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Bilateral Relations

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UKRAINE AND TURKEY IN A NEW SECURITY ENVIRONMENT: BRINGING CREDIBILITY TO STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

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Obviously, in the last couple of years the difficulties of making the way through the regional turmoil and facing new challenges brought about a completely new background with the embedded unique opportunities for further deepening of strategic partnership between Ukraine and Turkey. The question is, however, whether the intensification of bilateral cooperation is a temporary phenomenon that will end up in nothing, once the Russian threat ceases to exist, or this is a tendency that will reveal itself even more as the countries explore the momentum of crisis to create a new, solid basis for their future relations.

Introduction

Since the establishment of strategic partnership between Ukraine and Turkey back in 2011, both countries have gone a long way in their efforts to implement an ambitious bilateral agenda declared five years ago. Some of the goals, like introducing the visa free regime and creating a mechanism of the High-Level Strategic Council for regular political consultations between the Heads of the State, have been successfully realised. Others, such as reaching 10 billion dollars of bilateral trade turnover and signing the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) are yet to be achieved.

However, for some reason, until very recently, Turkey has rarely dominated

Ukraine's foreign policy agenda or moved to the top of the headlines in its media outlets, and vice versa. There has also been this traditional and deep-rooted conviction in the expert circles that two countries have failed to overcome limitations in the decision-making processes and to make the best use of the existing opportunities, often referring to these relations as "having high potential but low voltage"¹. Some analytics tended to blame official Kyiv for staying entrapped in the bipolar narrative of its East-or-West foreign policy dilemma, leaving the Southern vector without proper attention². The others pointed out the "Russian constant" in the Turkish-Ukrainian equation that had a significant impact on its results.³

¹ Habibe Özdal. Türkiye-Ukrayna İlişkileri: Yüksek Potansiyel, Düşük Voltaj / USAK, 24 January 2011 // <http://www.usak.org.tr/tr/usak-analizleri/avrupa-birligi/turkiye-ukrayna-iliskileri-yuksek-potansiyel-dusuk-voltaj>

² Марина Воротнок. Украина и Турция – (не)случайное партнерство / Украинская правда, 13 апреля 2016 // <http://www.eurointegration.com.ua/rus/articles/2016/04/13/7047681/>

³ Владимир Кравченко. Украина – Турция: союз «ситуативный», а не стратегический / Зеркало недели, 11 марта 2016 г. // <http://gazeta.zn.ua/internal/ukraina-turciya-soyuz-situativnyy-a-ne-strategicheskyy-.html>

The situation has dramatically changed with the Russian illegal annexation of the Crimea, military aggression in the Eastern Ukraine and, most recently, the incident with a downing of a Russian jet on the Turkish-Syrian border. Only within the first five months of 2016, the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko visited Turkey twice, with other high-level visits including



Ukraine and Turkey have been in close cooperation within the framework of the multilateral international organisations, spending joint efforts for the de-occupation of the Crimea, protecting rights of the Ukrainian citizens, including Crimean Tatars

Turkey's Prime-Minister, Minister of Defence, Minister of Culture and Tourism, Head of the Council of Higher Education and numerous economic and military Turkish delegations visiting Ukraine on different occasions, as well as regular visits of the Ukrainian top officials to Turkey.

Apparently, today's bilateral political dialogue between two countries has reached an unprecedented level. At the same time, Ukraine and Turkey have been in close cooperation within the framework of the multilateral international organisations, spending joint efforts for the de-occupation of the Crimea, protecting rights of the Ukrainian citizens, including Crimean Tatars, in the occupied territories and implementing the cease-fire agreement in Donbas region of Ukraine.

Boosting Economic Cooperation: Turning Challenges into Opportunities

Economy is the best litmus test to determine a real state of affairs in any bilateral relations. While heated discussions and high-level visits can create an illusion of active political

dialogue, the field of economic relations admits only a strict and accurate language of figures. This is especially the case if your partner is Turkey, a country that has made economic pragmatism as a part of its official foreign policy strategy.

