



## NATO-Ukraine Cooperation after the Warsaw Summit

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*At the Warsaw Summit, NATO decided to maintain its open-door policy towards Ukraine and to provide it with additional assistance. However, Ukraine cannot count on a membership perspective in the near future. Instead, cooperation will focus on adopting NATO standards and strengthening the military capabilities of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The Alliance should help Ukraine's government secure the country's border with Russia, which would also allow for more security on NATO's Eastern Flank.*

**NATO Warsaw Summit Provisions.** The heads of state and government of the Alliance adopted a comprehensive assistance package for Ukraine at the Warsaw Summit.<sup>1</sup> It provides for granting additional support in five areas: advisory (including critical infrastructure protection), defence and security-sector reforms, education and training, demining and countering improvised explosive devices, as well as explosive ordnance disposal. The package will complement NATO instruments launched at the Newport Summit in 2014. Five trust funds were established to deal with cyber defence, logistics and standardisation, command and communication, medical rehabilitation, and social adaptation of the veterans of the war in Donbas (only 50% of the estimated financial contribution has been obtained so far).

Cooperation between NATO and Ukraine will focus on strengthening the military capabilities of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and supporting reforms in the security and defence sector. The latter were specified in the "Strategic Defence Bulletin," which is the *de facto* roadmap for implementing NATO principles and standards and was adopted by the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine in May 2016. According to Ukraine President Petro Poroshenko, the process will last until 2020 and marks the first step towards eventual membership in the Alliance.

However, Ukraine's accession to NATO is impossible in the coming years. Although the Alliance reaffirmed its open-door policy at the Warsaw Summit and condemned Russian interference in Ukraine's foreign policy choices, Ukraine was not mentioned among the potential candidates to join NATO (instead, it named Georgia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Nonetheless, the Alliance should further deepen its cooperation with Ukraine in areas of mutual interest. The acts of aggression in NATO's immediate neighbourhood, including Russia's annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas, have weakened the international order and led to the destabilisation of NATO member states. Therefore, as an element to strengthen the Alliance's Eastern Flank, NATO should help Ukraine secure its borders, particularly with Russia.

**Consequences of Russia's Aggression on Ukraine.** Ukraine has lost control over 400km of its border with Russia as a result of the war in Donbas. Meanwhile, the Crimean Peninsula has been occupied by Russia and is outside the Ukrainian government's actual jurisdiction. Ukraine's border guard has established new checkpoints at an administrative line between Kherson Oblast and Crimea, as well as at the so-called "contact line" in Donbas that separates the territories under government control from those controlled by the Russian-supported so-called separatists.

Although the 2015 Minsk Agreement stipulates that Ukraine will eventually restore control over the border with Russia in Donbas, the prospect of that seems distant because it is conditioned on local elections on territory now not under government control and on constitutional reform that would grant special status to Donbas as part of Ukraine. The latter move, however, could pave the way for the separatists to legalise control over the part of the Ukrainian-

<sup>1</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Warsaw Summit Communiqué*, [www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_133169.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm).

Russian border they control if they are allowed to create their own law-enforcement units. Moreover, the Russian authorities are interested in maintaining the *status quo* because they believe it undermines Ukraine's integration with the European Union and NATO.

Russia has significantly increased its military presence in Crimea, so Ukraine is unlikely to regain control over the peninsula anytime soon.

**Cooperation on Border Security and Safety.** NATO's support should allow Ukraine to guarantee the essential security interests of the state. The first step should be to strengthen the Ukraine-Russia border in the territories under control of the Ukrainian government—Chernivtsi, Sumy and Kharkiv Oblasts, as well as part of Luhansk Oblast. Even there, the border is still relatively poorly protected and infrastructure and equipment for monitoring it is lacking. There have been numerous cases of illegal border crossings and weapons trafficking. Moreover, although Russia and Ukraine signed an agreement on border demarcation and established a joint demarcation commission, the border itself has not been marked in the field. As a response to the Russian aggression, Ukraine embarked on constructing a series of fortifications along the border with Russia as well as unilateral demarcation. The project, called "European Wall," envisages building such barriers as barbed wire fences, anti-tank ditches and observation towers with permanent firing positions. However, additional financial assistance from international partners will be necessary for it to be successfully completed.

Support for the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine is particularly important because it would allow it to effectively monitor the border with Russia, the contact line in Donbas, and the administrative line with Crimea. The 2016 concept for the development of the security and defence sector does not foresee militarisation of the border guard units even though they were unable to provide a military response to the Russian aggression. Nevertheless, it provides for an increase in the combat capability of the Service, the creation of rapid reaction border guard units, and for cooperation between the Service, the National Guard and the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the border area, which will open a new window of possibility for Ukraine-NATO partnership.

**Recommendations.** The Alliance should build on the experience of its own member states and join ranks with the European Union in order to support Ukraine in securing its border with Russia. This will not only mark a step towards implementing the joint NATO-EU declaration but also will provide for more security for those NATO members who share a common border with Ukraine.

Under the auspices of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, a joint working group on border security should be established to comprehensively address the existing border challenges and provide regular consultations in case of emergency. Within the working group, the strategic NATO-Ukraine communication ought to be simplified by determining authorised representatives from all sides in order to coordinate and supervise cooperation. A special representative of the new European Border and Coast Guard might also be included in the group.

NATO and the European Union should offer additional needed financial aid and technical assistance to secure the border with Russia and create a comprehensive border surveillance system that employs drones and satellite imagery. In 2015, Canada provided Ukraine with access to the RADARSAT-2 satellite. However, in June 2016, the Canadian government suspended it because of financial matters. Moreover, the Ukrainian State Border Guard Service still lacks modern, high-precision equipment needed to control the situation at the border. Such equipment may be provided by individual NATO members.

NATO should support the creation of the Ukrainian rapid-reaction border guard units, and launch a tailored train-and-equip programme that would cover cooperation with the territorial defence forces in the border area and supply of weapons. The programme may build on the experience of analogous initiatives for Georgia and Syria (led by the U.S.), can operate at the Yavoriv International Peacekeeping and Security Centre, and be based on the existing Joint Multinational Training Group—Ukraine. Poland has already taken steps to join the Training Group. Since July 2016, its soldiers from the 21<sup>st</sup> Podhale Rifles Brigade are providing practical training to the 1<sup>st</sup> Mechanized Battalion (the 93<sup>rd</sup> Mechanized Brigade) of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

With a view to facilitating cooperation between the Ukrainian State Border Guard Service, the National Guard and the Armed Forces, as envisaged in the 2016 concept for the development of the security and defence sector, NATO support for communication, command and control, and logistics and mobility, should be strengthened.