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EaP Security Forum

Associated Trio Security Monitor is a bi-monthly security analytical digest that reports and analyzes the international, regional, and domestic events, trends, decisions, actions, and conflicts that impact on the national security of the three associated countries of the Eastern Partnership: Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

The security monitor is part of the project „Eastern Partnership Security Forum”, that aims to launch the “EaP Security Forum” that will engage nongovernmental and governmental experts from Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine in a joint effort to strengthen security resilience of their countries in the areas of cybersecurity, intelligence reform, offsetting hybrid threats, and strengthening the national defense.

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CONTENT:

MOLDOVA security context ----- 2
by Mihai Mogildea

GEORGIA security context ----- 5
by Alex Petriashvili, Sandro Megrelishvili & Beka Parsadanishvili

UKRAINE security context----- 10
by Hennadiy Maksak & Oleksandr Kraiev

About the implementing & partners’ organizations ----- 16



MOLDOVA SECURITY CONTEXT

By Mihai Mogildea
Institute for European Policies and Reforms (IPRE)

SUMMARY

Moldova's security resilience has been seriously tested lately. The energy crisis, provoked by Russia's geopolitical ambitions and patronizing policies towards Chisinau, required a great deal of effort from the Moldovan government to withstand it. Benefiting from the backup of the international partners and the EU's clear commitment to supporting the Moldovan people, the current government has successfully overcome one of its first critical crises. Their response capability was carefully evaluated and one could expect additional pressure instruments to arise from the East in the near future.

REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL SECURITY CONTEXT

Multilateralism has been the defining key word for the past events that took place on the global stage. The aim of bringing the world actors together to discuss the most challenging issues of today was successfully reached. The 76th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations covered an extensive range of issues, such as the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, digital revolution and the threat of terrorism. President Biden's speech about unity and avoidance of a new cold war, along with China's President Xi Jinping's message for "mutual respect and win-win cooperation" were some of the highlights of the reunion. Also, in his speech, the American president praised the democratic aspirations of Moldova's people, which was greatly received in Chisinau, given the euphoric post-election context.

The G20 Summit in Rome confirmed once again that immediate action is needed among the world powers to limit the repercussions of global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial levels. Energy security and the transition to green energy, in the light of the current developments in Europe, should be ensured through a shared commitment among world economies to standardizing this process and helping the developing countries align with it. An example in this regard is the call that the EU leaders, Charles Michel and Ursula von Leyen, had with President Maia Sandu in the margins of the G20 reunion, having also touched upon the gas crisis in Moldova.

INTERNAL SECURITY CONTEXT

The most significant internal security developments in the last two months were related to the evolution of the gas crisis. Namely, the efforts of the Moldovan Government were particularly focused on ensuring the country's energy security while trying to facilitate the signing of a new deal between MoldovaGaz and Gazprom. The previous contract with Gazprom expired on the 30th of September and was initially prolonged for one month by the two sides, given the politically-motivated reluctance of the Russian state enterprise to agree on the terms of a new contract.

In the meantime, the representatives of the Moldovan government were actively involved in a two-sided process. On one hand, the authorities organized meetings and official visits with representatives of Romania, Poland, Ukraine and the European Union, aimed at securing alternative import sources in case of a prolongation of the gas crisis. On the other hand, the government continued to actively negotiate with Gazprom and Russian officials, including Dmitri Kozak, Deputy Chief of the Russian President Administration and Special Representative for Moldova. Interinstitutional delegations from the Bureau for Reintegration, Ministry of

Foreign Affairs and European Integration and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development were involved in four rounds of talks with the Russian side, an element which emphasized the political and less commercial character of the negotiations. Finally, after receiving clear signs of support from the EU and EU countries, the Moldovan Government has secured a new five-year contract with Gazprom at an acceptable price range, with a set of actions to be implemented during the next years, as mentioned in the bilateral protocol.

On the 22nd of October, the Parliament declared a state of emergency for 30 days, offering the prerequisites and means for the Commission for Emergency Situations to adopt decisions on the purchasing of natural gas in a faster regime. Furthermore, on the 25th of October, for the first time since its independence, Moldova bought gas from alternative sources to Russia, amid the decrease of the pressure level in the gas pipelines. Although it was a symbolic quantity, the state-owned company Energocom purchased a million cubic meters of natural gas from the Polish company PGNiG. This transaction, and the recently announced full functionality of the Iasi-Ungheni-Chisinau gas pipeline, endorsed/supported Moldova's energy security and strengthened the country's position in the negotiation process with Gazprom. In the medium and long term, the extension of the gas transport infrastructure, as well as the implementation of the Third energy package, could pave the way towards the advancement of the reintegration process of the country.

