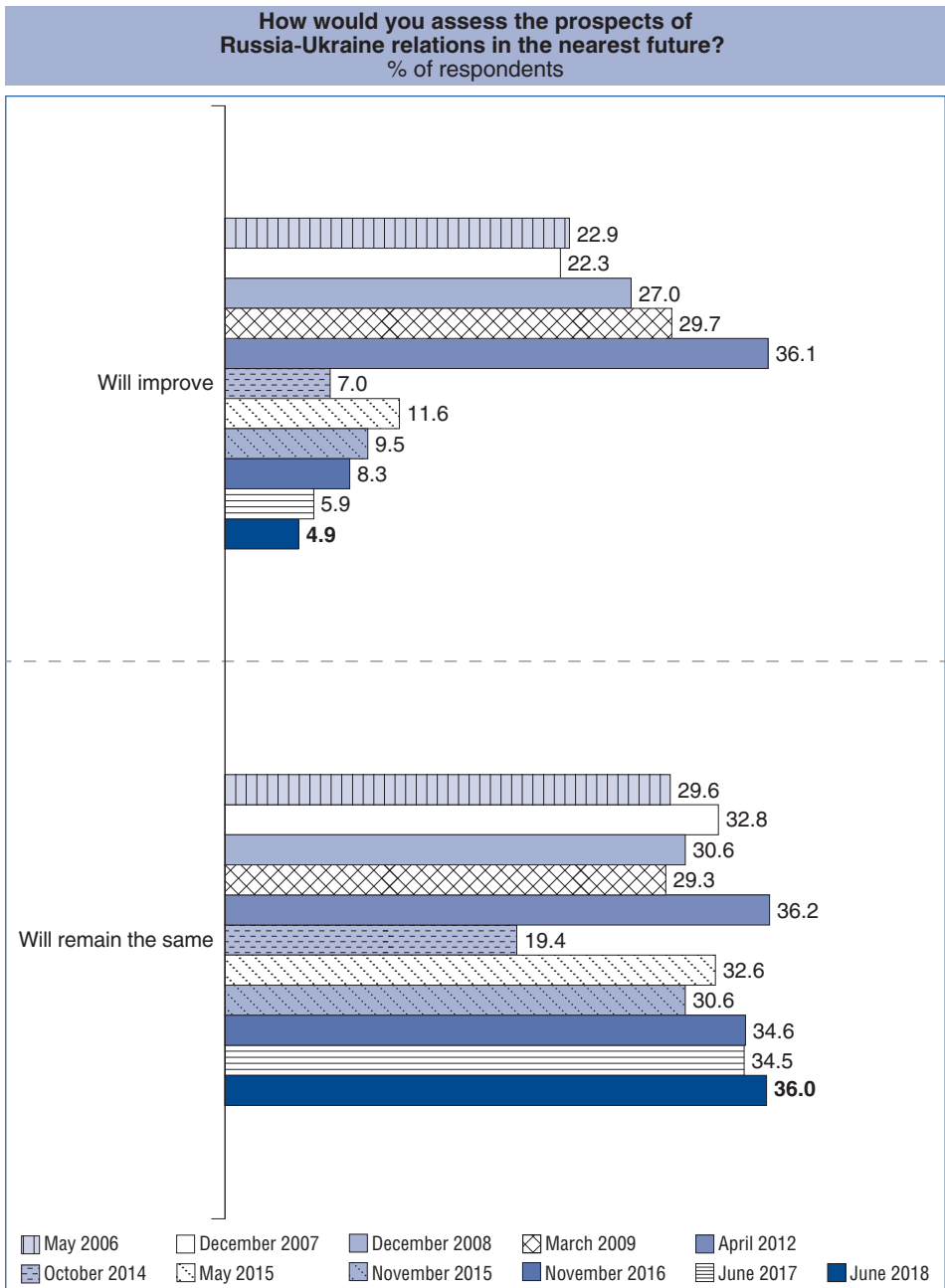


**What should be Ukraine's policy towards Russia?**  
% of respondents

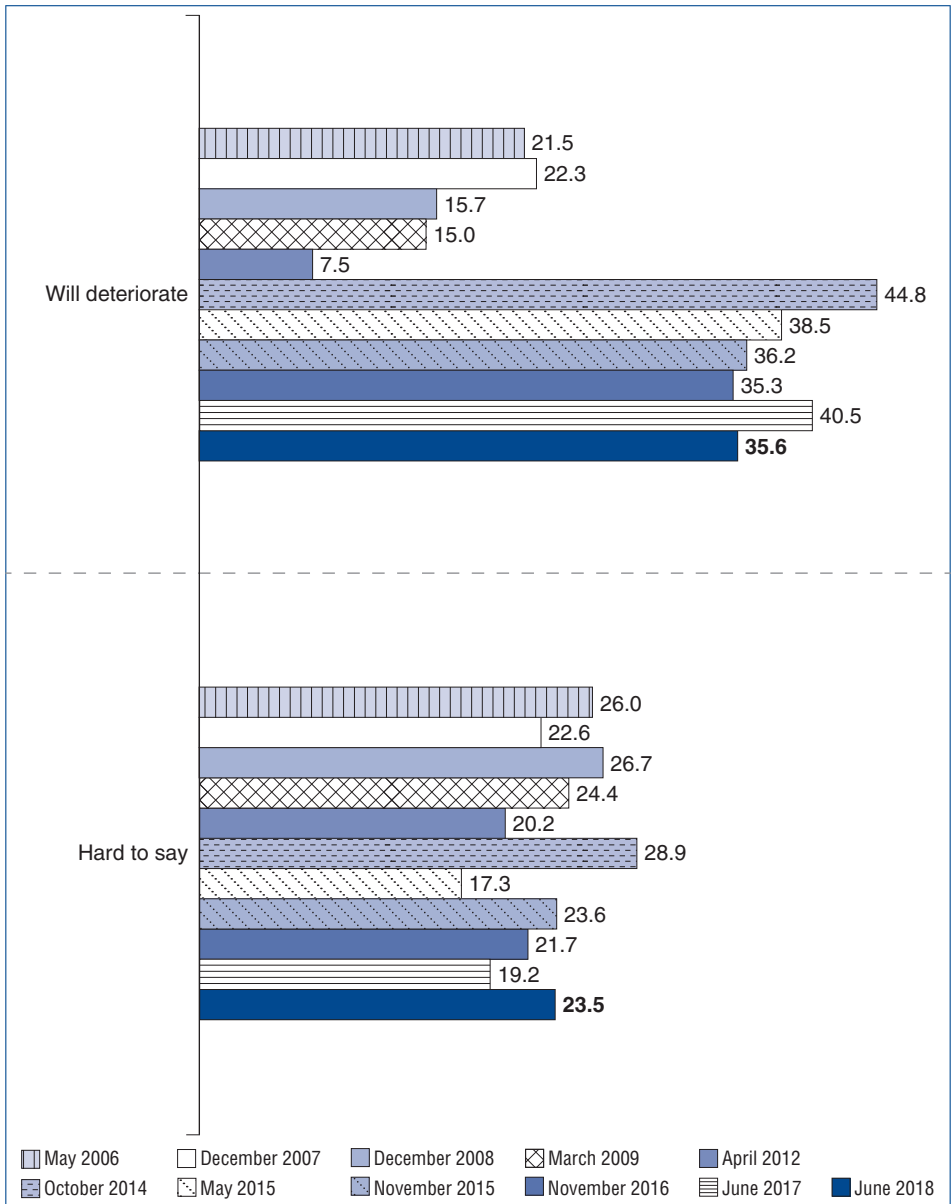
(Continued)

**AGE**

June 2018



**How would you assess the prospects of Russia-Ukraine relations in the nearest future?**  
 % of respondents (Continued)

