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Ukraine under Zelenskyy: Domestic, Foreign and Security Policy in Flux

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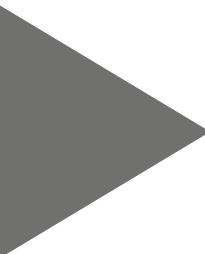
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Table of contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Executive summary | 7 |
| Foreword | 13 |
| Victoria Vdovychenko, Vlad Vernygora | |
| Naïveté as a beginning: Ze Ukrainian foreign policy | 17 |
| Marta Drabczuk | |
| The “Dreamland” of President Zelenskyy: implementation or imitation of economic changes | 33 |
| Oleksii Polegkyi | |
| Security issues of Ukraine in the context of Russian-Ukrainian conflict | 51 |
| Tomasz Stępniewski | |
| The European Union’s Eastern Partnership after the Brussels summit: what’s next? | 67 |
| Paul D’Anieri | |
| Continuity in Ukraine-US relations in the Biden-Zelenskyy era | 73 |
| Authors | 85 |



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Naïveté as a beginning: Ze Ukrainian foreign policy

Having assumed his presidential office in May 2019, Volodymyr Zelenskyy had to go through a distinct period of cowboyish *naïveté* before his foreign policy-associated moves started featuring some sort of logic and, to an extent, sophistication. Most definitely, from September the same year, the Trump – Ukraine scandal pushed the Ukrainian President-neophyte on the quest to realise how serious and multi-dimensional the process of foreign policy making is in its brutal actuality. Arguably, in January 2021, Zelensky’s interview to the Axios program on the HBO US television channel evidently showed that the 6th President of Ukraine had just completed the ‘foundational studies’ on being in charge of Europe’s largest country. The moment when he was replying to the host’s particular question (“I can see you’re angry with President Trump. Maybe a little bit?”)¹ became one of the Trump era’s most recognizable memes.

¹ *Zelensky admits he is ‘little bit angry’ with Trump*, 112 UA, 31 January 2021, <https://112.international/politics/zelensky-admits-he-is-a-little-bit-angry-with-trump-58560.html> [12.11.2021].

Some experts can also argue that the so-called ‘Wagner Affair’ in July – August 2020, when a multi-national special operation to capture a platoon of mercenaries from the egregiously ubiquitous Russian private military company Wagner Group was allegedly sabotaged by a known but still unnamed high-profile personality from the Ze team and, possibly, President Zelenskyy himself², was yet another learning curve for the Ukrainian leader in the process of studying a life-time lesson on statecraft. Provided that there was no treason during the ‘Wagner Affair’ on the President’s personal side, where to from there and where Zelenskyy is currently at with his foreign policy – these are the two major questions, which require some sort of serious elaborations on.

It can be suggested that, from July 2021, the National Security and Defence Council dotted the i’s and crossed t’s after it had approved the ‘Strategy of Foreign Policy of Ukraine’ (further – Strategy). Dmytro Kuleba, the country’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, speaks on the context about “a very voluminous document”, which is framed by the declaration that “Ukraine is an active participant in international politics”, the *fait constaté* that “Ukraine is forming a security architecture for itself, the region and the world”, and, finally, the dream about Ukraine as “a country of new economic oppor-

² S. Sukhankin, *The ‘Wagner Affair’ in Belarus and Its Implications for Ukraine*, The Jamestown Foundation, 9 February 2021, <https://jamestown.org/program/the-wagner-affair-in-belarus-and-its-implications-for-ukraine/> [2.11.2021]; V. Kravchenko, *Jak Zelens’kyy pro “vagnerivciw” iz Łukaszenkom hovoruyw (Як Зеленський про «вагнерівців» із Лукашенком говорив)*, ZN.UA, 4 October 2021, <https://zn.ua/ukr/international/jak-zelenskij-pro-vahnerivtiv-iz-lukashenkom-hovoriv.html> [12.11.2021].

tunities”³. Nevertheless, keeping in mind this important ministerial summary, recognising the Strategy as an undisputed achievement of the Ze foreign policy making (since it is the first document of its kind Ukraine’s post-1991 history), and leaving the USA-focused policy segment outside of this brief, there could still be a couple of the most ‘articulated’ lines for any strategic document on/of Ukraine to ‘go along’, and they are as follows.

