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Joint international military exercises of NATO countries within the implementation of programs supporting peace and security in Ukraine

Current events in Ukraine and the world testify to the persistent disruption of the existing system of international balance of powers, that took place after the end of the World War II and was consolidated in October 1945 by the United Nations. The period of new polarization in relations between the eastern and western states has begun, including the struggle for redistribution of spheres of influence and resource base on the planet. Western and the US economies use the concept of so called democratic development, focusing on the institutions of civil society and opposing it to the state to spread their hegemony. The Armed Forces can be used to achieve state's aims is only possible as a measure of last resort in the form of the Anti-Terrorist Operation. States of eastern hegemony, including Russian Federation, that has a de facto military conflict with Ukraine, openly use military forces, dictating its will to our country. Taking into account that Ukraine is willing to become a member of NATO's pro-Western military-political bloc and forced into an armed confrontation with Russia, the issue of the Alliance's influence on events in eastern Ukraine, its real assistance to Ukraine in preserving our statehood and restoring historical justice, is insufficiently researched by the national historical science. Thus, there is an opportunity for a more detailed study of *this issue*.

Tomashevych O.H. was engaged in the *analysis of military partnership research* through the relevant international programs at NATO-Ukraine level. In his article called Ukraine and NATO-backed Peacekeeping Operations, he focuses on Ukraine's active participation in international peacekeeping, professionalism of Ukrainian military forces, and their ability to effectively accomplish their tasks. Further, Kriuchkov H.M. in his research work, An Issue of Ukraine's Membership in NATO: Political, Legal and Moral Aspects, points out the importance of the non-military components of Ukraine-Alliance cooperation, focusing on the political and legal aspects. According to the researcher, the reason for Ukraine to choose cooperation with NATO was to move away from traditional forms of so-called Slavic brotherhood to

the new forms of prosperous collaboration that Ukraine did not practice till recently. A number of other scientists, including Vlasiuk O .S., Bodruk O. S., Parakhonskyi B.O., in the joint publication *Ukraine – NATO: Current State of Relations and Prospects for Development*, provide an explanation of the results achieved and the unfulfilled components of the roadmap that will lead to membership in Alliance. They note that re-arming and enhancing the mobility of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is not the ultimate aim set by NATO's leadership in cooperation with Ukraine. Anti-corruption, military trainings aimed at coordinating joint actions, respect for human and citizen's democratic rights and freedoms are just as important to the Organization's strategists as the effectiveness of Ukrainian military reform.

At the same time, the issues of practical result of cooperation with NATO, the system and organization of international military trainings under the auspices of the Alliance and the real prospects for Ukraine as a full Alliance's member in the future still *remains understudied*.

The main purpose of this research is to learn and conduct a comprehensive analysis of military interaction issue between Ukraine and the North Atlantic Alliance, including the role of NATO Liaison Office in this process.

Thus, the events of the Revolution of Dignity, that took place in 2013–2014 in Ukraine, testified to the existence of intense controversies in Ukrainian society, related to the dissatisfaction with the existing power in the country and its policies. European aspirations for Ukrainian nation were hardly offset by the refusal of the former President of Ukraine Yanukovich V.F. to sign Association Agreement with the European Union during the November Summit held in Vilnius (Lithuania) in 2013.

However, some Ukrainians, mainly from the eastern regions of the country, began to defend other views on the political situation in the country, looking at the pro-Russian vector of cooperation within the CIS and Customs Union. In February–March 2014, as a response to the pro-European Maidan in Kyiv, secessionist movement in the southeastern regions of the state, including Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, Mykolayiv, Kherson and Odessa regions, as well as the Autonomous Republic of Crimea began. So-called referendum on annexation of Crimea peninsula to Russian Federation, held on March 16, 2014, was made by Russian troops support and the Black Sea Fleet of the Armed Forces of Russian Federation stationed in the city of Sevastopol in Crimea. In cooperation with local pro-Russian activists, they created the preconditions for alienation of the peninsula territory from the mainland of Ukraine, blocking any attempts by Ukrainian authorities to counter separatist manifestations. It was evident that Russia had turned from a so called strategic partner into the same so-called strategic enemy, becoming an aggressor-state in the public's eyes. Certainly, resolving the issue of returning the lost peninsula, that is strategically important in terms of military location, and the suppression of separatist manifestations in other regions of the state, especially on the territory of Donets'k and Luhansk regions, without the Armed Forces of Ukraine (further – the Armed Forces) was no longer possible. The situation in the Armed Forces as of 2014, was worse than the critical one. The unsuccessful reform of the defense sector of the state, which was characterized by corruption of the army's generality, theft of state

defense property, ineffective military management and other factors, resulted in the complete disorganization and demoralization of the Armed Forces during a difficult period for the state. Objectively, the Armed Forces were not ready for a military conflict with Russia.