Moldova's European aspirations and the openness of the EU to support the reform agenda of the current Moldovan government were reaffirmed during the sixth EU – Moldova Association Council. As a result of the reunion, the EU and Moldova agreed to launch a high-level political and security dialogue. Furthermore, the joint statements underlined Moldova's willingness to participate in projects under the European Peace Facility, but also to capitalize on the cooperation potential in the field of cyber security, protection of critical infrastructure and strategic communication. While mentioning the importance of the "5+2" settlement process and the continuous implementation of the "Berlin+" package, the Association Council's results did not emphasize any novelties with regards to the Transnistrian settlement process.

SEPARATIST CONFLICTS/POLITICAL RESOLUTION OF 'FROZEN CONFLICTS'

The ambitious reform agenda of president Maia Sandu and the PAS-led government did not translate until now into a comprehensive vision for the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. The chapter dedicated to reintegration within the draft Action Plan of the Government for 2021-2022, which was published for public consultations at the beginning of September (and has not yet been approved by the Government), has a limited emphasis on the institutional and political dimension of the conflict resolution, also known as the "third basket". Under vague formulations, the actions make reference to the "mobilization of efforts" and the "synchronization of unique views" towards the reglementation process. The stylistic and rather unclear action plan of the Government for the reintegration of the country does not include any reference to the elaboration of a reintegration strategy or roadmap for the next two years.

The dossier of "neutral plates" has reappeared on the public agenda at the end of summer, when the Ukrainian border authorities announced that they will not allow the access of cars with "Transnistrian" numbers on their territory starting on the 1st of September, although the Moldovan authorities requested the prolongation of this term until the 10th of January. The new regime of accession, based on the protocol decision signed by Chisinau and Tiraspol in April 2018, refers to cars either with Moldovan plates or "neutral" plates. This decision has inflamed the discourse of the separatist authorities from Tiraspol, who held numerous talks with the Moldovan government and insisted on the approval of new terms of circulation for the commercial vehicles with "Transnistrian" plates.

Over the last two months, more than five meetings were held at the level of political negotiators and sectoral groups, touching upon the transport issues. Ultimately, Chisinau did not make any concessions to Tiraspol and

encouraged them to conform and promote the “neutral” plates matriculation process. Only in September 2021, more than 600 “neutral” plates were distributed, in comparison to the 371 distributed in August of the same year.

The dialogue between the newly appointed government in Moldova and international partners with regards to the Transnistrian settlement process was dynamized through the bilateral visits to Chisinau of the Ukrainian Viceprime-minister, Minister for Reintegration of Temporary Occupied Territories Oleksii Reznikov, Slovak Foreign Affairs Minister, Ivan Korcok, German President Steinmeier and Swedish Foreign Minister, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Anne Linde. Linde’s visit to Moldova aimed to lay the groundwork for the next reunion under the “5+2” format by the end of the year, which was initially announced by Tiraspol to take place between 2-3 of November 2021 but was later postponed. However, it is still unclear what expectations Moldova has from the upcoming 5+2 reunion in Stockholm under the Swedish OSCE Presidency, expected to be held at the end of this year.

Abbreviations:

CSDP - Common Security and Defence Policy

EaP - Eastern Partnership

EU - European Union

EUBAM - EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OSCE - Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PAS - Party of Action and Solidarity

US - United States of America

About the author:



Mihai Mogildea is the Team Leader of the Europeanisation Program within the Institute for European Policies and Reforms (IPRE). He has previously carried out research at several institutions, such as Collegium Civitas (Warsaw), Leibniz Institute for Studies in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe (Regensburg) and Slovak Foreign Policy Association (Bratislava). Mihai is a graduate of a master’s program in European Political and Administrative Studies at the College of Europe (Bruges).

GEORGIA SECURITY CONTEXT

by Alex Petriashvili, Sandro Megrelishvili & Beka Parsadanishvili
Georgian Center for Strategy and Development

SUMMARY

The previous two months have been considerably intense when it comes to the international, regional, and internal security environment. This is reflected in the changes in Georgia's role in the region, its fight against extremism, the criminal underworld, and cyber threats. While the western allies have reaffirmed their support for Georgia, the occupation of the country's territories remains to be an issue.

REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL SECURITY CONTEXT

The months of September and October could be characterized as a period of mixed signals, both positive and alarming ones, coming from the South Caucasus Region.

First, it was the President Erdogan of Turkey who indicated that he is ready to start the dialogue with his Armenian counterpart without any preconditions. “We can work toward gradually normalizing our relations with an Armenian government that states it is ready for such progress,” Turkish President Erdogan told reporters on August 29, 2021. Soon after, on September 8, 2021, the Armenian PM Pashinyan said in response that recent comments from President Erdogan represented an "opportunity for a conversation on settling relations. We stand ready for such a discussion," during a Cabinet meeting.

