

WE HAVE NO DOUBT THAT UKRAINE AND WORLD DEMOCRACY WILL WIN

Intro for the yearbook “Diplomatic Ukraine” proposes summary analysis for this year and reveals plans for the coming year.

Well. 2018 has been a particularly memorable year for our diplomacy and next year it will be the same. When the empire on your border engages in a war against your country, every year of war becomes memorable, without exception.

It is not for nothing that our work is often described as “the diplomatic front”. It is not really a metaphor. Hybrid war has multiple dimensions and front lines in addition to the physical one. There are visible but also hidden battlefields. It might seem that the hidden battlefields are safe as no shots are fired here, but in actual fact, the battles fought here could prove decisive for the whole campaign.

Thus, as long as the war continues, the crucial task for Ukrainian diplomacy remains the same: defending Ukraine and fighting against Russian aggression.

In 2018 we took a very important and profound step – we chose not to extend the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. I can just imagine the impulsive reaction of readers: “Big thrill! You should have done it way back in 2014!”

That is actually the point. In 2014 it would have been counter-productive. At that moment the international community was convinced that dialogue was the only viable way forward: a magic pill and would definitely condemn Ukrainian decision and weaken its support. I also fear that Russia could have used it as a pretext for a full-scale offensive. Now, however, the whole world appreciates our step as logical and reasonable.

Moreover, we have documented all of the hostile acts committed by Russia over the past 4 years which are incidents that violate the Treaty. We use this data as the basis for our legal action in international courts. These processes take time as they conform to the strict requirements laid down by international law. However, legal action is still the primary instrument to be used against those who break international law. Sooner or later justice will be served and those found guilty will face justice. We have already had some good results. The Appeal Court in London upheld the appeal of Ukraine against Russia in the case of “debt of Yanukovych” in the sum of \$3 billion received by him in Moscow. As the saying goes: to be continued!

The diplomatic aspect of defending Ukraine is concerned, first and foremost, with securing broad and effective international support. The Normandy format remains the main platform where Ukraine and Western democracies hold a dialogue with Russia. The dialogue between the United States and the Russian Federation is also extremely important for us as we coordinate with our American partners on every key point. We also utilize the full range of international organizations and platforms. With the involvement of the OSCE we negotiate the practical steps in Minsk, for example. Since 2014 it has become obvious to the whole world that, from the very beginning, Moscow has misled the international community and



has not intended to withdraw its troops from the occupied territories. It denies the further gains. On the other hand, Russia is caught up in its own complicity. Its readiness for negotiations led to the agreements yet its refusal to implement the agreements has led to a ratcheting up of pressure from the international community.

The UN special mission could put an end to the occupation of the region and ensure its peaceful reintegration. We have the precedent of the successful mission of the UN to Croatia between 1996–1998. Ukraine continues to push this issue which it has done for a long time. First, it looked like a utopia, now it is hard even for Russia to wave this idea aside. I believe that our subsequent actions and our determination will finally result in the establishment of a mission. We realize that it should not be a Russian puppet but that it should be a real mission with a policing element and effective international administration.

Time plays a big role in this hybrid war. With the occupation of Crimea and Donbas, Russia expected the Western world to express indignation as it did with Georgia in 2008, but to acquiesce over time so as not to upset relations with Moscow. However, for the first time since Hitler's annexation of foreign territory in Europe – Russia has indeed crossed the red line. Western democracies have imposed sanctions and so long as the sanctions remain valid, Russia cannot count on full membership of the international community.

That is why the question of lifting or at least easing of sanctions is crucial for Russia's foreign policy. Russia works hard to push Europe away from its moral principles and core values to the good of so-called "pragmatists" whose only interest is short-term benefit. It must be admitted that Moscow has had a few noticeable, albeit not wholly decisive, achievements in this area.

On the other hand, arrogance and an inclination towards active measures overseas has backfired for this Russian administration. Interference in US elections, cyberattacks against national and international institutions, bare-faced lying in its reporting of news and specifically the emboldened poisoning of British citizens on British soil has led to new and serious sanctions imposed against Russia.

There are two diverging camps within the EU. The first camp is increasingly cognizant that Russia is indeed a global threat. The other camp advocates a reconciliation with Russia and a return to “business as usual”. This second camp is comprised of cynical politicians, analysts, journalists, and business people who think only about their profit and short-term gain. This group is also comprised of far-right and far-left activists who admire Putin as an example of a strong leader reckless populists, naïve idealists who believe in “appeasement”, conformists who do not care about an independent Ukraine and moral values and instead care only about their own comfort, and all other types of “useful idiots”.

The first camp remains in the majority. But there are, however, a number of groups who want to return Russia to the Council of Europe. We managed to beat back their attempts during the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe earlier this year. This is definitely a victory for Ukrainian diplomacy. And I do not mean only our Foreign Office but I mean everybody who defended our interests – first and foremost our forthright parliamentary delegation.