The introduction of the Anti-Terrorist Operation regime (hereinafter – ATO) on the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk regions on April 8, 2014 by the Acting President of Ukraine, Oleksandr Turchinov, became the first adequate response of the official Ukrainian authorities to the encroachment of unlawful combatants of Donetsk and Luhansk, where the activity of legitimate bodies of state power, local self-government was completely blocked. The use of the Armed Forces units made it possible to implement the scenario of rapid crisis management in the east of Ukraine with the smallest casualties and the return of these territories to the full control of the central government in Kyiv.

However, supported and sponsored by Russia, fighters of unlawful combatants of Luhansk People's Republic and Donetsk People's Republic (hereinafter referred to as LNR and DNR respectively) after holding on May 11, 2014 so-called referendum (similar to so-called Crimea referendum scenario) on the independence of these two pseudo-states began a violent military fighting. Only with the help of quantitative and qualitative advantage of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and volunteer battalions it was possible to liberate a number of occupied cities and other Ukrainian settlements. In particular, the cities of Lyman, Kramatorsk, Slaviansk, Bakhmut, Lysychansk, Severodonetsk and others were liberated. The first significant losses forced unlawful combatants to withdraw to the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, to regroup their units and to establish a permanent logistical connection with Russian Federation to supply military equipment and weapons from there. The negative results of location change of the suppression of separatism in the eastern regions through the actions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were the following: full transition to control of Russian-terrorist troops of a large section of the state border along Donetsk and Lugansk regions; loss of the largest industrial conglomerations in the region, including the cities of Donetsk and Lugansk, that got the status of «capitals» for DNR and LNR respectively; open Russian intervention into a military conflict on the side of terrorists.

Russia's interference into the confrontation led to the Ilovaisk trap and Debaltsevo trap, that brought to Ukraine the greatest human losses during the whole period of the military conflict in the east of the country. Realizing their own inability to confront effectively Russian-terrorist forces on their own, Ukrainian authorities started seeking the assistance of international partners from NATO military-political bloc as they maintained partnership relations at the beginning of Ukraine's independence in 1991. At first, the cooperation was mainly in the field of scientific and technical cooperation. In 1994 Ukraine joined Partnership for Peace Agreement. It was designed by North Atlantic Treaty Organization for countries that appeared on the map after the collapse of the Soviet Union (hereinafter referred to as the USSR) and has formally defined the main directions, goals and objectives of future cooperation.

The war in the eastern Ukraine has transformed the relations within the framework of cooperation with NATO through a sharp condemnation of Russia's actions in Ukraine. The greatest assistance to Ukraine was provided by the United States, Canada, Germany, Israel, the Baltic States and Central Europe during the ATO period.

Prolongation of the military conflict and the gradual transition from escalation to positional fighting made it possible to change approaches to understanding the priority areas of NATO-Ukraine cooperation, and to move to the current realities of the Concept of lethal arms, building the infrastructure of the Armed Forces, Ukrainian National Guard and other statutory army units that will be discussed below.

Thus, the adoption of the Concept of Development of the Security and Defense sector of Ukraine by the National Security Council of Ukraine approved by the Decree of the President of Ukraine as of March 4, 2016 became a legal basis for confirming the presence of NATO military units on the territory of Ukraine before the adoption of official amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine that forbids foreign military presence, location of military bases of other countries on Ukrainian lands were made by Verkhovna Rada (Presidential Decree No. 92/2016). According to the provisions of this Concept, Ukraine has the right to use its own territory for combat operations by military units of NATO countries in the event of a direct military conflict with Russian Federation.

It was also envisaged that the needs of defense and security sector reform require the implementation of principles and standards adopted in NATO and EU countries. Ukraine's adherence to the fundamental principles of the rule of law, protection of human and civil rights, expertise of authorities at all levels, humanism, tolerance, unification of the resource base management system, taking into account modern European and Euro-Atlantic approaches, will ensure Ukraine's compliance with the conditions for admission to these organizations. Special attention was also paid to the need of building cybersecurity forces in the context of a hybrid propaganda war with Russia, a professional army and preparation of a capable military reserve at the expense of combatants, to strengthen interaction with NATO countries' partner intelligence agencies, to increase the level of trust and information exchange within the new Law of Ukraine On National Security of Ukraine (The Law of Ukraine...).

In general, cooperation between Ukraine and NATO countries is multifaceted and aimed at updating the capabilities of the Armed Forces and other legitimate military formations in order to effectively organize the defense of our country in the event of conflict escalation in the East of Ukraine and other possible territorial encroachments from Russian side.