Later on, President Erdogan reaffirmed his readiness to meet with the Armenian counterpart. “The Prime Minister of Georgia handed me the offer to have a meeting with the Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, but for that, Armenia must take positive steps. If that meeting takes place, Turkey will also establish diplomatic relations,” Erdogan is reported to have said.

Since the beginning of September, a number of high-level visits took place in the capitals of South Caucasian states. The Armenian Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan, exchanged visits with his counterpart Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili. In between, Gharibashvili visited Baku, where he held meetings with President Aliyev. It seems this was real shuttle diplomacy in action.

Exactly one year after the start of the 44-day war, in an exclusive interview for FRANCE 24, President Aliyev said Azerbaijan was ready to "work on a future peace agreement" with Armenia but warned that any move made by Yerevan towards reclaiming the territory lost in the last year's war, would be met with a fierce response by his country.

Notably, on September 25, the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan, with the participation of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, met in New York for the first time after the November 2020 armistice deal. A month later, on October 15, during an online summit of CIS, the Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan declared his country's readiness to provide both railway and highway connection to Azerbaijan, via southern Armenian territories, which would link mainland Azerbaijan with its exclave of Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. Following this statement, the prospects for the restoration of transport communications in the South Caucasus were discussed at the 8th meeting of the trilateral working group chaired by the Deputy Prime Ministers of Azerbaijan, Russia, and Armenia in Moscow, on October 20.

On October 26, President Erdogan and his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev jointly inaugurated a new Fuzuli International Airport in the recently liberated area. This was the Turkish president's third official visit to Nagorno-Karabakh this year. Erdogan also attended the groundbreaking inauguration ceremonies of a highway in the region and the Smart Agriculture Campus in Zangilan.

The relations between Iran and its neighbor Azerbaijan have steadily deteriorated over the recent weeks, which was fueled by military drills on both sides of the border, Iranian allegations of an Israeli military presence in Azerbaijan, and imposed border controls on a road straddling the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. In the week of September 12-19, 2021, joint military drills between "Three Brothers - 2021" Turkey, Azerbaijan and Pakistan took place in Azerbaijan. Shortly after that, on October 1, Iranian forces began large-scale military exercises, in close proximity to the Azerbaijan border.

INTERNAL SECURITY CONTEXT

The two rounds of the 2021 Municipal Elections have primarily set the agenda for September and October in Georgia. However, several noteworthy incidents took place within this timeframe. The following report covers recent events related to civil rights issues, radicalism, extremism, polarization, fight against crime, cybersecurity, and Georgia's multilateral partnership in matters of state security.

Georgia continues to deal with the aftermath of the July 5 events. The Ombudsman of Georgia, Ms. Nino Lomjaria, asked the Prosecutor's Office for the immediate commencement of investigation against the ALT-INFO far-right anchors (including Zurab Makharadze) over collective violence facilitation during the July 5 demonstrations. PACE members endorsed this initiative in their written memorandum on the importance of LGBTQ community protection. On the other hand, the Georgian court settled the dispute between the ALT-INFO far-right media outlet and Silknet local broadcaster by granting ALT-INFO the right to go live.

Alt-info affiliated, right-wing political leader and businessman Levan Vasadze, who is now battling amyloidosis, shared his suspects on alleged radioactive poisoning.

The SSG informed a media outlet director, the former minister of justice and former minister of education and science, Nika Gvaramia, about the viable threats of his murder. The information was confirmed by Nika Gvaramia himself.

Attempted bank robberies continue to take place in Georgia. MIA detained a hostage-taker who was later charged under articles 236, 323, 329 of the Criminal Code of Georgia, including illegal carrying of weapons and terrorism.

In the course of these events, MIA and SSG organized several crackdowns to fight the illegal proliferation of small arms and illicit drug trade. The MIA press center announced the arrest of 32 individuals from various locations on September 7. Moreover, SSG and MIA are running an investigation on SSG spying, facts of which became known to the public in August.

The arrest of Georgia's former president, Mikheil Saakashvili, on October 1, spurred further social polarization and stigmatization amongst the electorate during the elections. Officials in Kyiv pledged not to interfere in Georgia's domestic policy but also vowed to undertake all necessary measures to return a Ukrainian citizen to his country.

September 9 marked the 30th anniversary of the MOD, which held several meetings with the Ukrainian National Guard, General Mykola Balan, U.S Congressmen, and U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. A new cooperation

deal has been inked by the U.S Defense Chief, promising for Georgia an extended military support for the next 6 years.