Strategic line 1: Ukraine and NATO/EU

If this world is still willing to think that the current UN-bound international system is the system for the global communing of nations to operate in, then Ukraine is in limbo. On the one hand, since the 1945 San Francisco Conference, the country’s both nominal and real representatives had been rarely missing a chance to specify that Ukraine was among the inaugural members of the UN⁴. On the other hand, from 2018, the Constitution of Ukraine makes four references about the country’s EU- and NATO-focused intentions⁵, but

³ *At the NSDC meeting chaired by Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the Strategy of Foreign Policy of Ukraine was approved*, President of Ukraine, 30 July 2021, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/na-zasidanni-rnbo-pid-golovuvannyam-volodimira-zelenskogo-za-69873> [10.11.2021].

⁴ V. Vernygora, *A Place for Ukraine in a more cohesive European Union: Synergising the two different integrations* in L. Akulenko, D. Naumenko (eds.), *NGO Ukrainian Centre for European Policy*, 2019, p. 19, http://ucep.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/web_place_for_Ukraine_in_a_more_cohesive_EU_WEB.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2JoHg-44Wh2W8H-3ZjqBK3amTX3W9lgTSF5ty19j5bHcYjTNNHC4EIOngk [10.11.2021].

⁵ *Pro vnesennia zmin do Konstytuciji Ukrajinny (szczodostratehicznoho kursu derzavy na nabuttia pownopravnoho clenstva Ukrajinny v Jewropejs'komu Sojuzi ta v Orhanizaciji Pivnicznoatlantycznoho dohovoru)* (Про внесення змін до Конституції України [щодо стратегічного курсу держави на набуття повноправного членства України в Європейському Союзі та в Організації Північноатлантичного договору]), *Відомості Верховної Ради*, 2019, no. 9, p. 50, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2680-VIII#Text> [21.11.2021].

the latter two are distinctly non-conventional for the Yalta international system.

In the early 2000s, Ukraine had about forty countries as its 'strategic partners' and couldn't manage them properly due to the obvious lack of normative documents of strategic nature that would be describing the main notions and outlining the main conditions. It was only after the Foreign Policy Strategy was signed by President Zelenskyy in summer 2021⁶ Ukraine could really commence strategising, working with a certain amplitude and understanding its own key foreign policy benchmarks. Having prioritised the processes of ensuring the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and counteracting the aggressive policy of the Russian Federation, the Strategy underlines the course for the EU and NATO membership, stipulates on the importance of the rights and interests of Ukrainian citizens abroad, support of Ukrainian exports and attraction of foreign investments, and technological and ecological transformation of the country.

In the particular case of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (AA) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area's (DCFTA) framework, a general progress in 2019 was recorded on the level of 59%⁷, with the figure decreasing to 39% next year 39%⁸ to be estimated for 'arrival' at 49.2% by

⁶ *Hława derzhavy zatverdyyu Stratehiju zovnishnopolitycznoji dijal'nosti Ukrajinny (Глава держави затвердив Стратегію зовнішньополітичної діяльності України)*, President of Ukraine, 27 August 2021, <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/glava-derzhavi-zatverdiv-strategiyu-zovnishnopolitichnoyi-di-70413> [22.11.2021].

⁷ *Zahal'nyj prohres za 2019 rik (Zagal'nyj prohres za 2019 rik)*, EU.UA, <https://pulse.kmu.gov.ua/ua/a/year/2019> [19.11.2021].

⁸ *Zahal'nyj prohres za 2020 rik (Zagal'nyj prohres za 2020 rik)*, EU.UA, <https://pulse.kmu.gov.ua/ua/a/year/2020> [21.11.2021].

the second half of 2021⁹. In the context of the AA, the leading segments of cooperation are reported to be ‘technical trading barriers elimination’, ‘public procurement’, and ‘foreign, security, and defence policy’, which enjoy correspondingly 100%, 68.6%, and 44.2% of perfect execution (such areas as ‘public health’ and ‘transport’ are lagging behind with 7.8% and 7.1%)¹⁰.

With that, as argued, there is a distinctively negative tendency that the process of legal approximation in Ukraine is featured by – it can be described as ‘Ukrainisation of EU legislation’ when some of the EU-issued normative documents, which can not be legally ‘absorbed’ by and in Ukraine, started being interpreted by a number of Ukrainian entities “at their own discretion, whilst attempting to apply these regulations in a selective manner”¹¹. This became a major topic in the context of discussion between Ukraine and the EU on the comprehensive review of the country’s achievements regarding the AA’s objectives, which both sides decided to do after the 22nd Ukraine-EU summit in October 2020¹².