A general overview of the Ukrainian-Turkish economic cooperation over the last 8 years brings about a rather dull picture – due to the 2008 global financial crisis and the economic stagnation Ukraine has experienced ever since, the trade turnover between the countries has shown more negative than positive dynamics with a slight sign of recovery in late 2015. This makes the expectations of reaching 20 bln USD of trade by 2020 a way too optimistic, if not an unrealistic goal. However, market conditions are not only about figures, they are also about tendencies. And herein one can see a much more favourable conjuncture.

On one hand, a lot of small and middle-sized Turkish enterprises slowed down their activities or had to leave the Ukrainian market in the last 2 years due to the economic crisis and the loss of considerable parts of territories with well-developed industrial and touristic infrastructure. On the other, small firms have been gradually replaced by big companies and large corporations, which were much better fitted to working in the unstable crisis-prone environment. As a result, the number of Turkish companies involved in doing business in Ukraine has decreased, however, Turkish investments to Ukrainian economy have acquired a more sustainable, well-institutionalized structure. The spheres, in which the Turkish companies are most active in Ukraine now, have also undergone considerable changes. Contrary to the traditional focus on textile industry and retail sales, today they include such strategic sectors as construction, telecommunication, aviation, defence and airspace technologies, IT, engineering, logistics, energy, transportation etc.


The first lot for 3G mobile license in Ukraine was won by a Turkish company “Turkcell”, which is now one of the three biggest mobile operators in the country. This victory of a Turkish company in the state tender has not only resulted in more than 3 billion UAH of Turkish investments to Ukrainian economy, but was referred by Turkcell management as a “sign of deep trust and high importance attached to Ukraine” by Turkish investors.⁴ With a new wave of privatization declared by the Ukrainian President P.Poroshenko in his welcome address to the leading Turkish businessmen during his official visit to Turkey on 9-10 March 2016, Turkish companies have recently been exploring new opportunities provided by the future privatization of seaports, coalmines and other strategically important state enterprises in Ukraine.

At the moment, Ukraine’s biggest stadium, the international terminal of the Boryspil Airport, hundreds of kilometres of highways, a number of high-tech business centres and five-star hotels all over the country have been built by Turkish construction companies. Most recently, a leading Turkish constructor “Onur Insaat” has successfully presented to the Kyiv Mayor V.Klichko the completed restoration works in the city’s central Taras Shevchenko boulevard⁵ while another Turkish company “Limak” has won a tender for building metro in Dnepr city and “Güriş Enerji” has already started construction of the country’s biggest wind power station.

According to some experts’ estimations, Turkish contractors have so far completed projects in Ukraine totalling more than five bln USD while the amount of direct Turkish

investments to the Ukrainian economy has reached two bln USD.⁶

With the Russian aggression against Ukraine and sanctions against Turkey, the ongoing military conflicts in the Middle East, inability to preserve economic ties with the traditional partners like Libya or Syria and losing their major foreign markets in the region, both countries have started searching for the new alternative ways to reinvigorate economy and trade. In this respect, there is much room left for boosting Ukrainian-Turkish cooperation. The economies of both countries are, to a big extent, complementary to each other and create a perfect background for mutually beneficial joint projects. Turkey’s successful structural reforms in economic and financial spheres that have ensured country’s quick economic

 ***The economies of both countries are, to a big extent, complementary to each other and create a perfect background for mutually beneficial joint projects***

growth in early 2000’s and its unique experience of creating organized industrial zones are thoroughly examined in Ukraine. On the other hand, the increasing number of Ukrainian-Turkish business associations and bilateral industrial, business and investment forums proves that Ukrainian market is placed high among Turkey’s foreign economy priorities, considerably revised after Moscow’s offensives.

In the light of the recent developments with Russia, both countries seek closer

⁴ Turkcell’den 3G Yatırımıyla Türkiye – Ukrayna Stratejik İşbirliğine Büyük Katkı, 21 March 2015 // http://medya.turkcell.com.tr/turkcellden-3g-yatirimiyyla-turkiye---ukrayna-stratejik-isbirligine-buyuk-katki-bulten_7538.html

⁵ Taras Şevçenko Bulvarı’nda inşaat tamamlandı, Türk şirketine Klitçko’dan özel teşekkür, 6 June 2016 // <http://ukrturk.net/taras-sevchenko-bulvarinda-insaat-tamamlandi-turk-sirketine-klitcikodan-ozel-tesekkurl/>