Last but not least, the NSC has approved the 3rd National Cyber Security Strategy for 2021-2024 which sets four priority areas:

1. Developing an information society, and cyberculture at organizations;
2. Resilient cybersecurity governance system, and strengthening of the public-private partnership;
3. Enhancing cyber capabilities with a strong cyber workforce and relevant technical support;
4. Strengthening Georgia's position, as a net contributor to cybersecurity internationally.

SEPARATIST CONFLICTS/POLITICAL RESOLUTION OF 'FROZEN CONFLICTS'

During the reporting period, no dramatic breakthroughs have been observed in the conflict dynamics in Georgia. As anticipated, the relations among Georgia and the de facto states of occupied Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as Russia, have stayed antagonistic, largely dominated by themes of illegal detention of citizens of Georgia by the de facto authorities, by the illegal process of delimitation and demarcation spearheaded by Russia, abolition of the right to teach at schools in Georgia (in Gali region) and other hostile moves and statements.

Recently, three more citizens of Georgia have been jailed by the de facto authorities, reaching a total of 36 illegal detainments in the current year. Although shortly released, three other citizens of Georgia are still imprisoned for the charges in Tskhinvali and Sokhumi. Irakli Bebutia and Genadi Bestaev have been illegally detained for more than a year now, while Gela Gochoshvili, as only recently revealed, has been imprisoned by de facto authorities of occupied South Ossetia since August 2021. The issue for releasing the illegally detained citizens of Georgia has been raised at the 102nd Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) meeting that took place in Ergneti, on September 27, as well as during the 54th round of Geneva International Discussions (held on October 13) - a platform of negotiations created on the basis of the ceasefire agreement from August 12, 2008 - but no tangible results have been achieved.

Meanwhile, the de facto ministry of education of occupied Abkhazia decided to fully prohibit teaching in Georgian in schools in Gali district, largely populated by ethnic Georgians. Indeed, this is the culmination of a policy initiated long ago that gradually restricted use of the Georgian language at schools in different regions of Abkhazia. Tbilisi officials have condemned the decision, and assessed the move as a continuation of ethnic discrimination and russification policy by the Russian occupation regime, which aims to destroy Georgian traces in the occupied territories and complete the assimilation of the population.

Moscow has resumed the delimitation and demarcation process with de facto authorities of Tskhinvali and Sokhumi. In September and October, officials from Moscow visited Sokhumi and Tskhinvali to discuss the delimitation and demarcation. Furthermore, Moscow called on Tbilisi, Sokhumi and Tskhinvali to delimit and demarcate the dividing line, the so-called "border". The delimitation and demarcation process between Moscow and Sokhumi has been causing tensions between the two for quite some time, as Russia tried to seize the village of Aibga - the only inhabited and attractive area located in a specific part of the Psou River. The Georgian side assessed the process as a continuation of the annexation of Georgian territories, and has tried to raise the issue during the 54th round of Geneva International Discussions. Notably, this process has been only one of the many manifestations of the annexation of Georgian territories by Russia, as the latter illegally opened around 20 polling stations on the occupied territories and held the elections of the State Duma of the Russian Federation there on September 19, 2021. Tbilisi officials condemned the move, accusing Russia of grossly violating the fundamental norms of international law.

In October, the de facto president of occupied Abkhazia paid an official visit to Moscow, where he met with the head of the Russian Federal Air Transport Agency, Alexander Neradko, to discuss the restoration of air traffic in Abkhazia. For a long time now, the de facto government has been trying to restore the functioning of the Sokhumi airport with the participation of Russia. The airport was granted the "Joint Base Status" and "International Code URAS." In response, the Government of Georgia appealed to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to properly assess the intention of the Russian occupation regime in Abkhazia to open Sokhumi Airport for international air traffic. For its part, ICAO reaffirmed that Sukhumi Airport and its airspace belong to Georgia.

On September 27, the de facto president of occupied South Ossetia, Anatoly Bibilov, visited Sokhumi to participate in the celebration of "Abkhazia Victory and Independence Day". The day is celebrated both in Sokhumi and Tbilisi. For Abkhazians, this is the day of the liberation of Sokhumi, while for Georgians - the fall of Sokhumi.

Important developments have unraveled in the religious sphere as well. Namely, the "Orthodox Church of Abkhazia", led by Besarion Aplaia, addressed the Patriarchates of Georgia and Russia to resolve the issue of autocephaly of the Abkhazian Church, based on the historical events cited. The Georgian patriarchate invited Besarion Aplaia to Tbilisi to discuss the existing problems, but Aplaia responded that the dialogue can be held only in Moscow. No further correspondence followed. So far, the Russian patriarchate has not recognized the autocephaly of the "Orthodox Church of Abkhazia".

