

NATO and Ukraine: In or Out?

Hanna Shelest*

Despite being the first of the former Soviet republics to join the NATO Partnership for Peace, and later signing the Charter on Distinctive Partnership, for the last 20 years Ukraine's integration aspirations have been somewhat unstable. Kiev has struggled to maintain a balance between Russian influence and finding the optimal and most beneficial format for relations with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. By announcing its non-bloc status in 2010, Kiev did not lower the level of interaction and coordination with Alliance, but in fact developed interoperability and cooperation in new areas. The 2013-2014 events in Ukraine raise new questions about the future of the Ukrainian-NATO cooperation, as well as about the future of NATO itself. What does partnership mean and can it guarantee the security of a non-member state? Should NATO return to Europe? These are just a few of the questions raised by the current crisis. Despite the fact that Ukrainian membership in NATO is not on the agenda, public opinion in Ukraine in support of further NATO integration is increasing dramatically, and a search for new options for cooperation is timely.



* Dr. Hanna Shelest is a Senior Researcher at the National Institute for Strategic Studies, Odessa Branch, Ukraine, and she currently serves as a Partnership for Peace Visiting Research Fellow at the NATO Defence College in Rome. Her research interests are conflicts, security and cooperation in the Wider Black Sea, Balkans and Middle East regions. She has more than 40 academic and more than 100 media publications.

In 2010, Ukraine officially rejected the NATO membership perspective by adopting a new Foreign Policy Doctrine. Following that, discussion of the NATO-Ukraine cooperation was almost absent from academic and political discourse. Nonetheless, from 2012, there was a more open approach towards NATO integration, which had previously been absent in strategic documents. This addition to the Military Doctrine of Ukraine indicated that the government was moved by political motivations rather than practical necessity.

Most of the current academic discourse is focused either on Ukraine's possible NATO membership, or on Russia's influence over NATO – Ukrainian relations. Russian-Ukrainian relations generally receive more attention than an assessment of what can be achieved between the Alliance and Ukraine despite that opposition. Analyses of the Ukrainian-NATO partnership are more often performed by military specialists, focusing on practical concerns, effectiveness and tactical possibilities, without accounting for political aspects of cooperation.

Historical Basis

NATO-Ukraine relations were formally launched in 1991, just after Kiev declared independence, when Ukraine joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (later the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council). In February 1994, it became the first of the post-Soviet states to sign a Partnership for Peace Agreement with NATO.

In 1997, the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between NATO and Ukraine was signed. It not only laid a basis for cooperation, defining the main instruments and spheres of interaction, but also established the NATO-Ukraine Commission, which directs joint activities and provides a forum for consultation between the Allies and Ukraine on shared security concerns.

Article 3 of the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between NATO and Ukraine states that “Ukraine reaffirms its determination to carry forward its defense reforms, to strengthen democratic and civilian control of the armed forces, and to increase their interoperability with the forces of NATO and Partner countries. NATO reaffirms its support for Ukraine’s efforts in these areas.”¹ Until now, the main spheres of cooperation have been defined by these guidelines. Other issues of common concern included:

¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization (1997) *Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Ukraine*. Available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_25457.htm

conflict prevention, crisis management, peace support, conflict resolution and humanitarian operations; political and defense aspects of nuclear, biological and chemical non-proliferation; disarmament and arms control issues, including those related to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe; arms exports and related technology transfers; combatting drug-trafficking and terrorism.

According to the Charter, areas for consultation and cooperation, in particular through joint seminars, joint working groups, and other cooperative programs, should cover a broad range of topics, such as: civil emergency planning, and disaster preparedness; civil-military relations, democratic control of the armed forces, and Ukrainian defense reform; defense planning, budgeting, policy, strategy and national security concepts; defense conversion; NATO-Ukraine military cooperation and interoperability; economic aspects of security; science and technology issues; environmental security issues, including nuclear safety; aerospace research and development, through the Advisory Group for Aerospace Research and Development (AGARD); civil-military coordination of air traffic management and control.²

In 1996, Ukrainian soldiers were deployed as part of the NATO-led peacekeeping force in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1999, the Polish-Ukrainian battalion was launched as a part of the NATO-led peacekeeping force in Kosovo. These missions became first non-UN peacekeeping operations in which the Ukrainian military and police took part.