⁶ Burak Pehlivan. Ukrayna’da pazara girmek için doğru zaman / Para Dergisi, 25 Mayıs 2016 // <http://burakpehlivan.org/4861/ukraynada-pazara-girmek-icin-dogru-zaman-burak-pehlivan-para-dergisi-roportaj/>

cooperation with Europe. On January 1, 2016, Ukraine's Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Zone with the EU entered into full force. At the same time, Ankara has recently been involved in the negotiation process with Brussels to revise and expand the scope of the Turkey-EU Customs Union that has not seen any changes since mid-1990's and hardly corresponds to the demands of the day. According to the Turkish then-Minister of Economy Mustafa Elitaş's statements, Turkey is going to complete the revision of the Customs Union Agreement with the EU by the end of 2017 by including ten new sectors, such as energy, tourism, communication, contracting business, agricultural products, service trade, public purchases, environment, taxes and transportation within the framework of the revised deal.⁷ Though in a short-term perspective the problems of transitional period will likely bring about some complaints, in a more distant future developing cooperation within the European legislative framework can prove beneficial in terms of opening new horizons for collaboration, increasing the efficiency of national economies, transferring to modern technologies, improving the competitive ability of national products.

In this context, the negotiations on the Free Trade Agreement between Ukraine and Turkey have been restarted after a long interval. The 10th meeting of the Turkey-Ukraine Intergovernmental Trade and Economic Cooperation that took place in Kyiv in May 2016 gave a new impetus to this process⁸. However, there are still serious problems to be resolved (first of all, reaching mutually acceptable compromise on the

tariff regime for the agricultural goods in bilateral trade), this time Kyiv and Ankara seem to have firm will and determination to proceed with the agreement.

Diversification of Energy Partners as a Key to National Security

The collapse in bilateral relations with the Russian Federation has unfolded existing imbalance in Ankara's traditional relations with Moscow and the high level of dependency on Russia in almost all strategic spheres. The lack of diversification in energy resources and energy suppliers had for a long time been Russia's most valuable leverage in dealing with both official Kyiv and Ankara. The heavy energy dependency on Russian gas had enabled Moscow to apply politically motivated approach to forming its price policies and significantly limited countries' abilities to benefit from the positive trends on global oil and gas markets. Energy blackmailing has traditionally remained one of the Kremlin's major tools in shaping its foreign policy towards Ukraine since the first "gas war" Russia waged against Ukraine in winter of 2005/2006. The same pattern was later used in relation to Turkey when a Russian monopolist Gazprom rejected a request from the Turkish state-owned company Botaş to supply additional volumes of gas during 2008/2009 and 2011/2012 winter seasons.

Paying a high price for these lessons, both countries realized too well that diversification of energy sources and transportation routes is a key factor to their energy and, on a broader scale, national

⁷ Erdiñ Çelikkan. Turkey Moves to Expand Customs Union with the EU / Hürriyet Daily News, 11 January 2016 // <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-moves-to-expand-customs-union-with-eu.aspx?PageID=238&NID=93670&NewsCatID=345>

⁸ Ali Cura. Milli Savunma Bakanı Yılmaz: Anlaşma İki Ülke Arasındaki İlişkilere Yeni Boyut Kazandıracak / Anadolu Ajansı, 13 May 2016 // <http://aa.com.tr/tr/politika/milli-savunma-bakani-yilmaz-anlasma-iki-ulke-arasindaki-iliskilere-yeni-boyut-kazandiracak/571952>

security. Ukraine has solved this problem by steep decrease of gas consumption and gradual substitution of Russian gas by the European supplies. Since January 1, 2016, Ukraine has not received a single cubic meter of gas from Russia. After the recent crisis in relations with Moscow, Ankara has also started its own search for alternative energy sources and suppliers. In February 2016, Turkish Energy and Natural Resources Minister Berat Albayrak announced an updated “road map” for the energy sector, which is based on the concepts of “security of supply, alternative energy resources, resource variety, increasing storage capacities”. According to Albayrak, dependency on a single country must be dropped to at most 50 percent by the end of 2019.⁹ One of the key problems for Turkey’s energy security now is the lack of sufficient gas storage facilities. Despite Ankara’s plans to build new storage capacities in central Turkey, they are too small to cope with its needs.