The military aspect of our cooperation with the Alliance is primarily based on joint military trainings. Depending on the type of troops, these exercises have a naval and land component. The maritime component is represented by the annual Sea Breeze international military exercises. They have been conducted in the Black Sea since 1997 in accordance with the signed Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation on Defense and Military Relations between the Pentagon and the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine. The purpose of the Sea Breeze exercises was

to establish co-operation between the countries of the Black Sea region and NATO countries in the event of potential and real threats to their security from the sea. Russian Federation is the only country that has access to the Black Sea but does not participate in military exercises. For Ukraine, since Crimea occupation in 2014 and the beginning of the military conflict in Donbas, these exercises have become a guarantee of protecting its maritime borders from the aggression of Russian Federation or its attempts to occupy areas of the southern regions of our country that have access to the sea coastline.

During four years of the Anti-Terrorist Operation before it was reformed into the Joint Forces Operation (hereinafter referred to as JFO) from April 30, 2018, the presence of NATO Navy warships did not allow Russia to create preconditions for further annexation of Ukrainian land. Crimea peninsula militarization and the presence of the 14th Peacekeeping Army of the Armed Forces of Russia in Prydniprovskia Moldova Republic became a real threat to the state security of Ukraine and its maritime borders. The key interest for Russian invaders was the city of Odessa as the largest seaport and Ukrainian Navy base of ships (Feduniak 2015: 123).

In recent years, Sea Breeze trainings have been transformed. In particular, the number of countries participating in military exercises is steadily increasing from 14 to 17 countries. New units, such as military transport aviation, MiG-29 jets fighter of Ukrainian Armed Forces, US Boeing P-8 Poseidon of the US Navy, etc were involved. Submarines are also applied, taking into account the strategy of Russian Black Sea Fleet submarines' presence in the area of Black Sea. The interaction with the coastal land units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine was significantly improved, working out joint actions of repulsing military aggression at Shyrokyi Lan military range in Mykolayiv region. The total number of military personnel participating in the joint maneuvers shifted from two to three thousand fighters during 2014–2018. In July 2017, the North Atlantic Alliance initiated the construction of the Naval Operational Center for Ukrainian Navy in Ochakiv, Mykolaiv region. Construction work have been done at the expense of the US military budget by the 11th and 133rd U.S. Army Construction Battalions. According to the Construction Plan three infrastructure facilities should be built for Ukrainian Navy. These include: 1) Naval Operational Center of the Navy of Ukraine; 2) repair shops for military vessels; 3) checkpoints and systems of construction protection. They are scheduled to be commissioned in 2019. After construction work completion, the Naval Operations Center will manage the maritime, coastal, air defense components, special operations forces. This reflects the willingness of NATO countries to have a Black Sea focal point that liaises with NATO forces and the Armed Forces and facilitates their effective response to the Black Sea warfare involving Alliance Mediterranean Squadrons.

The ground component of military cooperation between Ukraine and the Alliance is concentrated within the activities of the International Center for Peacekeeping and Security, operating at Hetman Petro Sahaidachnyi National Academy of Ground Forces. The Center is located at the Yavoriv military training range, located in Lviv region. The Peacekeeping Center started in 1995, when the Peace Shield military exercises were first launched in the framework of the Partnership for Peace Agreement signed between Ukraine and NATO in 1994. Initially, the Center's mission was to

develop peacekeeping movement and preparing trainings for the Armed Forces of Ukraine participating in international peacekeeping missions in Africa and Southern Europe countries, and subsequently counteracting the threats of international terrorism. When Russian aggression began in 2014, there was a third Center reformat within the framework of the Concept of Combating the Hybrid War, which is based on the use of socially unstable marginalized elements of the population to ignite civil strife within the country. Propaganda is an integral attribute of a hybrid war with the usage of media, Internet resources, the implementation of measures to consciously misinform users of social media (Vlasiuk, Bodruk, Parahonsky 2018: 264). To counter the hybrid attacks, NATO experts have developed a plan of events to prepare intellectual professionals capable of counteracting the threats of today's digital information society.

Since 2006, the Center has been conducting joint international Rapid Trident military exercises aimed at preparing for joint action within multinational security forces during international coalition operations (Tomashevych 2011: 94). During 2014–2018, when coalition exercises were held, the number of participating countries significantly increased, mainly at the expense of the Alliance Partner Countries (Georgia, Moldova), which also experienced Russian aggression against their territories and lost a part of their territories (Georgia lost South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Moldova – Pridnestrovska Moldova Republic).

Thus, in 2012, on the basis of Iavoriv military range, the 184th Training Center was created at Hetman Petro Sahaidachnyi National Academy of Land Forces of Ukraine by the Decree of the Minister of Defense of Ukraine. Within the framework of the Training Center's activities, foreign experts from the North Atlantic Alliance countries will train Ukrainian instructors under the United Multinational Peacekeeping Group Program. Since 2014, more than 200 Ukrainian military instructors have been trained by military instructors from Latvia and Canada in the course of First Medical Aid for wounded soldiers, accompanied by heavy blood loss, surgery, etc.