If compared to the EU-associated dimension, the NATO-Ukraine ‘story’ is even more dynamic and complex. The fact of recognising Ukraine as an Enhanced Opportunities

⁹ O. Bułana, S. Diaczenko, D. Naumenko, *Jewrointehracija popry COVID: prohres u vykonanni Uhody pro asociacijuu u 2020 – perszu polowynu 2021 rr.* (Євроінтеграція попри COVID: прогрес у виконанні Угоди про асоціацію у 2020 – першу половину 2021 рр.), NGO Ukrainian Centre for European Policy, 2021, <https://ucep.org.ua/doslidzhennya/yewrointegracziya-popry-covid-progres-u-vykonanni-ugody-pro-asocziacziyu-u-2020-pershu-polovynnu-2021-rr-2.html> [19.11.2021].

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ V. Vernygora, *op.cit.*, pp. 16-17.

¹² *EU-Ukraine Association Agreement*, Mission of Ukraine to the European Union, 15 April 2021, <https://ukraine-eu.mfa.gov.ua/en/2633-relations/ugoda-pro-asociaciyu-mizh-ukrayinoyu-ta-yes> [12.11.2021].

Partner of NATO is a colossal step ahead in establishing a higher level of interoperability between the two sides. In June 2020, the North Atlantic Council decided to add Ukraine to the list of the alliance's enhanced partners (Australia, Finland, Georgia, Jordan and Sweden), so a more nuanced tailor-made platform for cooperation could be established¹³. Of course, such a level of recognition is not to assist the Ukrainian side in solving the 'Hungarian puzzle' by default – from 2018, Hungary has been making global headlines with its blockage of myriads of NATO-Ukraine activities, from statements to meetings, because of the country's widely publicised disagreement with Ukraine about the latter's language law¹⁴ – but, as declared, it will allow Ukraine to take part in the planning of NATO operations and gain access to all NATO exercises¹⁵.

In 2019-2021, Volodymyr Zelenskyy met NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg several times. Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration has been a major theme for Oleksiy Honcharuk and Denys Shmyhal, as Prime Ministers. More than 70 Ukrainian institutions took part in implementing Ukraine-NATO Annual National Programs, which were even updated to the RBM methodology as per NATO standards¹⁶.

¹³ *NATO recognises Ukraine as Enhanced Opportunities Partner*, NATO, 12 June 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_176327.htm [19.11.2021].

¹⁴ *Hungary to block Ukraine's NATO membership over language law*, Reuters, 4 December 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-nato-hungary-idUSKBN1Y823N> [19.11.2021].

¹⁵ *NATO's Enhanced Opportunities Program for Ukraine*, Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 24 July 2020, <https://www.mil.gov.ua/en/news/2020/07/24/natos-enhanced-opportunities-program-for-ukraine/> [15.11.2021].

¹⁶ *Pro rizni nacional'ni prohramy pid ehidoju Komisijiukrajina – NATO (Прорічні національні програми під егідою Комісії Україна – НАТО)*, President of Ukraine, 24 February 2021, <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/722021-36825> [19.11.2021].

Moreover, the Communication Strategy on Euro-Atlantic Integration was also signed by the President of Ukraine in order to raise awareness about the importance of this strategic vector of Ukraine as per its Constitution¹⁷. In September 2021, President Zelensky “very directly” asked US President Joe Biden about Ukraine’s NATO accession prospects¹⁸. At the end of the day, “you have not because you ask not”...

Strategic line 2: Ukraine and its Neighbourhood

Ukraine’s multi-dimensional importance for Europe’s central and eastern parts as well as the Black Sea basin can hardly be underestimated. Together with the Black Sea-connected environs, Ukraine’s neighbouring proximity with ten countries¹⁹ makes it one of the most inter-regional in the world. Objectively, however, the President’s initial naïveté did not prevent him from establishing highly effective as well as pragmatically positive channels of communication with Turkey and Poland; it is something that no Zelensky’s predecessors had ever been able (or wanted) to accomplish. In a significant addition, the obvious inefficacy of the GU[U] AM and the disastrous historic flop of the Community of Democratic Choice were good lessons to learn from, especially given the relatively peaceful, for Ukraine, circumstances then. Therefore, the Crimea Platform, having grown up

¹⁷ *Pro Stratehiju komunikaciji z pytan' jewroatlantsznojiiintegraciji Ukrajinu na period do 2025 roku (Про Стратегію комунікації з питань євроатлантичної інтеграції України на період до 2025 року)*, President of Ukraine, 11 August 2021, <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/3482021-39617> [17.11.2021].