Considering this background, Ukraine has recently come up with an offer to provide its own gas infrastructure, first of all, its gas storage facilities, for Turkey’s use. At the moment, the capacities of the gas storages in the Western Ukraine are estimated as approximately 33-34 bcm. At least half of them can be provided for Turkey’s needs¹⁰. Though the use of Ukrainian facilities for storing Russian gas now seems problematic from the legal point of view and would definitely arouse Moscow’s protests, once the TANAP pipeline is put into exploitation Ankara can easily arrange storing Azerbaijani (and, potentially, Turkmen)

gas in Ukraine. This will not only help decrease Ankara’s dependency on Moscow but also create a more profitable economic conjuncture on the energy market, allowing Turkey to sell its gas reserves to Europe when market conditions are favourable, or to use them for domestic consumption once or if the situation changes for the worse.¹¹ In this situation, with any single supplier deprived of a possibility to use gas blackmail as an instrument of political pressure or intimidation, both Kyiv and Ankara, as well as the other players on the energy market, would gain significant benefits from this new economic, instead of geostrategic, framework for energy cooperation.

Science, Technology and Industry: Three Pillars of Long-Term Cooperation

With the realization of the nuclear power plants projects and Turkey’s joining a global community of “nuclear states”, the national energy strategy will get yet another reading. Though the first NPP’s to be constructed in Turkey will be exploited on a build-own-operate model, Ankara is well aware of the necessity to create sufficient educational opportunities for preparing its own high-qualified specialists in the field. Sending Turkish students abroad can be a good solution for the moment, but it is important to be sure that similar nuclear research institutions are formed on the basis of Turkish universities in the future. So far, the only foreign University that has been defined for these purposes was the Moscow Engineering Physics Institute (MEPhI) with 300 undergraduate Turkish students enrolled under the provisions of

⁹ Minimizing Dependency Priority, Says Turkish Energy Minister / Daily Sabah, 09 February 2016 // <http://www.dailysabah.com/money/2016/02/10/minimizing-dependency-priority-says-turkish-energy-minister-1455047251>

¹⁰ Murat Temizer: Ukraine Offers Gas Storage Facilities for Turkey’s Use / Anadolu Ajansi, 16 May 2016 // <http://aenergyterminal.com/news.php?newsid=8349240>

¹¹ Interview of Ukrainian Envoy to Ankara Sergiy Korsunsky for Anadolu Agency, 17 May 2016 // <http://turkey.mfa.gov.ua/en/embassy/ambassador/interviews/4525-intervju-posla-ukrajini-v-turechchini-sergija-korsunskyko-go-stosovno-spivrobotnictva-mizh-ukrajinoju-ta-turechchinoju-u-sferi-jenergetiki-informacijne-agenstvo-anadolu-ukraine-offers-gas-storage-facilities-for-turkeys-use>

the Akkuyu NPP contract. However, it is not clear if the education will be endured after the quick deterioration of bilateral relations and Rosatom management's plans to sell 49% of its shares in the Akkuyu Joint Stock Company¹².

Long before that, Ukraine had come up with a suggestion to provide education for Turkish students in Ukrainian universities and to share its experience in such spheres as creating regulatory environment, elaborating safety and security measures, introducing early warning and crisis management mechanisms, etc.¹³ The unique experience of dealing with the consequences of the Chernobyl tragedy and operating 15 Russian reactors at four different NPP's have roused significant interest of the Turkish side. After a long interval in bilateral contacts, the Head of the Turkish Council for Higher Education Prof. Y.Sarac has recently visited Kyiv to discuss in details the opportunities for collaboration in the sphere of education, including nuclear technologies.

So far, the sides have agreed to sign a Memorandum of understanding that would create a framework for further cooperation in education and scientific research in such strategically important and mutually beneficial areas, as nuclear energy, aviation and space technologies. These will include staff and students' exchange programs, issuing double diplomas by partner Ukrainian and Turkish universities,

providing grants and scholarships for students on bilateral basis, etc.¹⁴ At the moment, there are ongoing negotiations on the issue with Kyiv, Odesa and Lviv Polytechnics, Kyiv T.Shevchenko University, National Aviation University and a number of others.

