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TRANSATLANTIC AMBITION

UKRAINE'S EXPECTATIONS
OF THE ADMINISTRATION
OF THE 46TH PRESIDENT
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
JOE BIDEN



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November, 2020

The strategic partnership between Ukraine and the USA is based on both shared values as well as shared interests. It is these values and interests – as opposed to crisis response – which should generate momentum for relations between Kyiv and Washington and the United States’ new administration.

Ukraine welcomed the victory of Joe Biden in the presidential elections with great enthusiasm. Volodymyr Zelenskyy was one of the first foreign leaders to congratulate the President-elect and Vice President-elect. Ukrainian leadership is counting on the effective implementation of three main policy priorities indicated by the Joe Biden campaign. Ukraine also hopes that it will have an open ear in Washington and that its concerns will be heard by the new administration. In discussing these hopes and expectations in the government, think tanks and civil society, the following priorities stand out:

1 UKRAINE AS A FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITY AND CORE TO THE LEGACY OF JOE BIDEN

Kyiv expects that the Ukrainian portfolio will become one of the top foreign policy and security issues for the incoming Biden administration, and will ultimately become a lasting part of his presidential legacy. For his legacy to be a positive one, we propose the development of a Ukrainian-American Action Plan for the first term of a Biden Administration, outlining the key priorities for the bilateral partnership as well as a path to achieving them.

A more resilient Ukrainian-American partnership requires greater coordination between both countries across various levels. Shadow diplomacy, the lack of a consolidated position on partnership across institutions and the politics of contradictory signals should remain squarely in the past. The U.S.-Ukraine Strategic Partnership Commission should become a strategic resource which can be relied upon to work through even the most sensitive issues between our countries.

The United States remains Ukraine’s most important ally within the eyes of the Ukrainian people. In Ukraine, one of the biggest disappointments of the Obama Administration was that over his two terms Mr. Obama did not find the opportunity to visit Ukraine. A state visit by President-elect Joe Biden within the first year of his term would send an important symbol of support to the Ukrainian people. Likewise, a White House invitation for Ukraine’s leadership would serve as a motivating factor to strengthening the US-Ukraine strategic partnership and the implementation and realization of reforms.



Ukraine's expectations of the Administration of the 46th President of the USA, Joe Biden

2 WITHOUT UKRAINIAN SECURITY THERE IS NO EUROPEAN SECURITY

Ukraine is interested in renewing close and trusted transatlantic relations, effective US engagement of its European partners, as well as the strengthening of the role and influence of the United States within international organizations – including, NATO, G7, UN, and the IMF.

A “Europe whole, free and at peace” – the underlying principle the US has worked for over the last half century – is impossible without ending the only active war on European soil, Russia’s war against Ukraine. War in Europe is not only an issue of security, but of economic well-being, taking into account the high levels of trade between the EU and the US. The United States’ contribution to ending this war can be meaningful if Washington’s diplomatic relations with Moscow are based on the premise that the Donbas question must be resolved. The first step along this path should be the appointment of a new Special Representative for Ukraine Negotiations.

A declaration by the US State Department on Crimea could be supplemented by a declaration on Donbas – outlining the positions of the United States on resolving the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. On the question of Crimea, the United States could help create and actively promote a “Crimean Platform,” a framework for negotiations on the eventual deoccupation of Crimea. The question of detained Ukrainian citizens – Crimean residents who became political prisoners of the Kremlin and find themselves currently outside formal prisoner exchange frameworks – is critically important.

Understanding the importance of nuclear disarmament on global security, Ukraine counts on a substantive and depoliticized dialogue on commitments as well as necessary security

assurances under the framework of the Budapest Memorandum for Ukraine and any other countries which may choose to denuclearize in the future. There needs to be a clear understanding of which specific obligations could be a part of the security assurances of the United States and its international partners, and how these commitments can be fulfilled by the signatories to the document (with the exception of the Russian Federation).

Within the bilateral security dialogue with the United States, it is important that the first term of a Biden administration prioritizes the continuation of joint military training and exercises, the reformation of Ukrainian security and defense institutions modeling NATO standards, investment in Ukraine’s military-industrial complex, and joint defense production. We expect an increase in military support from the US (up to 1 billion USD). Among the most urgent needs for Ukraine are strengthened air defense systems, reconnaissance drones, modern communication and electronic warfare equipment, further development of naval forces as well as the special operations forces of Ukraine. US military assistance will be accompanied by Ukraine’s participation in the Pentagon’s Foreign Military Sales (FMS) Program.

Ukraine will continue being a beneficiary of defense cooperation, but aspires to be a significant contributor as well. Along this goal, Ukraine is prepared to negotiate with its American partners on a package of proposals for contributing to European and international security. Ukraine’s practical experience combating hybrid war as well as its participation in NATO peacekeeping operations and missions are proposed as some elements of this contribution.