This partnership was symbolized not only by Ukraine's participation in the joint peacekeeping operations, but also by support in civil emergencies. Ukraine received assistance following severe floods in 1995, 1998 and 2001; in 2010, Ukraine sent a mobile rescue center to Poland as part of an aid effort following flooding in the country. All these measures were carried out within the framework of practical cooperation on civil emergency planning and disaster-preparedness.³

In 1996, Ukrainian soldiers were deployed as part of the NATO-led peacekeeping force in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1999, the Polish-Ukrainian battalion was launched as a part of the NATO-led peacekeeping force in Kosovo. These missions became first non-UN peacekeeping operations in which the Ukrainian military and police took part.

² *Ibid.*

³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization (2014) *NATO's relations with Ukraine*. Available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_37750.htm

The Partnership for Peace Trust Fund support also became an important component in enhancing Ukraine's security. Taking into account the costs involved, it would have been almost impossible for Ukraine on its own to destroy the excessive and out-of-date munitions that presented a threat to Ukrainians living nearby the storage areas. The first project involved the safe destruction of 400,000 landmines at a chemical plant in Donetsk over a 15-month period in 2002-2003, marking the first step in destroying Ukraine's stockpile of almost seven million anti-personnel mines. A second project to destroy 133,000 tons of conventional munitions, 1.5 million small arms and 1000 man-portable air defense systems was launched in 2005. The total cost of these operations was 25 million Euros; the approximate duration is twelve years. It is the largest demilitarization project of its kind ever to be undertaken, and will increase Ukraine's capacity to destroy surplus munitions in the future.⁴

According to the common belief, it was only after the Orange Revolution that Ukraine enhanced its relations with NATO.

In fact, an Intensified Dialogue on Ukraine's membership aspirations was launched back in 2005, along with related reforms.

According to the common belief, it was only after the Orange Revolution that Ukraine enhanced its relations with NATO. In fact, an Intensified Dialogue on Ukraine's membership aspirations was launched back in 2005, along with related reforms. It is also noteworthy that presidential foreign policy orientation did not influence the tactical level of cooperation with NATO. Seen as a more pro-Russian leader, President Kuchma (second president of independent Ukraine; in office July 1994 - January 2005) added Euro-Atlantic integration to Ukraine's Foreign Policy Doctrine. In 2004, then-Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, later an opponent of NATO membership, together with then-Head of the Presidential Administration (later a major proponent of closer integration with Russia) Viktor Medvedchuk, approved the Military Doctrine. In the Doctrine, the conditions of national military security were listed as: strengthening trust between states; consistent reduction of the threat of the use of military force; policy of Euro-Atlantic integration, the ultimate goal of which is joining NATO, as the basis for the European security system.⁵

The Armed Forces perceived security and defense reform as the main advantage of Ukraine-NATO cooperation. Despite not being ready to introduce civilian control over the Ministry of Defense at the beginning of this cooperation, as the relationship

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ President of Ukraine (2004) 'Decree of the President of Ukraine "On the Military Doctrine of Ukraine" #648/2004' Available at: <http://www.rada.gov.ua>

developed, efficiency levels increased. NATO's active support in destroying stockpiles of weapons and munitions meant that the military became the biggest supporter of deeper cooperation and integration with NATO. This partnership mostly aimed to transform Soviet-style Armed Forces, ready for a 'global war', to more professional and mobile units under democratic and civilian control.

The victory of pro-Western presidential candidate Viktor Yushenko in the 2004 elections made NATO membership an official foreign policy goal. It remained so until 2008, when the NATO Bucharest Summit became a watershed for future Ukraine-NATO cooperation. Under Russian pressure, the possibility of Ukraine and Georgia signing a Membership Action Plan (MAP) was taken off the table. Both Ukraine and NATO demonstrated their weakness and shortsightedness in relation to their belief that they could evade Russia's disapproval of NATO enlargement.

The introduction of the non-bloc status in 2010 led to changes to the legislative, financial and institutional principles of cooperation with NATO, as well as the considerable reduction and loss of experienced experts at the agencies mainly responsible for preparing and monitoring the ANP (Annual National Plan).⁶ This was presented as a move toward more pragmatic relations with the Alliance, but could also be explained – at least in part - by Ukraine's inability to comprehend the necessity of security sector reform, NATO assistance in this sphere, and added value of participation in joint operations, as well as intensified Russian pressure.