This agreement comes at a time when two countries have officially announced their decision to engage in joint cooperation on aviation and space technologies. According to the provisions of the agreement signed during the recent visit of the Turkish then-Minister of National Defence Ismet Yilmaz to Ukraine in May 2016, Turkey will work to produce a TAN-158 model passenger plane and a cargo plane based on respective models of the Ukrainian aircraft manufacturing company Antonov.¹⁵ The projects of regional jet construction and aircraft engine manufacturing in aviation go parallel with cooperation in other areas of defence industry. Ukraine possesses unique technologies in construction of tanks and armoured personnel carriers, some of which have been acknowledged as the best national army technology projects. Apart from this, Ukraine has started negotiations on the possibilities of cooperation with Turkey regarding modernizing Ukrainian armoured vehicles, particularly equipping them with the electron-optical devices produced by the leading Turkish defence company "Aselsan".¹⁶

¹² Russian Company Puts 49% of Turkey's First Nuclear Plant on Sale / Hurriyet Daily News, 27 April 2016 // <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/russian-company-puts-49-percent-of-turkeys-first-nuclear-plant-on-sale-report.aspx?pageID=238&nID=98394&NewsCatID=348>

¹³ Sultan Çoğalan. Ukrayna'dan Türkiye'ye nükleer enerji için işbirliği teklifi. Anadolu Ajansı, 9 February, 2016 // <http://aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/ukraynadan-turkiyeye-nukleer-enerji-icin-isbirligi-teklifi/518399>

¹⁴ YÖK'ten Ukrayna ile Nükleer ve Uçak / Uzay Teknolojileri Alanlarında İşbirliği. – 24 May 2016 <http://www.yok.gov.tr/web/guest/yok-baskani-sarac-in-ukrayna-temaslari>

¹⁵ Turkey and Ukraine Sign Joint Plane Manufacturing Project // Daily Sabah, May 15, 2016. <http://www.dailysabah.com/money/2016/05/16/turkey-and-ukraine-sign-joint-plane-manufacturing-project#>

¹⁶ Birol Tekince. Ukraine and Turkey: Strategic Relations, Plenty of Cooperation Opportunities // MSI Turkey Defence Review, January 2016.


Taking into consideration the technological and intellectual potential, as well as long and successful story of the Ukrainian space and defence industry enterprises' participation in the international projects, Ukraine has a potential to become one of the most important partners of Turkey in the aerospace. Both countries regard scientific and technical cooperation in the high-tech spheres of space rocket industry and military-industrial complex as crucial for further development of their strategic partnership, with the prospects to jointly enter the global market with a full cycle of space-related services starting with design and construction of satellites and other aerospace equipment and up to their launch into orbit.

To be precise, cooperation of Ankara and Kyiv in defence sector is not something new. However, it is only now that these sporadic contacts have been complemented by the endeavours to build a strategic industrial alliance that would include joint projects across a variety of military, technological and defence areas.

Military and Security Cooperation: Working for Peace, Preparing for War

A sweeping deterioration of the regional security environment and return of the "hard" power instruments back on the agenda have paved the way to a breakthrough in a military cooperation between the countries. Since mid-1990's, Ukraine and Turkey have been working within the framework of multilateral mechanisms called to strengthen security measures and contribute to stability in the Black Sea region. Over the years both countries have been jointly participating in international peacekeeping operations,

bilateral and multilateral military and naval exercises, like the Black Sea Harmony, Sea Breeze, Sea Shield, BLACKSEAFOR and PASSEX, to name just a few. However, when the existing regional organizations turned out to be inefficient under the conditions of the "hybrid" wars of the XXI century, which require quick reaction, operational mobility and considerable flexibility in decision-making process, Ukraine and Turkey have similarly adopted a new vision of the security arrangements in the Black sea basin. In fact, the new security threats and increased militarization of the region in the aftermath of Russia's illegal annexation of the Crimea and its intervention in Syria have revealed considerable breaches in the



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national security strategies of both Ukraine and Turkey. However, in a curious way, these developments have brought about a growing awareness of their own strengths and, for the first time ever, made Ankara and Kyiv focus on bilateral forms of cooperation as a central part of a new security architecture emerging in the Black sea region.