It is clear that the last two years have brought a new and urgent task for our diplomacy – fighting for a united Europe – a Europe that remains committed to democratic principles and is ready to defend them.

Since the fall of Soviet communism we have appreciated Europe as a wise mentor but we never imagined that we ourselves could influence Europe’s direction. However, during the war years we have accumulated enormous experience, we know the enemy and its dirty tricks better than anybody in the Western world. Eventually, we have the right to demand from Europe a respect for its own espoused values because we are the only nation that defends them in a combat zone and because only our men and women are paying for these values with their own lives.

We will continue to persuade Europe that:

Russia did indeed choose to launch a global and complex hybrid war against the democratic world, especially those that have since 2014 dared to support Ukraine. In fact, it is a global hybrid war that some prefer not to notice even now. Moscow has ambitious goals to destabilize the Western world, to drive a wedge between the United States and Europe, between member-states of the EU as well as NATO. Russia’s paranoid dream is to renew its control over all ex-Soviet territories and to become a superpower once again.

European values are not abstract concepts nor meaningless moralization. They are real and effective. They led Europe to its power, its stability and its prosperity. So-called “pragmatists” or adherents to “Realpolitik” are either agent provo-

cateurs or cannot think outside the box. Withdrawal from values would mean the degradation and fall of Europe and could lead to disastrous consequences. Europe has faced a similar situation once before, back in 1938.

Unfortunately, the time of peace and harmony that came after the end of the Cold War has passed. The situation is now different. The stakes are high, the risk is lethal. The Western world has to mobilize itself and to unite on all levels and fronts. We need new partnerships, new effective platforms that can defend the democratic world against all types of hybrid threats and that can make totalitarian Russia abide by the rules of international law. Adherence to international law and democracy should become the main principle of the platform. Any violation should result in an immediate and consolidated reaction. Ukraine is ready for its proper role and to make its active contribution within such a partnership.

From this perspective, the Western world should finally realize that Ukraine is already an organic part and active, de facto member. In 2014 it might have looked like Western countries were following the principles of international law by supporting Ukraine as the victim of a local conflict in the post-Soviet area. Now, however, it is absolutely clear that the situation is in fact more complicated. It is not only the Western world that defends Ukraine but also Ukraine that defends the Western world, fighting against Russian imperial expansion on the frontline.

Many have already realized it. It is no coincidence that our movement towards the EU and NATO has been sped up following Maidan and after the onset of Russian aggression. With the launch of a visa-free regime, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians have already had the chance to visit EU-countries without any barriers or bureaucratic hurdles. It is not only convenient, it changes and Europeanizes the public conscience. We feel ourselves equal to all the peoples of the free world, we are now there where we belong.

Most actively we continue to develop our vital partnership with NATO. The Alliance Summit in 2018 confirmed our membership trajectory.

European and Euro-Atlantic integration have always been strategic priorities for Ukrainian foreign policy but now they are naturally connected with our main priority – liberation of our territories occupied by the Russian aggressor. Deep and powerful EU- and NATO-integration will definitely speed up our victory.

By the way, changes are also underway in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself. This year a new Ukrainian law “On Diplomatic Service” was adopted. Its main goal is to free our diplomacy from the relics of the Soviet bureaucratic system and to form a new, modern European-styled diplomatic service. These changes concern not only the system itself but the role of every single employee. Instead of simply being the gears for a bureaucratic apparatus – we need initiative, creative and responsible individuals who perform their duties in a skilled, professional way. The main principle of the new Law is along the lines of “More trust and more responsibility”.

The primary task of our Ministry is the defense of our citizens abroad. Every one of our citizens should know and be assured that in the case of difficulty overseas, they will receive the full support of the state, represented by our diplomats.

Our special sore point is our fight for the release of Ukrainian political prisoners who languish in Russian prisons. They remain constantly in our mind and we use every possible opportunity to remind our foreign partners of them. We have already managed to put pressure on Moscow from the international community and we will continue to do so until the very last political prisoner has been freed.

Support of our business community remains our priority as well. We need to improve a lot of things in this area, but I already hear comments from within our business circles that signal positive change.

Last but definitely not least. One of the stand-out achievements in 2018 by the Ukrainian diplomatic service has been the decision of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to grant Autocephaly to the independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church and to recognize the canonicity of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate. This is not just an everyday success or victory, it is literally a landmark event. I will avoid theological nuances in this article and will only dwell on two issues – social and political. Recognition by Constantinople of the canonicity of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate will finally free the believers of both Patriarchates from doubts and torments, it will help them to overcome the secession and to consolidate within the united church. From a political point of view, it is history-shaping victory. A national independent church is one of the main attributes of every independent state. By creating an independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church we establish the fullness of our sovereignty and finally break free of the unnatural chains imposed by our former colonial captor that now pursues a war against us.

I do not doubt that Ukraine and world democracy will win as we have the logic of historical development in our favor. However, this logical victory still requires a total commitment from us. 2019 is going to be a particularly memorable year as well. We are ready.