Although the Yanukovich government, which came to power in 2010, was not seeking NATO membership, it decided to continue to pursue cooperation at the same level using the same instruments, based on service to national interests.⁷ Moreover, despite Ukraine's apparent rejection of NATO membership, it has not stopped adopting Annual National Programs, which are usually undertaken by aspirant countries.

The victory of pro-Western presidential candidate Viktor Yushenko in the 2004 elections made NATO membership an official foreign policy goal. It remained so until 2008, when the NATO Bucharest Summit became a watershed for future Ukraine-NATO cooperation.

⁶ NATO-Ukraine Partnership Network (2012) 'Implementation of Annual National Programs of NATO-Ukraine Cooperation Civil Monitoring 2011-2012'. Analytical report. Institute for Euro-Atlantic Cooperation. Available at: http://euroatlantica.info/attachments/article/530/ANP%20eng_last.pdf

⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization (2014) *NATO's relations with Ukraine*.

In 2011-2012, the ANP was gradually transformed from a “national program” (which is what it is supposed to be) to a “bilateral cooperation program”, where the resources are largely provided by the Alliance partners.⁸ This was mainly due to the general reduction in financing for the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Current State of Affairs

Until the Crimean Crisis of 2014, the Ukraine-NATO partnership was composed of two main dimensions: internal and external. The internal dimension entails first of all security sector reform, joint military trainings and eradication of ammunition. The external dimension encompasses information exchange, joint participation in peacekeeping or special operations, rapid response and smart security.

According to NATO-Ukraine Partnership Network experts: today Ukraine is the only state whose commitments in relationships with NATO include the transformation of the entire range of political and security relations without seeking NATO membership. Hence, Ukraine has a unique role and position in its contractual and legal relations with the North Atlantic Alliance.⁹

Despite the perception that NATO represents ‘hard security’, while the European Union offers ‘soft security’, analysis of the Annual National Plans demonstrates that soft security is deemed no less significant. Ukraine’s commitments on free and fair elections, strengthening democratic institutions, protection of human rights and freedoms, economic reforms – all these spheres are accorded equal importance in bilateral relations.

Ukraine’s relations with NATO go far beyond the Partnership for Peace framework. Some spheres are well known, while others are more technical, or less public. In the first category, we can include: the *NATO Kiev Week*, led by the NATO Defense College; support for the Security Sector Reform; and joint military trainings. Others such as PfP Trust Fund projects for destroying stockpiles of weapons and munitions or regular consultations on cyber security are less public, but sometimes have even greater impact.

Despite the fact that the NATO integration was removed from the Military Doctrine of Ukraine in 2012, and a new “non-bloc

policy” was officially introduced, Kiev nonetheless left a window for cooperation. Thus Chapter III of the new Doctrine, titled “Prevention of the military conflicts”, states one of the means of preventing military conflicts: “participation in international operations connected with crisis resolution, in antiterrorist and anti-piracy activities according to the norms of the international law and the legislation of Ukraine.”¹⁰

Despite the changes Ukraine made to its foreign policy trajectory, it never expressed any willingness to sign the Russia-sponsored Collective Security Treaty for the post-Soviet space, nor to join Collective Security Treaty Organization – this option did not even feature in public discourse. Then in 2012, Minister of Foreign Affairs Kostyantyn Gryshchenko proposed the “28+1+1” cooperation format,¹¹ emphasizing the impossibility of maintaining cooperation with NATO without considering the Russian position, but also unwilling to become a pawn rather than an active player in this dialogue.

At the same time, one should take into account that several national polls have revealed that over 50 percent of Ukrainians have negative perceptions of NATO. This can be explained by several factors, including poor awareness of NATO, ignorance of NATO’s post-Cold War transformation and anti-NATO propaganda.¹² Additionally, none of the previous governments led an information campaign explaining what NATO integration could mean for Ukraine. Two documents were adopted back in 2003 and 2005 on this topic, but financing never came through and for the most part they were never acted upon. However, the Crimean annexation in 2014 turned attention to NATO security mechanisms, and public support rose from 13 percent in autumn 2013 to 34 percent in March 2014.¹³ This increase can be explained by the impossibility of guaranteeing Ukraine’s territorial integrity via the Budapest Memorandum (1994), along with numerous statements by NATO officials declaring that they were not able to intervene, as Ukraine is not a member.