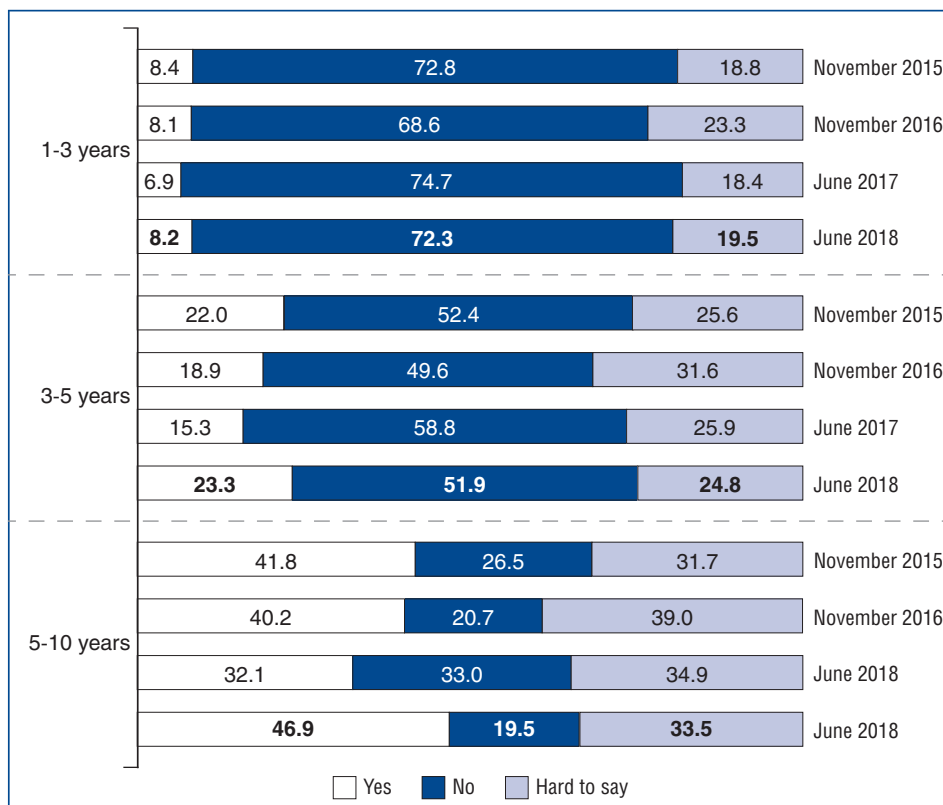


**How would you assess the prospects of Russia-Ukraine relations in the nearest future?**  
% of respondents

(Continued)

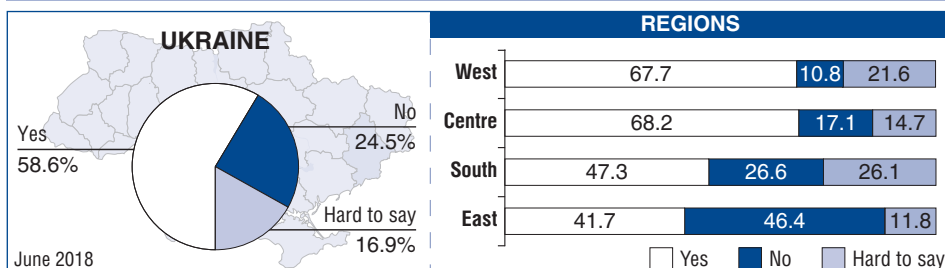
	REGIONS (June 2017)				
	West	Centre	South	East	
Will improve	4.9	5.3	11.2	5.3	
Will remain the same	31.5	35.0	26.6	40.0	
Will deteriorate	44.2	45.0	31.5	34.6	
Hard to say	19.5	14.7	30.7	20.1	
	AGE (June 2017)				
	18-29 y.o.	30-39 y.o.	40-49 y.o.	50-59 y.o.	60 y.o. and older
Will improve	5.7	5.5	5.8	4.7	7.2
Will remain the same	36.6	35.4	28.5	32.4	37.2
Will deteriorate	38.9	41.2	46.6	41.6	36.5
Hard to say	18.9	17.8	19.0	21.2	19.1

**Can there be changes for the better in Russia's policy towards Ukraine?**  
% of respondents



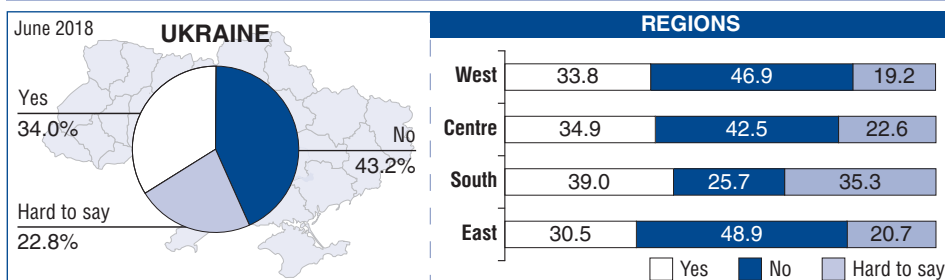
### Do you support the deployment of a UN peacekeeping forces to the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts?