¹⁸ *Zelensky tells of Biden's stance on Ukraine's NATO membership issue*, Ukrinform, 13 September 2021, <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-politics/3314456-zelensky-tells-of-bidens-stance-on-ukraines-nato-membership-issue.html> [19.11.2021].

¹⁹ Let us count Georgia into this number, even though its territorial waters do not get directly interlinked with those of Ukraine.

into noticeable being from within the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in April 2021, can be described as the Ukrainian foreign policy's ultimate success achieved in the process of crafting a conceptually new version of neo-regionalism, which has apparently drifted far away from boring premises of political economy, corny quasi-regional interrelations, and opportunism of Henry Kissinger's old-fashioned 'triangles'.

Arguably, having secured the attendance of high-level representatives from all member states of NATO, the EU, G7 as well as Australia and New Zealand, the Platform's inaugural event on 23 August 2021 managed to formulate and project that should lead to "de-occupation of Crimea and its peaceful return to Ukraine"²⁰. In a geo-strategically innovative and bold way, this move brings the Crimean issues (being intentionally blurred by the Kremlin and its global partners) back on the table, underlining the fact that the Russian Federation is not enjoying even the *de facto* full control over the peninsula. Thus, there is a likelihood that the Crimea Platform is to stay for as long as Ukraine and the signatories of the Platform-issued declaration remain focused (for both the common and their own reasons) on putting pressure on the Russian Federation to end its "temporary occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol"²¹.

Geography-wise, the immediate east means 'war' for Ukraine, and Kravchuk-Kuchma-Yushchenko-Yanukovych's

²⁰ *Crimea Platform*, Crimea Platform, <https://crimea-platform.org/en/about> [21.11.2021].

²¹ *Joint Declaration of the International Crimea Platform Participants*, Crimea Platform, <https://crimea-platform.org/en/samit/deklaraciya> [19.11.2021].

style of flirting with Russia does not look like a possibility any longer. In his interview with *The Washington Post*, Volodymyr Zelenskyy described Russian President Vladimir Putin as being “irrational” and “emotional, sometimes even highly emotional”, adding that Putin “is too emotional when it comes to Ukraine”²². This level of the caustic use of irony can be treated as a position of moral strength vis-à-vis Russia, an undetected communicational phenomenon among all foregoers of the current Ukrainian President. Across the Ukrainian border with Russia, 400 odd kilometers of which are controlled by the latter, another style of communication prevails. In April 2021, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, making a reference about the Minsk-2 Protocol, noted that Russia “mustn’t let Mr. Zelensky and his team get off the hook, even though they are trying hard to wriggle out”²³. Arguably, the “war” vs. “hook” situation is to determine the next steps for the two sides, but if any new agreement is to be signed, it is unlikely to be done in Minsk. Things have changed since 2015 when the latest package of measures to stop hostilities (essentially – yet another Russian occupation) in the Ukrainian east was signed off in the Belarusian capital. These days, it is a different Belarus.

Even though it is not going precisely with geography, the northern dimension for Ukraine is reverberated in the

²² I. Khurshudyan, *Ahead of White House meeting, Ukraine’s Zelensky expresses frustration with Western allies*, *The Washington Post*, 19 August 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/ukraine-zelensky-interview-russia/2021/08/19/93b475e6-fabe-11eb-911c-524bc8b68f17_story.html [19.11.2021].

²³ V. Isachenkov, *Russia’s foreign minister warns Ukraine that Moscow would not accept push to revise 2015 peace deal*, *The Globe and Mail*, 28 April 2021, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-russias-foreign-minister-warns-ukraine-that-moscow-would-not-accept> [20.11.2021].

images of Belarus and the Baltic trio (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania). Historically, the Principality of Polatsk (the ‘cradle’ of Belarusian statehood) and its interlinkage with Kyivan Rus as well as Livonians and Latgalians made it possible for Belarus to become an essential element of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and, later on, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. These formations and historic connections allow Ukraine to enhance its understanding about the country’s immediate and not so immediate northern neighbourhood. As once noted, Belarus was among those eleven countries, which voted against the UN General Assembly’s Resolution that was calling upon states not to recognise changes in status of Crimea region (adopted on 27 March 2014), and, considering the fact that Belarus and Ukraine share a 1,000 km borderline, “[a]ny Russian military pressure from the north would totally redefine the current conflict and would force Ukraine to radically rethink the country’s entire defence posture”²⁴.