For its part, since 2017, the United Kingdom, as a member of NATO, according to the personally developed Orbital training program for military personnel, has been training the 93rd Specialized Guards Mechanized Brigade for combat operations and direct fire contact with the adversary of the interaction of intermediate links between officers and soldiers for more effective repulsion of the enemy (Tomashevych 2011: 96).

Particular attention was paid to the assistance of the North Atlantic Alliance to Ukrainian troops in the framework of projects launched by the NATO Trust Fund. Collaboration with the Fund began in 2000 and has been linked to the implementation of surplus weapons and ammunition disposal programs within the framework of the reform of the Alliance's National Military Forces, including Ukraine. However, since the beginning of ATO, the character of assistance was changed at the request of our country. Military ammunition kits, technical equipment, motor vehicles, medicines and other non-lethal equipment began to arrive to Ukraine at the expense of the Alliance's budget. NATO Trust Fund Project Manager Frederick Peugeot and the Head of NATO Liaison Office in Ukraine Oleksandr Vinnikov have repeatedly stated

their support for Ukraine and readiness to provide financial assistance to Ukrainian military (Vlasiuk, Bodruk, Parahonsky 2018: 87).

To date, the main priorities of the partnership are focused on the health and social and psychological rehabilitation of wounded Ukrainian soldiers in military hospitals and rehabilitation centers of NATO countries.

In summary, it should be noted that the interaction of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the North Atlantic Alliance during the period of military aggression of Russian Federation in the East of Ukraine was indirect and aimed primarily at reforming the Ukrainian army, its material, technical, financial, organizational and legal support without direct intervention of military units of Alliance into the military conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Further cooperation is traced through the construction and adjustment of existing military programs between our country and NATO. Thus, the programs of joint military training Sea Breeze have been conducted since 1997, and Quick Trident since 2006. Each year, they are held almost during the same time. The only exception was construction of Ochakiv Naval Operations Center of the Ukrainian Navy, which is funded at the expense of the US military budget.

However, undoubtedly, NATO's so-called natural enemy of Russian Federation, has become our most reliable ally. The assistance provided by Alliance to Ukraine cannot be overestimated. And even pro-Russian sympathies of individual politicians of NATO countries such as Hungary and Austria will not hinder Ukraine's integration into the Alliance. It is well known that the United States is the de facto recognized leader and the most powerful NATO member. It is the United States that invests the largest amount of financial, logistical and human resources in the Alliance's activities and, accordingly, receives a "decisive" vote. And Ukraine, in its turn, after four years of armed confrontation in the hybrid war with Russia, generated interest of NATO countries with its best practices that reflects modern chronology of history from defeat to the victory of Ukrainian weapon and the indomitable spirit of our nation and readiness to share the lessons learned with Alliance's countries.

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Joint International Military Exercises of NATO Countries Implementing Programs to Support Peace and Security in Ukraine

Abstract

This article considers the issue of annexation of the Ukrainian Crimea peninsular territory by the Russian Federation and further deployment of the secessionist movement in the southeastern regions of Ukraine that subsequently developed into a military conflict in the east of Ukraine. The research analysed the directions and character of the cooperation between the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the Alliance military units. The level of practical interaction within the framework of existing NATO-Ukraine bilateral partnership programs, including military trainings, was also identified. The chronology of transformation of organizational forms of Ukrainian army's presence in the east of Ukraine from the Anti-Terrorist Operation to the Joint Forces Operation and the role of NATO in this process were also considered. The elements of the North Atlantic Alliance's influence on the reform of the Ukrainian army were identified directly following the requirements and standards defined by the Organization. The role of NATO's Liaison Office, located in Kyiv, Ukraine, and the Center for Security and Information Processing was outlined. Particular attention was paid to the issue of counteracting cybercrimes and protecting the state's information systems from external influences. In particular, reference was made to the protection of the state's critical infrastructure elements (nuclear power plants, strategic state-owned enterprises, etc.), including electronic registers of citizens e-lists and the state's banking system databases. The activities of the NATO Cybercrime Operations Centers and the establishment of similar institutions in Ukraine were also researched. The maritime component of cooperation between Ukraine and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was analysed, taking into account the aggravation of the situation in Azov-Black Sea region during 2018, associated with the passage of Ukrainian warships of the Azov Fleet of the Naval Forces of Ukraine through the Kerch Strait which is under the control of the occupying troops of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. As a result, so-called border conflicts were caused leading to the capture of Ukrainian warships and sailors by Russians in November 2018.

Key words: NATO, North Atlantic Alliance, Partnership for Peace, Sea Breeze, Quick Trident, Peace Shield, annexation, cybersecurity, unlawful combatant