Moreover, South Ossetia's foreign intelligence service (SVR) officer, Alexei Maksimov, met the Taliban leader and Afghanistan's first deputy prime minister Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar on September 23. The parties discussed recent developments in Afghanistan.

Abbreviations:

CIS - Commonwealth of Independent States.

ICAO – International Civil Aviation Organization

IPRM - Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism

LGBTQ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer

MIA – Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia

MOD - Ministry of Defense of Georgia

NSC - National Security Council of Georgia

PACE - Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe

SSG - State Security Service of Georgia

SVR - South Ossetia's Foreign Intelligence Service

U.S. – United States

About the authors:



Alex Petriashvili is a career diplomat with over 20 years of experience representing his country in both bilateral and multilateral formats at the highest levels. He served as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Georgia to Turkmenistan and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 2004-2009. In October 2012, he became a member of the Georgian Parliament. In 2012-2014, he served as the State Minister for Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic Integration. He received his degree from Tbilisi State University's Faculty of Economics and Social Geography in 1992. He also graduated the NATO Defense College, Rome, Italy in 2000. Currently, Ambassador

Petriashvili is an international affairs anchor, the host of a weekly TV program, The World as Such, as well as the co-host of the weekly political talk show, Political Friday on TV Pirveli. He also is a contributor on international and security affairs for Forbes Georgia. Since 2020 joined The GFSIS as a Senior Fellow. His area of interest is NATO EU Integration, as well as global and regional affairs.



Sandro Megrelishvili joined GCSD in October 2020, in the position of organizational development manager. Sandro has received a Bachelor's degree in International Relations at the University of St Andrews, and a Master's degree in Political Science, at Ilia State University. Over years, he has successfully completed several international courses, among which should be singled out the course - 'Managing Defense in Wider Security Context', held at the UK Defense Academy. Sandro has spent most of his professional career at the Ministry of Defense of Georgia, where he worked on the preparation of various reports and documents. In parallel, he has been engaged in the academic field as well. Currently, Sandro is a Ph.D. student at Ilia State University.



Beka Parsadanishvili is a Research Project Manager at GCSD. He studied public governance at MykolasRomeris University in 2018. He graduated from Tbilisi State University's International Relations bachelor programme in 2020. He is currently doing MA studies in conflict analysis and management at Tbilisi State University. Beka Parsadanishvili was nominated to do Master's studies at Masaryk University (Faculty of Social Sciences). He has work experience as a research assistant at TEPSA (2018). Has a number of publications and conference papers on state security, terrorism and soft power.

UKRAINE SECURITY CONTEXT

by Hennadiy Maksak & Oleksandr Kraiev
Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism”

SUMMARY

During the months of September and October, the series of general security trends that took hold in Ukraine in 2021 continued to unfold.

In the context of the international environment, President Zelensky's visit to Washington in the last days of August - the first days of September officially marked the beginning of a new level of security cooperation between Ukraine and the United States. This new framework established with the United States, which is based on the principles of defence partnership, can indeed be considered a practical result of the visit. The cooperation agreement is already finding its niche in Ukraine's foreign policy and is being worked out on both sides of the negotiating table.

In the regional context, the series of military exercises with partner countries, which took place on the territory of Ukraine, were of significant importance for Ukraine. These include “Rapid Trident”, “United Efforts - 2021” and “Saber Junction”, bilateral military exercises with Romania “Riverine-2021”, Slovakia - “Joint Endeavor-2012”, and Britain, “Warrior Watchers 2021”.

The National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine continued to play a prominent role when it comes to the domestic security track. Its decisions, including the adoption of the Defence Plan of Ukraine, the Strategy of Information Security, the decision “On the establishment of a national resilience system”, and the creation of the information and analytical system “SOTA”, have reaffirmed the Council’s informal status of a key decision-making center in the field of national security and defence.

When it comes to Ukraine’s dynamics with the Russian Federation, during the two months there was a continued escalation of issues in several of the disputed regions. The critical situation on the territory of the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea was exacerbated by a wave of political and ethnic repression against Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar activists. At the same time, in the east of Ukraine, armed provocations and repeated, systematic violations of the ceasefire have become a constant. Another important case relates to the capturing of the so-called “LPR” separatist, prompting a hysterical reaction from the terrorists, which culminated in the capturing of representatives of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission.

REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL SECURITY CONTEXT

US - Ukraine relations

The new agreement framework on cooperation with the United States on principles of a defence partnership can indeed be considered a practical result of the visit. This is already finding its niche in Ukraine's foreign policy and is being worked out on both sides of the negotiating table. The agreement itself provides for the development of three key areas:

- continuation of Ukrainian reforms in the military sector and bringing the Armed Forces and military leadership up to NATO standards;
- cooperation for security in the Black Sea region;
- countering the aggression of the Russian Federation.

An agreement on projects in the field of research, development, testing, and evaluation was also signed within the security cooperation framework. This document is currently in the works of two Ministries of Defence, being discussed in detail and worked out at the last meeting of the Deputy Minister of Defence of Ukraine Oleksandr Nosov with a delegation of the Institute of Defence Analysis. The agreement is fundamental for the implementation of the next priorities on the bilateral agenda, especially in the field of defence reforms in Ukraine.

After the first results are achieved (and these can be considered conditionally successful because of the recent exercises that took place with the participation of the American and Ukrainian military, in particular the “Joint Efforts-2021” and Rapid Trident-2021 exercises, and the start of the first joint research projects), US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin has visited Ukraine to detail and expand the existing agreements. According to the long-standing practices of the Ukrainian authorities, the visit will be successfully linked not only to the public relations “success” of the military and political leadership, but also to some of the progress in the implementation of the bilateral security agreements – even if this is mentioned only during the Cabinet report.

Also in October, the US Department of Defence booked an \$84 billion contract to produce six Mark VI patrol boats for Ukraine by March 2025. Two boats under another contract are expected to get going by the end of 2022.

Ukraine - EU Summit

The 23rd Ukraine-EU Summit, which took place in Kyiv on October 12, was an important event for Ukraine's foreign policy agenda, including its security component. The final statement of the summit contains several security theses that clearly resonate with the current state of relations between the EU and Kyiv. In paragraph 10 of the statement, the parties stressed the importance of the security sector reform, in particular the adoption of the law on the Security Service of Ukraine. In paragraph 12, the emphasis was placed on further strengthening the cooperation in the field of the Common Security and Defence Policy, which for Ukraine this is a promising area of strengthening the country's security through external means. Of course, the energy aspect of security has been repeatedly addressed due to the Nord Stream-2 issue and its importance for Ukraine, although no specific commitments in this regard have been made.

Bilateral cooperation

In addition to the common course of Euro-Atlantic integration and increasingly close and productive cooperation at the Brussels-Kyiv level (Brussels as the capital of the EU and Brussels as the capital of NATO), Ukraine continued to develop a track of bilateral working contacts with partner countries during these two months. These talks concerned both general strategic issues, including support for Ukraine's course towards NATO, and the practical implementation of previously signed military contracts.

On September 30, Ukraine and Turkey signed a Memorandum on the construction of a joint drone training and testing center. The document was signed by Defence Minister Andriy Taran, and on the Turkish side, by the Bayraktar CEO, Haluk Bayraktar. The Ukrainian Air Forces and Navy have 12 Bayraktar drones and Ukraine plans to buy another 24 in 2021-2022.

According to the Ministry of Defence, the next step will be the establishment of the Ukrainian-Turkish production of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones).

Ukraine and France carried out a strategic dialogue between their defence agencies on October 14. The meeting gave the opportunity to outline the goals of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces of Ukraine regarding the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity, implementation of tasks within the defence reform, as well as the achievement of interoperability and military criteria of membership in NATO and the EU.

Evacuation from Afghanistan: Ukrainian success-story

The joint international efforts to evacuate civilians and citizens of other countries from Kabul, Afghanistan, occupied the front pages of the world media almost daily during the month of September. The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with the Ministry of Defence, has taken an active part in these international efforts. It should be noted that Ukraine conducted a total of seven evacuation operations that helped evacuate approximately 800 people from the Afghan capital, which is under the control of the Taliban forces. Ukraine also carried out such operations at the request of partner countries, such as Canada and the Baltic States.

At that moment, the Ukrainian special forces who were in Afghanistan alongside other international missions manifested themselves strongly. Thanks to the decisive actions taken within several operations, the special forces were able to create a security corridor to evacuate the last few refugee flights to Ukraine. Ukraine conducted its last evacuation flight from Kabul on 23 September. As a result, 96 evacuees were safely brought to the Boryspil airport.

INTERNAL SECURITY CONTEXT

The internal security context was dominated by new legislative initiatives and the documenting of Ukraine's national security and resilience strategy in the face of new security threats. It is important to note that the key body responsible for shaping the new security reality of Ukraine during this period is the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, which is almost entirely subordinate to the President. At the same time, the Ministry of Defence continues to work with the daily needs of the Ukrainian armed forces and is responsible for the practical aspects of Ukraine's international obligations.