Despite the fact that the NATO integration was removed from the Military Doctrine of Ukraine in 2012, and a new “non-bloc policy” was officially introduced, Kiev nonetheless left a window for cooperation.

⁸ NATO-Ukraine Partnership Network (2012) ‘Implementation of Annual National Programs of NATO-Ukraine Cooperation Civil Monitoring 2011-2012’

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Presidency of Ukraine, ‘Decree of the President of Ukraine “On the Military Doctrine of Ukraine” #648/2004 – edition from 8 June 2012 № 390/2012’ Available at: <http://www.rada.gov.ua>

¹¹ Грищенко К, ‘Україна і НАТО: минуле, сучасне та майбутнє відносин’, *Наука і оборона*, #2, 2012, p. 12-18

¹² Savchenko V., ‘The Puzzle Of NATO-Ukraine Relations: The Importance Of Images In Ukraine’s Bid For NATO Membership’. Naval Postgraduate School Master Thesis, 2007, Available at: <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA467357>

¹³ Public Opinion Survey. Residents of Ukraine, *International Republican Institute*, March 14 –26, 2014.

In 2013, Ukraine was the only Partner country actively contributing to all ongoing NATO-led operations and missions - in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Operation "Active Endeavour" in the Mediterranean, Operation "Ocean Shield" in Somalia.

In 2013, Ukraine was the only Partner country actively contributing to all ongoing NATO-led operations and missions¹⁴ - in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Operation "Active Endeavour" in the Mediterranean, Operation "Ocean Shield" in Somalia. It was the first partner country to contribute to the NATO Response Force. Ukrainian peacekeepers are still serving as a part of the joint Polish-Ukrainian battalion in Kosovo, in different units in Afghanistan, and in anti-piracy operation near Somalia coast.

Anti-piracy became a new important area of cooperation. When it comes to maritime security, piracy has become a pressing concern for NATO. In considering which nations are most involved, Ukraine is probably not the first name that comes to mind. But Ukraine has become a valuable ally, not exactly what one would expect from a nation that used to so closely align with Russia in geopolitical terms. Even though at 1.8 per cent of the world total Ukraine's merchant fleet is relatively small, the country has somewhere between 80,000 and 100,000 merchant sailors at sea, or 8-10 percent of the world's total,¹⁵ and so could not ignore this problem.

The first instance of cooperation on maritime piracy took place back in October 2005, when Ukraine called to request NATO's assistance in responding to the capture of the Ukrainian-owned vessel m/v Panagia by Somalian pirates. Since then, the partnership has grown; Ukraine's Navy deployed ships for extended operations with NATO's Operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean on five separate occasions.¹⁶ In 2007, the first Ukrainian ship, the corvette URS Ternopil, was deployed in support of Operation Active Endeavour.

The Ukrainian frigate "Sagaidachniy" joined Operation Ocean Shield on 10 October 2013, marking the first time a partner nation has contributed to the Alliance's counter-piracy effort. In the opinion of General Bartels, the Chairman of NATO's Military Committee: "Ukraine's ability to plug in and out of NATO's operations show the high level of interoperability the Alliance can achieve with its partners".¹⁷

¹⁴ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *NATO's relations with Ukraine*. Available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_37750.htm

¹⁵ Willschick A. (2013) *NATO and Ukraine: Unlikely Team in Piracy Fight*. The Atlantic Council of Canada. Available at: <http://news.usni.org/2013/03/28/nato-and-ukraine-unlikely-team-in-piracy-fight>

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *NATO and Ukraine navy together in the fight against pi-*

The new concept of the "smart security" announced at Chicago Summit generated new spheres of cooperation. In the opinion of the NATO Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow:

"Over the past three years, co-operation has become arguably more intensive and productive than ever before. Ukraine boosted its sizable contribution to the NATO-led operation in Kosovo. Ukraine increased its standing contribution to the NATO-led ISAF operation in Afghanistan. And it was among the first nations to pledge to contribute to a new, post-2014 mission to train, advice and assist the Afghan security forces."¹⁸

In addition, Ukraine became the first NATO partner to join the NRF.

Back in February 2013, NUC defense ministers agreed to reinforce NATO-Ukraine cooperation. An exchange of letters confirmed Ukraine's intent to contribute to NATO's counter-piracy operation off the coast of Somalia; agreement was reached on a set of priorities to guide cooperation over the next five years, including in training and exercises. A project to retrain former military officers in Ukraine has been extended, and progress has been made on plans for a new project to support the neutralization of radioactive sources from former Soviet military sites.