Nevertheless, during the Ze period, a prospective Russian invasion from the northern flank started being tightly bound with the outcome (and revolutionary consequences) of the 2020 Belarusian presidential election, the ‘Wagner Affair’, and the 2021 Belarus–EU border crisis – all these factors taken together, with necessity, can determine the fate of Alyaksandr Lukashenka’s political regime sooner rather than later. There is a likelihood that the situation’s further escalation is not to bring any positive news for Ukraine,

²⁴ V. Davidzon, *Difficult neighbors: How the Belarus crisis has strained ties between Minsk and Kyiv*, Atlantic Council, 3 March 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/difficult-neighbors-how-the-belarus-crisis-has-strained-ties-between-minsk-and-kyiv/> [19.11.2021].

since the rising geo-strategic stakes may push the Russian Federation to establish its full military control over Belarus, in the light of a series of documents on integrating the two countries' economies, energy sector, and taxation systems, which were signed Putin and Lukashenka in the beginning of November 2021²⁵.

Elaborating on the Baltics, a recent comprehensive academic study on strategic narratives and perceptions of the Baltic trio vis-à-vis Ukraine detected a multi-dimensional level of understanding of the status quo. This is where sincere partnerships, honest concerns, socio-historic 'closeness', self-reflections, and friendly advice can be found in their widest variations²⁶. Yet Ukraine cannot treat, for example, Estonia's support of its Euro-Atlantic aspirations as a forever given – any of the Baltics is never shy in expressing its dissatisfaction with how Ukraine does things. For example, in August 2021, Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid noted that the country would need 20 years of work to get to the EU's full membership, underlining her concerns about Ukrainian courts²⁷.

On the western side, there is plenty of strategy for Ukraine. To an extent, the Belarusian crisis together with the Nord Stream-2 saga made this particular vector of Ukrainian

²⁵ *Russia's Putin backs 'brotherly' Belarus amid EU pressure*, DW, 4 November 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/russias-putin-backs-brotherly-belarus-amid-eu-pressure/a-59726101> [19.11.2021].

²⁶ *Special issue 30 years after the breakup of the USSR: Russia and post-Soviet Europe, narratives and perceptions*, N. Chaban, E. Pavlov, H. Mondry (eds.), "New Zealand Slavonic Journal", vol. 53-54, 2021, <https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/arts/schools-and-departments/russian/nz-slavonic-journal/accordion/latest-issue/nzsj53-54.pdf> [21.11.2021].

²⁷ K. Kaljulaid as cited in *Estonian president: Ukraine needs 20 years of work to join EU*, The Baltic Times, 25 August 2021, https://www.baltictimes.com/estonian_president__ukraine_needs_20_years_of_work_to_join_eu/ [19.11.2021].

foreign policy as important as it can ever be. There has been a lot of different and difficult history behind, thus Poland does not need an intermediary in communication with Kyiv, and President Zelenskyy seems to have found a good comfort zone in exchanging thoughts with Polish President Andrzej Duda – they met in May and August 2021, while having had a number of phone conversations in the meantime²⁸. As reported, on 9 November 2021, when Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki advised his country's parliament that the closure of Poland's border with the Belarusian side "could result in migrants being redirected to Ukraine in order to make their way to the EU from there"²⁹, thus the two countries' authorities began cooperating to be in a preemptive mode. On the top of everything, as a 'geo-strategic message in a bottle' from Józef Piłsudski, Poland is the heart of the Three Seas Initiative to counterbalance the Chinese 16/17+1 framework – this is something serious that Ukraine is required to monitor for its own benefit and in a framework of establishing yet another point of contact with the other EU's Member States on its western flank.

Slovakia, Hungary and Romania – for different reasons – are instrumental for Ukrainian foreign policy-linked initiatives and moves. Bratislava is gradually becoming gigan-

²⁸ *Poland always supports Ukraine and the Ukrainian people – Volodymyr Zelenskyy following the meeting with Andrzej Duda in Warsaw*, President of Ukraine, 3 May 2021, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/polsha-zavzhdi-pidtrimuye-ukrayinu-ta-ukrayinskij-narod-volo-68253> and *Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with President of Poland Andrzej Duda*, President of Ukraine, 23 August 2021, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/volodimir-zelenskij-zustrivsyia-z-prezidentom-polshi-andzheye-70305> [19.11.2021].