During his recent visit to Turkey in January 2016, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin stressed in the interview for the local newspaper that Ukraine is open to military cooperation with Turkey in the Black Sea and "any kind of security and defence cooperation between Kyiv and Ankara is possible".¹⁷ The Turkish side seems more than happy to welcome such rapprochement. Experts pay attention that

¹⁷ Yusuf Selman İnanç, Ukraine Open to Military Cooperation with Turkey in Black Sea / Daily Sabah, 31 January 2016 // <http://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2016/02/01/ukraine-open-to-military-cooperation-with-turkey-in-black-sea-ukrainian-fm-says>

Moscow's repeated violations of Turkish airspace, countries' divergent positions in Syria campaign, Turkish shoot-down of Russian jet, and the Kremlin's economic sanctions and threats of retaliation have not only spoiled its relations with Ankara, but also contributed to deepening security cooperation of Turkey with Georgia and, especially, Ukraine.¹⁸

Particularly, since last year Ukraine and Turkey have remarkably intensified their naval partnership. In March 2016, during the Ukrainian President P.Poroshenko's official visit to Turkey, Ukrainian "Hetman Sagaidachnyi" frigate and "Balta" vessel launched joint naval exercise with a couple of Turkish ships in the Sea of Marmara after they had visited naval base in Gölcük to accept onboard Turkish humanitarian aid for the Ukrainian army.¹⁹

Less than a month later, Turkey's "Salih Reis" frigate and "Bartın" corvette vessels were reported to practice with Ukrainian Navy tactical manoeuvring, cargo transfer and signal communication at an exercise course in the Black Sea, following a visit by Turkish naval officials to Ukraine's port city of Odessa. Ukraine's Ministry of Defence commented the drill as "another step in the deepening of cooperation of the fleets of the two countries, which aims to strengthen stability and security in the region".²⁰

At the same time, though NATO Defence Ministers have already decided earlier this

year in favour of "continuous rotational" presence in the Black Sea basin instead of establishing new bases in the Eastern Europe²¹, the Alliance's enhanced role in the region is regarded as a key to effective Russia's deterrence and long-term regional stability. Ukraine has repeatedly voiced its readiness to contribute to all kinds of possible naval exercises, joint trainings, maritime patrol and humanitarian operations that might be carried out in the Black Sea within the NATO framework and has got a firm support of its Turkish partners in this regard.

Romania has recently come up with a new initiative to increase NATO's presence in the Black Sea basin by creating a permanent alliance fleet in order to counter Russia's increasing military involvement in the region²². The general problem with this initiative is the restrictions of the 1936 Montreux Convention, prohibiting warships of countries not littoral to the Black Sea from spending more than 21 days at a time there. To solve the issue, the regular flotilla might include ships from the Black Sea littoral countries, namely Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey whereas other NATO members' vessels might stay in the Black Sea basin on a rotating basis. During his recent visit to Romania in April 2016, President P.Poroshenko stressed that under the conditions of the lasting Russian aggression Ukraine, though not a NATO member, is willing to join the flotilla in case such a decision is approved

¹⁸ John Herbst. Estranged From Russia, Turkey and Ukraine Join Forces / Newsweek, 15 April 2016 // <http://europe.newsweek.com/estranged-russia-turkey-and-ukraine-join-forces-447473>

¹⁹ V Odessu posle uspeshnogo vipolneniya zadach u beregov Turtsii vernulsya otryad korably VMS Ukraini / UNIAN, 13 March 2016 // <http://www.unian.net/society/1288560-v-odessu-posle-uspeshnogo-vyipolneniya-zadach-u-beregov-turtsii-vernulsya-otryad-korably-vms-ukrainyi-fotoreportaj.html>

²⁰ Damien Sharkov. Ukraine and Turkey Launch Black Sea Naval Drill Amid Russia Tensions / Newsweek, 7 April 2016 // <http://europe.newsweek.com/ukraine-and-turkey-launch-black-sea-naval-drill-amidst-russia-tensions-444882>

²¹ Andrew Rettman. U.S. and Germany Say Poland 'No' on NATO Base / Euobserver, 16 April 2016 // <https://euobserver.com/foreign/133084>

²² Joshua Kucera. Romania Pushing for Permanent NATO Presence in Black Sea / Eurasia.net, 17 January 2016 // <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/76866>

by the Alliance.²³ If this happens, NATO's framework might become an additional platform for deepening Ukrainian-Turkish naval cooperation and exerting joint efforts to restore peace and stability in the Black Sea region.