New system of security strategies

These two months were marked by the adoption of several documents that form the national security system of the state. The first one is the National Security and Defence Council's decision "On the development of the Naval Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine until 2031", adopted on September 8. This bill serves as a framework for the Maritime Security Strategy of Ukraine, which is still being developed within the NSDC and the Ministry of Defence. As is stated on the NSDC website: "*Ukraine's maritime security should be considered in the context of the security of the Baltic-Black Sea region and international maritime security, as Russia's aggressive actions in the Black and Azov Seas pose a threat not only to our security*".

Another framework document that discusses the Ukrainian goals in the reform process of the military is the Strategic Defence Bulletin, adopted on September 17. The document sets out the goal and vision of the defence forces until 2030. It also reads that the model of defence force will be achieved through the implementation of five strategic goals: effective defence management; professional and motivated personnel defence forces; modern weapons and military (special) equipment; developed military infrastructure, unified logistics, and sufficient supplies inventory; and integrated operational (combat and special) capabilities of the defence forces.

On September 20, the President of Ukraine signed the decision of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine on increasing the defence budget for 2022. According to the decision, Ukraine will allocate no less than 5,95% of its GDP (more than €319,4 bln) to the security and defence sector. The Ministry of Defence would receive approximately €131-135 bln out of €319,4 bln, as resources would be also allocated for other security and defence bodies of Ukraine. Among others, the Ministry of Defence will receive financing for the development of missile armament, the Navy, as well as for new scientific, research and development works in the sphere of high technologies.

Next is the National Security and Defence Council's decision "On the establishment of a national resilience system", which was adopted on September 27. This particular document lays out the Concept of the National Resilience System, which is aimed at improving crisis management and strategic communications, as well as fostering Ukraine's integration into the Euro-Atlantic security system.

The most intriguing of the new set of bills and directives is undoubtedly the Defence Plan of Ukraine, adopted on October 15. The document discusses the cooperation among public authorities in the event of the aggravation of a security situation. The document and its provisions are classified and will be implemented only in case of war. During the same session day of NSDC, two other instruments were adopted - the Strategy of Information Security and the Strategy of Biosecurity and Biological Protection. Both were created and approved by NSDC and both offer general instructions on issues specific to their subject spheres.

As shown by this block of new security legislation, measures and concepts, all strategic work in the field of national security is slowly taken away from the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence. Such changes that are not supported by sufficient legislative background, have already led to warnings and precautions from the Ukrainian civil society. Many experts stated that such a shift may be perceived as a sign of increased presidential authority within internal policy and especially its security branch. As for now, the situation is being closely monitored and evaluated at all levels.

SEPARATIST CONFLICTS/POLITICAL RESOLUTION OF 'FROZEN CONFLICTS'

The situation in temporary occupied territories

As stated earlier, the situation is still tense and complicated when it comes to the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. The aggression of the Russian Federation continues to create infrastructural, economic, and security difficulties on a permanent basis. The continuing implementation of the strategy of stable escalation, on one hand, keeps the Ukrainian armed forces and the Ukrainian government in constant domestic and foreign policy tensions. OSCE reports that since July 2020, September was the month marked by a peak in ceasefire regime violations in Donbas. On the other hand, the escalation constantly reminds the international community of the ongoing Russian aggression and helps divert the resources of the aggressor country, reducing its potential for future escalation.

The key events of September and October, in addition to the constant military and political escalation, are also related to the Russian elections and the census in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. Thus, the Russian Federation has once again demonstrated its complete disregard for international law and Ukraine's sovereignty. It is possible and important to note with optimism the coordinated reaction of the international community to Moscow's similar aggressive steps.

Between September 17-19, the Russian occupier's administration carried out in Crimea and Donbas the Russian elections for the State Duma, the lower house of the Russian Federal Assembly. In this context, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine made a statement condemning the organization of elections on the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and stated that they are illegal and their results would have no legal effect. The motion was supported by Ukraine's international partners, including the U.S., the U.K., Poland, Turkey, Georgia and others.

In October, Russia also carried out an illegal population census in Crimea. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine expressed its protest against these activities. "Such actions of the Russian Federation are directed against the state sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and constitute continued efforts to legitimize the attempted annexation the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the

city of Sevastopol, as well as to extend Russian legislation to this territory”, the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine reads. At the same time, the EU and the USA have condemned the Russian population census in Crimea that takes place from 15 October to 14 November.