% of respondents



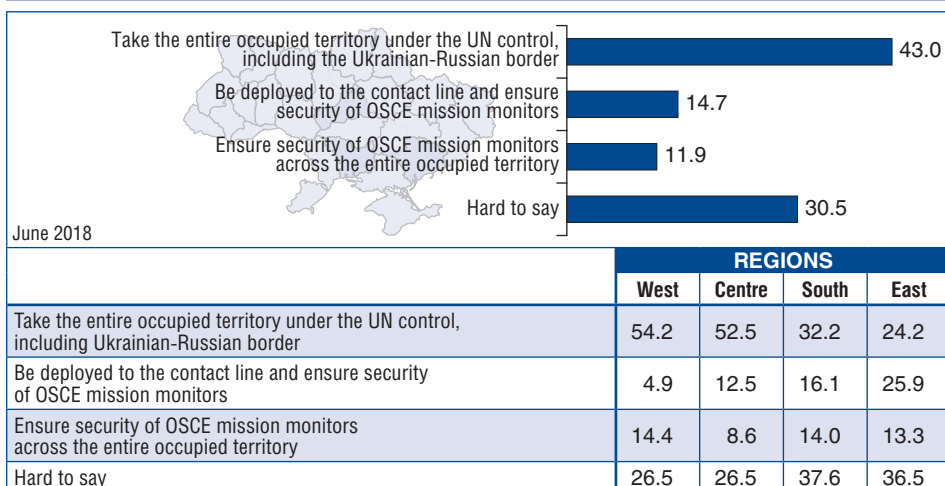
### Should the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission to Donbass be approved by DPR and LPR?