However, the Crimean crisis of 2014 has made it necessary to reconsider the NATO partnership concept. The fact that none of the existing legal frameworks could be activated in the service of protecting Ukrainian territorial integrity and security raised questions about what the partnership could really provide. While Ukraine was able to join NATO-led operations when Alliance needed support, in return, it got only statements of support. If during the Euromaidan protests (November 2013 - February 2014) there had been no place for NATO, the Crimean events and further destabilization of the situation elevated the risks from soft security to hard security issues. NATO countries bordering Ukraine and/or Russia - namely Poland, Romania, Latvia and Estonia - expressed deep concern on Kiev's behalf, but also saw the situation as a direct threat to their own security, and called for increased security on their Eastern borders.

While Ukraine was able to join NATO-led operations when Alliance needed support, in return, it got only statements of support.

racy, 28 - 30 October 2013, Available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_104597.htm?selectedLocale=en

¹⁸ New Europe Online (2013) 'NATO sees great potential for co-operation with Ukraine'. Available at: <http://www.neurope.eu/article/nato-sees-great-potential-co-operation-ukraine>

NATO itself managed to express a more coherent position than the EU in dealing with Russia. At the two-day meeting of NATO foreign ministers (April 1-2 2014) a decision was taken to suspend all practical cooperation with Russia, civilian and military, as a direct consequence of Russia's illegal military intervention in Ukraine and of Russia's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, which NATO strongly condemned.¹⁹

Future Prospects

Currently, in terms of NATO relations, Ukraine is in between Moldova (which officially has neutral status) and Georgia (which is actively seeking NATO membership). Ukraine's deeper participation in the European security system via increased cooperation with NATO looks shaky. As Ian Shields wrote in 2012: Ukraine's 'on-off' relationship with NATO remains subject to diplomatic and economic ties between Moscow and Kiev.²⁰

In the opinion of M. Kapitonenko, full NATO membership for Ukraine would mean that security in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in the Black Sea region would continue to be rooted in democratic and liberal principles, following collective decision-making procedures and power-sharing techniques. Ukraine outside NATO would result in a version of regional stability more reliant on "balance of power" tactics, with the likely recurrence of historical spheres of influence in one way or another.²¹

Following its appointment in February 2014, the new Ukrainian Government mostly agreed that NATO membership is not currently on the agenda. The NATO issue was not included in the program of the new government. Moreover, people like Ambassador Borys Tarasiuk, among others, refused to become the new Vice-Prime Minister on European Integration, because of this lack of political will and clarity around Euro Atlantic cooperation. However, the "non-bloc" concept is not an option, as that will not bring stability and security, lacking an international legal basis. Nevertheless, current events around Crimea could become a trigger for Ukrainian-NATO relations. Moreover, these developments will test the operability and adequacy of the partnership.

19 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (2014) *Measures following NATO Ministers' decision to suspend all practical cooperation with Russia*. Available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_108902.htm?selectedLocale=en

20 Shields I. (2012) 'Ukraine and NATO - an On-Off Relationship', *International Relations and Security Network (ISN)*. Available at: <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Special-Feature/Detail?lng=en&id=150750&contextid774=150750&contextid775=150747&tabid=1453259502>

21 Kapitonenko M. (2009) 'Between NATO & Russia: Ukraine's Foreign Policy Crossroads Revisited', *Caucasian Review Of International Affairs*, Vol. 3 (4)

In the view of Lubashenko and Zasztowt: "It is hard to expect that NATO-Ukraine relations will develop exclusively on a pragmatic and technical level. It is still unclear, however, where the proper balance between pragmatic and value-driven cooperation should be."²²

Some experts expect that with forces withdrawing from Afghanistan in 2014, NATO will have more possibilities in relation to providing financial and technical support for Ukraine. Having said this, we also should take into account the general feeling of intervention fatigue among the populations of member states; such actions may struggle to get support from national publics. In addition, since the Libya campaign, the concept of no-boots-on-the-ground has gained more and more popularity.

Some experts expect that with forces withdrawing from Afghanistan in 2014, NATO will have more possibilities in relation to providing financial and technical support for Ukraine.