On a larger scale, the General Staffs of the Ukrainian and Turkish Armed Forces have recently signed a "road map" for military cooperation that envisages direction and scope of military cooperation between two countries until 2020, a year, which has been set as a deadline for the wide-scale reform process in the Ukrainian Army. Among other things, it focuses on strategic planning, military education and training of troops, consultative and advisory assistance, cooperation between the respective branches of the Armed Forces, information sharing, etc.²⁴ In fact, this document is a detailed implementation plan of practical measures on military cooperation, aimed both at strengthening bilateral ties and getting Turkish support in preparing Ukrainian Army in accordance with NATO standards. Interestingly, the experience of military and technical collaboration between Ukraine and Turkey has become one of the most vivid examples of how the countries can turn security threats existing in their regional environment into major opportunities for speeding up the pace of bilateral cooperation, with the results that are likely to have impacts for the whole region.

Recreating Missing Parts of the Picture, or Why Humanitarian Dimension Matters

The return of security concerns to the top of the regional agenda naturally predefines

the dominance of the military and defence issues in bilateral relations. However, it is important to remember that winning over the hearts of Turkish people should become a key consideration for any state that wants to achieve a durable and sustainable partnership with Turkey. Generally true for all countries, this is especially the case when the Ankara's approach to establishing foreign partnerships is concerned – it is not only about making a "strategic" choice, but rather about preferring "confident" and "trustworthy" partners with a clear and transparent set of values and goals. That is why public diplomacy, close interpersonal ties, humanitarian cooperation and popularization of a country's profile in such spheres as culture, education and tourism play an important role in creating favourable atmosphere that enables the development of other, strategic dimensions of bilateral relations.

In the current situation, when the recent crisis in relations with Russia has shattered Turkish-Russian relations and the general aggravation of the security environment in the region has led to a substantial downfall in Ankara's overall trade and tourism turnover, ironically Ukraine and Turkey have got unique opportunities to boost their touristic ties and transform their traditional security-focused strategic agenda into a more balanced intersocietal dialogue. The positive images of the countries in the nations' public opinion and the absence of unresolved problems or historical burden of deep-rooted hostilities in bilateral relations have created a solid basis for close social ties while the introduction of the visa free regime in 2012 has facilitated mutual travel and tourism. Most recently, a principal agreement has

²³ Ukraine and Romania Stand for Establishment of Flotilla under NATO Auspices to Enhance Security in Black Sea Region. April 21, 2016 // <http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-ta-rumuniya-vistupayut-za-stvorennya-flotilyi-pid-37013>

²⁴ Ukraine and Turkey Ink Military Cooperation Road Map, 17 May 2016 // <http://24today.net/open/663932>

been reached to increase the term of an uninterrupted stay for Ukrainians in Turkey and Turks in Ukraine up to 90 days²⁵. Despite the overall negative dynamics in regional tourism, the amount of Ukrainian tourists visiting Turkey has shown a 57% increase in the first five months of 2016. While the unstable regional environment and presumably high level of terror threats have made Turkey one of the least desirable touristic destinations for Israeli, German, British and other European tourists and the number of Russian tourists has plunged more than 96% after the jet crisis²⁶, Ukrainians, much less sensitive to potential security threats, have chosen Turkey as their favourite touristic destination after the Russian occupation of the Crimea.

During his recent visit to Kyiv in March 2016, Turkish Minister of Tourism and Culture Mahir Unal said Ankara was expecting a record number of about 1 mln of Ukrainian tourists this year.²⁷ The goal seems quite achievable. At the moment, Turkey is the number one foreign destination for Ukrainians with its national flag carrier, Turkish Airlines (THY), being the biggest foreign airline company in Ukraine (Ukraine rates second after Germany with the largest number of flights served by THY outside Turkey). Together with the other airlines, there are now more than 100 regular flights from Istanbul to seven different cities of Ukraine²⁸. During the summer season, this number becomes even higher with the charter flights to Antalya, Dalaman and other touristic destinations in Turkey. These dynamics

are likely to preserve sustainability in the future, creating solid social and economic basis for the implementation of agreements reached on a high political level.