Today, Russia – albeit to varying degrees – poses an external security threat and is a source of domestic destabilization, not only in Ukraine, but – especially since 2016 – the US, too. Ukraine and the United States should step up their preventative

response to such hybrid threats from Russia, by deepening cooperation on cybersecurity issues, specifically intelligence sharing and fighting disinformation.

Given the continued aggressive posture of Russian leadership, the United States should seek not a reset of relations with Moscow, but a reset of sanctions instead. It is important that sanctions are not only expanded, but deepened as well, so that they affect not only individuals closely tied to the Putin regime, but also the families of these individuals as well as targeted economic sectors. It is critical that Ukraine and the US jointly respond to violations of sanctions by individuals and legal entities. Also, it is important that the United States continues (and Ukraine begins) the practice of preparing investigative reports on Russia's influence not only in the United States but in Ukraine as well. Such interaction is particularly important in the context of a July 2020 bill proposed by Democratic Congressman Max Rose (D-NY), which obliges the Secretary of State to determine whether Russia satisfies the criteria for recognition as a state sponsor of terrorism.

Ukraine's Euroatlantic integration serves the interests not only of Ukraine, but also the United States. Today, Ukraine serves a dual role; it is both one of NATO's greatest partners, as well as an aspirant to permanent membership in the Alliance. Ukraine counts on the support of the United States in the next logical step in Ukraine's Euroatlantic integration – support for Ukraine's NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) over the course of the next three years. Should Ukraine's NATO accession be unrealistic in the short-term, other bilateral security arrangements with the United States would surely be welcomed in Kyiv, including updating the Charter on Strategic Partnership and making Ukraine the major non-NATO Ally (MNNA).

Ukraine, like Georgia and Romania, is critical to Black Sea security. Ukraine aspires to become a key partner for the United States in the Black Sea region along with Georgia and Romania (forming the "Black Sea Security Trio"). American presence in the Black Sea region could be strengthened not only from US participation in joint military exercises, but also by the launch of the US (or NATO) training mission in the region. Ukraine needs American political support to bring the status of the Azov Sea in line with the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, as its current status as an inland sea of the two countries was imposed on Ukraine by the Russian Federation in 2003 and created unilateral advantages for Russia as well as grave security risks for Ukraine. Ukraine has an interest in permanent dialogue with the United States regarding security threats on the heavily-militarized Crimean Peninsula, including the possibility of Russia deploying nuclear weapons to the Peninsula.

Ukraine also hopes for consistent policy from the United States on the issue of cessation of the "Nord Stream 2" pipeline project in the Baltic Sea, and also advocates for the same consistent, firm position on the "TurkStream" project in the Black Sea as well. An additional sanctions package blocking these Kremlin natural gas pipeline projects and restricting the purchase of Russian oil and gas could impel Russia to deoccupy Ukrainian and Georgian territories as well as liquidate its military presence in Moldova.



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3 UKRAINE AS A LEADER OF DEMOCRATIC TRANSFORMATION IN THE REGION

Ukraine's situation is unique, as perhaps the only country in the world that – in the face of continued external aggression – continues to strengthen its democracy and fight corruption. In our opinion, Ukraine's history building democratic institutions in spite of ongoing foreign invasion should earn the invite of both its political and civil society leaders to a global summit of democracies, a plan proposed by Joe Biden during his presidential campaign.

In preparation for a global Summit for Democracy, Ukraine could also organize a regional summit of democracies which could develop ideas and proposals for regional democracies for a global summit. In preparing for a global summit of democracies in Washington, it should bear mentioning that Ukraine remains a trailblazer for the implementation of democratic processes in the Post-Soviet space. The success of Ukraine's democratic transformation will largely determine the fate of other countries in the region, especially Russia. Ukraine's potential influence on Russia's democratization is greater than any other country in the world.

Ukraine is interested in actively assisting the US in its continued anti-corruption reform efforts, initiated under Vice President Joe Biden during the Obama administration, taking into account the lessons learned over the past six years of American support. The issue of new loan guarantees for Ukraine should also be considered.

Regarding anti-corruption efforts, we expect assistance from the Biden administration, including in the revocation of US visas and implementation of personally-targeted sanctions,

for individuals who subvert anticorruption reforms and the rule of law, and undermine the independence of anti-corruption institutions, including the National Anti-Corruption Bureau, High Anti-Corruption Court, and the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office. The corruption of Ukrainian state institutions by oligarchs and pro-Russian political forces should be viewed through the lens of Russia's hybrid warfare against Ukraine and against liberal democracies more broadly.

An important potential contribution from Washington would be a firm position on the issue of deoligarchization, without differentiating between "good" and "bad" oligarchs. In order to avoid undermining the deoligarchic message, it is important that US government representatives not take part in initiatives or events organized or financed by oligarchs.

Taking into account Kyiv's increased emphasis on economic diplomacy, Ukraine is interested in the removal of tariffs imposed by the Trump administration on Ukrainian steel and aluminum products (25% and 10% respectively). It is also important that Ukraine return fully to the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), which helped remove tariff restrictions on 3,800 commodity items, thus facilitating the entry of Ukrainian exporters onto the American market.

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