At the NATO-Ukraine Commission meeting on April 1, 2014, partners agreed to implement immediate and longer-term measures in order to strengthen Ukraine's ability to provide for its own security.²³ It is understandable that NATO is ready to support but not intervene in the Ukrainian –Russian crisis. Moreover, it awaits specific requests from the Ukrainian side, in terms of practical assistance.

The winter 2013-2014 events raise new questions about the future of Ukrainian-NATO cooperation, as well as about the future of NATO itself. NATO now needs to explain to its partners around the world why partnerships are necessary, and what added value they can bring, in the absence of increased security guarantees. At the same time, this crisis has brought NATO back to Europe. In recent years, the Alliance has concentrated too much on new partnerships with African Union and Brazil, and the Afghanistan's transformation. It has neglected a situation on its immediate borders. One of the reasons for this was that many inside of NATO believed that Europe did not pose any immediate risks, and that the chances of a crisis erupting were minimal.

This crisis also raises questions about the future role of NATO in the Black Sea region. Turkey, a NATO member country, has limited NATO's activities in the Mediterranean Sea by creating the Black Sea Harmony as an alternative to Active Endeavour. Now, the recent Ukrainian crisis invokes the necessity of formu-

22 Lyubashenko I., Zasztowt K. (2012) 'NATO – Ukraine Partnership', In: Ondrejcsák, R. – Górká-Winter, B. (eds.): *NATO's future partnerships*. Bratislava – Warszawa: CENAA – PISM, pp. 37- 46

23 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (2014) *Statement by NATO Foreign Ministers*. Available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_108501.htm

lating a strategic vision for the future policy in the region based on the Alliance's holistic perspective, not just the views of individual member states. The Ukrainian crisis could stimulate relations between NATO and other regional countries, including member-states, the Caucasus countries, or even Moldova, which will search for additional mechanisms of cooperation. If neutral Sweden and Finland have started talking about the possibility for deeper Euro-Atlantic integration, they have thereby undermined the rhetoric of a possible neutral status for Ukraine.

Events in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine have opened multiple questions about crisis response mechanisms; the concept of "responsibility to protect", and even more, the need for new tools and strategies as new conflicts emerge.

Events in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine have opened multiple questions about crisis response mechanisms; the concept of "responsibility to protect", and even more, the need for new tools and strategies as new conflicts emerge. These are all questions that NATO has to face. In the post-9/11 era, discussions focused on the emergence of a new type of the conflict where the enemy - transnational and trans-border – is essentially invisible. But at the same time, after every terrorist attack, there was some organization taking responsibility. What the crisis in Ukraine demonstrated is that the absence of official military insignia, despite local understanding of the identities of the soldiers, creates difficulties in terms of activating adequate legal and security responses. It took more than a month for NATO commanding staff to openly express views on the responsible parties in the Ukraine crisis.²⁴

Conclusions

For the last twenty years, Ukraine's integration aspirations have been subject to major fluctuations, with Kiev balancing between Russian influence at the same time as seeking optimal and beneficial relations with NATO. Although Ukrainian membership in NATO has been off the agenda since 2010, and despite the announcement of the country's non-bloc status, Kiev and Brussels did not reduce their interaction and coordination. On the contrary: they even developed interoperability and cooperation via new operations and in new fields, such as piracy and cybersecurity. However, many spheres of cooperation, including security sector reform in Ukraine, have suffered from a lack of funding and sporadic implementation.

The events of winter 2013-2014 raise new questions about the future of Ukrainian-NATO cooperation, as well as the future of

NATO itself. In terms of Ukraine – NATO cooperation, the current crisis will likely crystallize the possible spheres of cooperation. It will no longer be possible simply to provide financial support for the Security Sector Reform in the absence of proper supervision. The whole framework of cooperation must be re-configured. It should shift from sporadic to strategic, with greater level of knowledge exchange and sharing of best practices. If it is not ready to assist in crisis management, NATO should guarantee a proper response readiness in relation to the Ukrainian crisis. Unfortunately, although Ukraine will decrease its level of cooperation with Russia, NATO is not promising to increase Ukraine-NATO relations in a timely and strategic manner.

24 Breedlove Ph. (2014) *Who Are the Men behind the Masks?* / Allied Command Operations. Available at: <http://www.aco.nato.int/saceur2013/blog/who-are-the-men-behind-the-masks.aspx>