Concluding Remarks

As the long international practice of strategic partnerships has proved, a key to successful and effective bilateral cooperation is not in inventing new partnership models but rather in filling the existing frameworks with real content. The non-conventional threats of the modern “hybrid” warfare have revealed new unexplored opportunities to bring more credibility and tangibility to the traditional Ukrainian-Turkish strategic partnership and paved way for the diversification of bilateral cooperation. In today’s regional turmoil, shared security concerns create a common footing that keeps the partners together. With much attention paid to the current strategic environment and immediate steps taken to mitigate the direct impacts of Russian aggressive policies in the Black Sea region, deepening strategic partnership between Ukraine and Turkey possesses necessary political, military and diplomatic potential to become a cornerstone of the new regional security structure.

Of course, there is still a long way to go. A way, which is neither straight nor simple, and hides its own risks and obstacles. The asymmetry of bilateral trade balance and a righteous desire to protect the most sensitive sectors of national economies from strong foreign competition cause serious

²⁵ Türkiye ile Ukrayna vizesiz kalış süresini 90 güne çıkarıyor / NTV, 23 May 2016 // http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/turkiye-ile-ukrayna-vizesiz-kalis-suresini-90-gune-cikariyor,nyVESX4xx0m7n10muBmW6w?_ref=infinite

²⁶ Number of Russian Tourists Visiting Antalya Plunges 96 Percent / Hürriyet Daily News, 07 June 2016 // <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/number-of-russian-tourists-visiting-antalya-plunges-96-percent.aspx?page-ID=517&nID=100183&NewsCatID=349>

²⁷ Turkey Eyes One Million Tourists From Ukraine / Anadolu Agency, 30 March 2016 // <http://aa.com.tr/en/turkey/turkey-eyes-one-million-tourists-from-ukraine-/546564>

²⁸ Ukraynalılar En Çok Türkiye’ye Uçuyor / QHA, 13 Ocak 2016 // <http://qha.com.ua/tr/turizm/ukraynalilar-en-cok-turkiye-ye-ucuyor/141974/>

contradictions regarding the classification of goods that should be eligible to the free trade regime and complicate signing of the Agreement. In the military and defence spheres, positions of the third parties still have a considerable impact on the regional state of play and the countries will, obviously, face a strong opposition of major stakeholders that will counter the emergence of a new strategic alliance in the Black Sea region, which includes three NATO countries, Ukraine and potentially – Georgia and Azerbaijan. Finally, the developments of domestic political agenda and strong influence of the external forces create additional risks of destabilization in the countries and make them focus on resolving their internal problems, often at the expense of boosting partnership relations and developing international cooperation.

However, probably for the first time in many years, Ankara and Kyiv seem both ready and willing to exert enough effort to overcome these limitations and develop the narrow politically and security-focused strategic agenda that has traditionally dominated their relationship into a full-fledged and comprehensive partnership based on long-term and well-specified joint projects in different areas where the countries share common and mutual interests. Today, the range of projects on the bilateral agenda varies widely from creating joint enterprises in defence and space industries to common use of gas pipeline infrastructure, cooperation in nuclear energy sphere, conducting joint naval and

military exercises, exchanging information and experience in countering terrorism, and signing the free trade agreement and memorandum in the educational sphere. Though this cooperation has obviously got a new strong impetus for development after both countries' relations with Russia experienced a serious blow, it would be wrong to regard it as a reactive measure to the Russian policies in the region. The projects recently launched between Ukraine and Turkey are aimed at a long-term perspective and are unlikely to cease to exist with the occasional changes in the international conjuncture. While the current crisis has become a trigger for rapid development of the Ukrainian-Turkish strategic cooperation in new directions, these relations have gone a way too far to be called a "situational" or "tactical" alliance. On the contrary, over the last several years Ankara and Kyiv have succeeded in making a huge step forward, moving from hollow political declarations to a more pragmatic, result-oriented and multifaceted partnership.

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