% of respondents

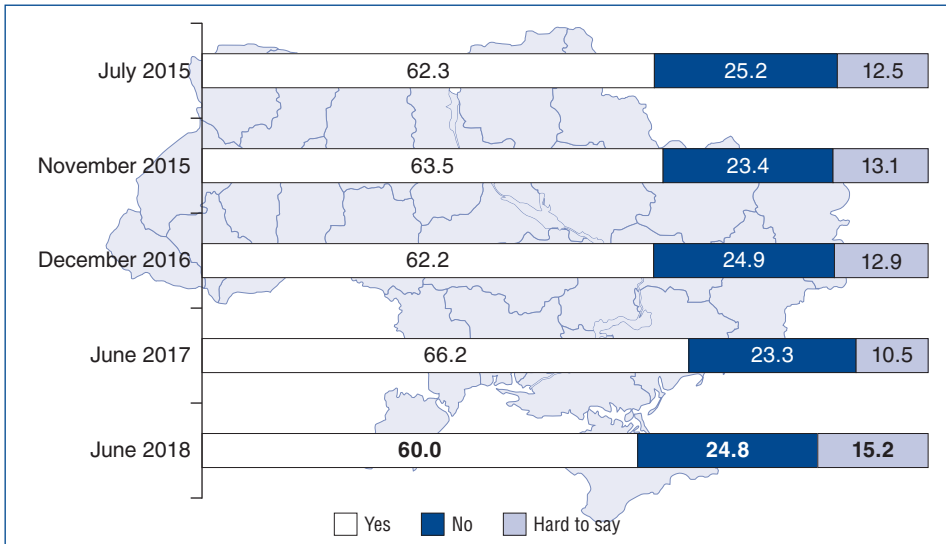


### How should the UN peacekeepers operate in the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts?

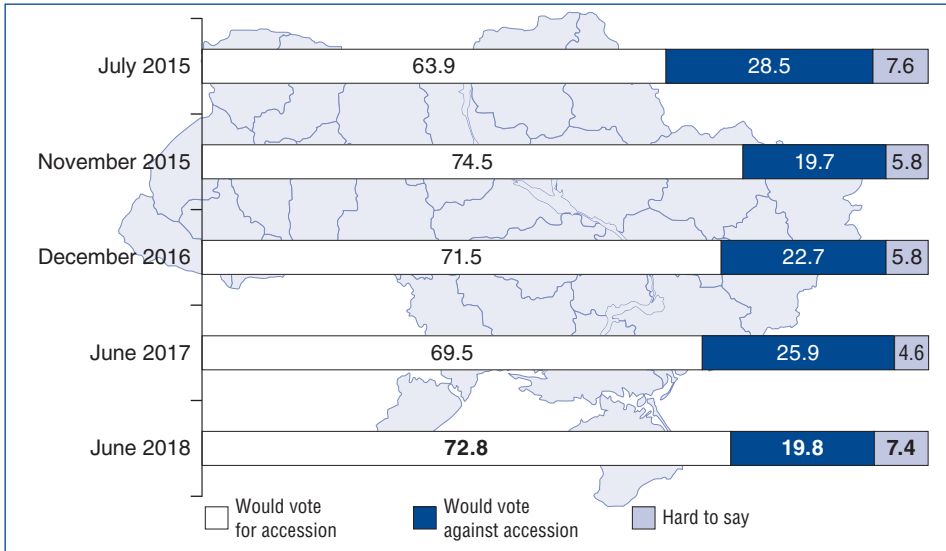
% of respondents

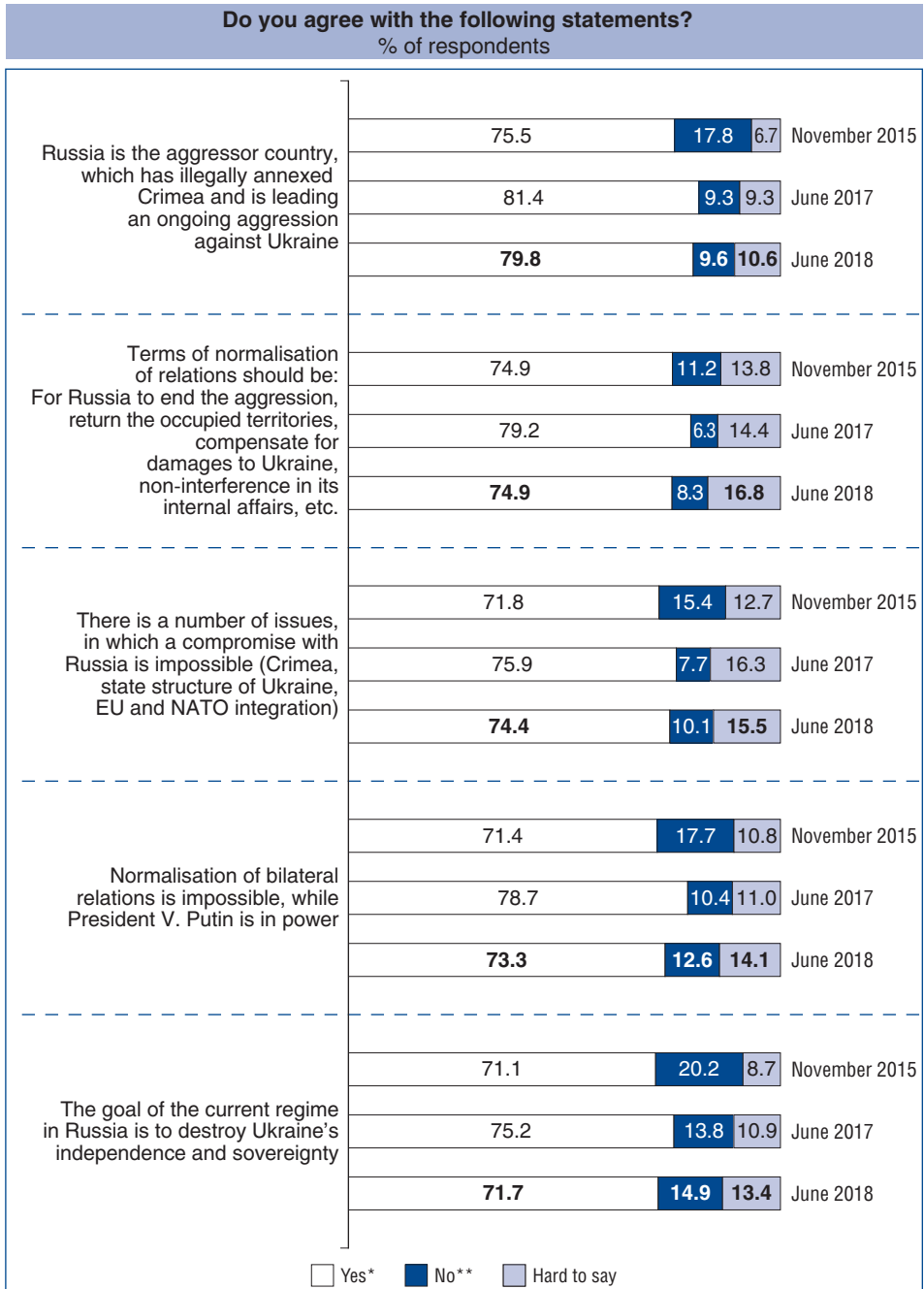


**If a referendum on Ukraine's accession to NATO were to be held in the near future, would you participate in it?**  
% of respondents