Another grim violation of the international humanitarian law is reflected in the conscription campaign in Crimea, which started on October 1. According to the Prosecutor’s Office of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol City, Russia has carried out 13 conscription campaigns in the peninsula since 2015. As a result, 34 thousand Crimeans were forced to serve in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

On October 26, the Bayraktar TB2 strike drones of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were used for the first time to destroy the enemy artillery that was shelling the village of Granitne in the Donetsk region. In response to the shelling by a Russian battery that killed a Ukrainian serviceman, a howitzer D-30 of the Russian occupation forces was destroyed by a guided drone bomb.

This prompted the condemnation and concern of France and Germany, who called it a potential violation of the ceasefire. However, at the same time, no reaction on their part to the numerous violations by the Russian occupation forces, about three dozen in the last week, was further observed. Ukraine denies all allegations of the ceasefire violations, claiming this was a retaliatory fire in self-defence.

Trilateral contact group

These two months have been marked by the intensification of the work of the trilateral contact group - although it may be difficult to call this engagement productive. On the Ukrainian side, the issue of resuming consultations at the level of working subgroups, especially on humanitarian issues and matters, was repeatedly raised during September. However, Russia and particularly the head of the Russian delegation Gryzlov criticized these proposals. According to him, neither Ukraine nor the OSCE is ready to listen to the proposals of the terrorist organizations of the so-called "L-DNR".

In October, the topic of holding a new meeting in the Normandy format of the leaders of the four states was being actively promoted again. This opinion was expressed by the President of Ukraine on October 11, during a video conference with the President of France and the Chancellor of Germany. The Russian Federation responded only by agreeing to hold previous meetings at the level of foreign ministers, if the situation requires them.

On October 13, the Ukrainian counterintelligence captured a militant of the so-called "LPR", who was conducting reconnaissance in the area of the settlement of Zolote. The detainee called himself an observer of the Joint Control and Coordination Center on compliance with the Minsk Protocol, although the format of the Joint Center does not provide for the participation of representatives of terrorist groups. This episode provoked a hysterical reaction in the so-called "peoples’ republics". On Monday, October 18, representatives of the so-called "DPR" captured representatives of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Horlivka, who are still being held hostage. They stated that they would not be allowed to leave the hotel until the release of the militant captured near Zolote.

Abbreviations:

- EaP - Eastern Partnership
- EU - European Union
- G7 - Group of Seven
- MFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NS2 - Nord Stream 2
OSCE - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
POTUS - President of the United States
TCG - Trilateral Contact Group
USA - United States of America
VTC - Video Tele-Conferencing

About the authors:



Hennadiy Maksak is the Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism” Executive Director. Studied economics (Chernihiv state institute for economics and management), political sciences (Warsaw University, Center for East European Studies). In 2006-2015, he was the president of the Polissya Foundation for International and Regional Studies. In 2012-2014, 2017-2019 was a member of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. 2017-2021 was the Head of the Civic Council under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Fields of interest: International relations and foreign policy of Ukraine, Ukrainian neighborhood, Security in Eastern Europe, Eastern Partnership policy, diplomatic service.



Oleksandr Kraiev is director of the North America program in the Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism”. PhD candidate at Institute of international relations in Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. He is an international relations columnist for several Ukrainian and international media outlets. Key academic and professional spheres of interest: the UK and US foreign and domestic policy, the Irish border dispute, hybrid warfare, and modern conflicts.

ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION



Foreign Policy Association of Moldova (APE) is one of the leading foreign policy think-tanks in Moldova. The Association is committed to supporting the integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European Union and facilitating the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict in the context of the country's Europeanization. APE was established in 2003 by a prominent group of local experts, public figures, former government officials and high-ranking diplomats, who decided to contribute through their experience and expertise to the development of a coherent, credible and efficient foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova.

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gcsd@gcsd.org.ge | www.gcsd.org.ge | [@GCSDorg](https://twitter.com/GCSDorg) | [@GCSDorg](https://www.facebook.com/GCSDorg)



Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism" is a network-based non-governmental analytical center, the goal of which is to participate in providing democratic ground for developing and implementation of foreign and security policies by government authorities of Ukraine, implementation of international and nation-wide projects and programs, directed at improvement of foreign policy analysis and expertise, enhancement of expert community participation in a decision-making process in the spheres of foreign policy, international relations, public diplomacy. The Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism" is officially registered as a non-governmental organization in 2015, while analytical work and research had been carried out within the network of foreign policy experts "Ukrainian Prism" since 2012. At present, the organization united more than 15 experts in the sphere of foreign policy, international relations, international security from different analytical and academic institutions in Kyiv, Odesa, Kharkiv, Chernihiv and Chernivtsi.

info@prismua.org | www.prismua.org | [@prismUA](https://twitter.com/prismUA) | [@PrismUA](https://www.facebook.com/PrismUA)