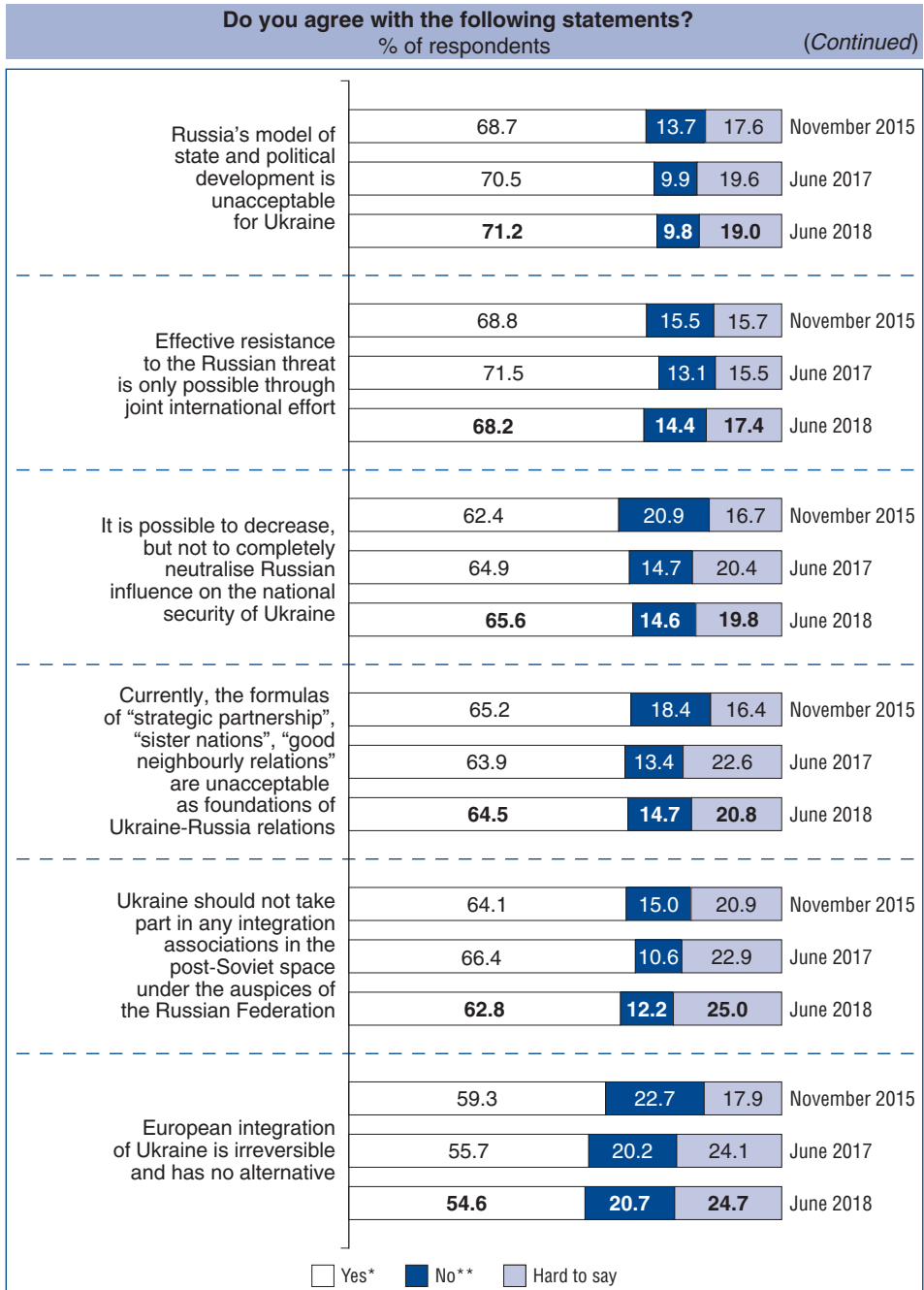
**If you were to take part in a referendum on Ukraine's accession to NATO, how would you vote?**  
% of respondents who would participate in the referendum





\* Sum of answers "yes" and "rather yes".

\*\* Sum of answers "no" and "rather no".



\* Sum of answers "yes" and "rather yes".

\*\* Sum of answers "no" and "rather no".