²⁹ M. Morawiecki as cited in Bohdan Nahaylo, *Escalating Belarus border crisis could pose a security threat to Ukraine*, Atlantic Council, 15 November 2021, <https://www.atlantic-council.org/blogs/ukrainealert/escalating-belarus-border-crisis-could-pose-a-security-threat-to-ukraine> [22.11.2021].

tically important for Kyiv in the process of solving many energy ‘equations’ – especially, when the physical connection of the Slovak and Polish GTS will be established via the interconnector PL-SK, so the Slovakian side will be expecting to “get the opportunity to enter the market of Norwegian natural gas with a proposal to transport it to the south in the interests of the CEE countries by the end of 2022”³⁰. Objectively, President Zelenskyy’s visit to Slovakia in September 2020³¹ was a smart move by all means. As for Ukraine’s policy on Hungary, it could be suggested that the dispute between the two countries could be ‘replaced’ onto a common EU-Ukraine platform – a positive solution on the problem that has plenty of populist ‘flavour’ clearly asks for a much broader perspective, since the bilateralism does not work and Zelenskyy’s greetings of his country’s Hungarian community in their mother tongue do not work either³².

To the south is Turkey, the world’s most sophisticated geo-strategic actor in the first two decades of the new millennium. In less than twenty years, Ukraine’s southern neighbour across the Black Sea has ‘grown’ up into a multi-regional power, entering the segments of international politics where it had never been from the beginning of the XX century. Moving away from the Turkey of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a new Turkish Republic is slowly but surely broad-

³⁰ *The first ever connection of gas transmission systems of Slovakia and Poland*, CEP Consult, 5 August 2021, <https://cepconsult.com/publications/the-first-connection-of-gas-transmission-systems-of-slovakia-and-poland/> [22.11.2021].

³¹ V. Zelenskyy, *Slovak PM discuss cooperation in trade, transport, energy*, Ukrinform, 19 November 2021, <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-economy/3105888-zelensky-slovak-pm-discuss-cooperation-in-trade-transport-energy.html> [19.11.2021].

³² *FM Szijjártó: Actions Would Hopefully Follow Zelensky’s Gesture*, Hungary Today, 2020, <https://hungarytoday.hu/fm-szijjarto-actions-would-hopefully-follow-zelenskys-gesture/> [19.11.2021].

ening the horizons in all directions, including the Ukrainian one. Evidently, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is member of another 'league' for the Ukrainian President to match him any time soon, but Zelenskyy's amateurishness is objectively likable, even amusing, for the Turkish strategist – their talks are frequent and effective for both sides³³. In this difficult period, Turkey is a guarantee for the Crimea Platform to survive and a reinforcer for Ukraine's global initiatives like, for instance, a call on UNESCO to support protection of the Crimean cultural heritage³⁴. Certainly, on a bad day, Ukraine can be told off by Ankara (in October 2021, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu was furious about Ukraine that was making constant references about Bayraktar TB2 drone, deployed by the Ukrainian Army, as it would be 'Turkish' one)³⁵, but *naïveté* helps to get a problem off the table. Finally, the Turkey-Azerbaijan effective interlinkage has already become an example of establishing a regional 'powerhouse' that delivers big time – the 2020 Karabakh War as well as Azerbaijan's undisputed success in it made a number of notable amendments to dozens of textbooks in the field of security studies.

³³ Zelenskyy, Erdoğan, discuss the situation of Crimean Political Prisoners, Ukrinform, 21 September 2021, <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-polytics/3319797-zelensky-erdogan-discuss-situation-of-crimean-political-prisoners-fta.html> [24.11.2021].

³⁴ Emine Dzhaparova calls on UNESCO to support protection of the Crimean cultural heritage from Russian occupants, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 10 November 2021, <https://mfa.gov.ua/en/news/emine-dzhaparova-zaklikala-yunesko-spriyati-zahistu-kulturnoyi-spadshchini-krimu-vid-dij-rosijskih-okupantiv> [24.11.2021].

³⁵ Don't blame us for Ukraine's use of Turkish drones – Turkish FM, Reuters, 31 October 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/dont-blame-us-ukraines-use-turkish-drones-turkish-fm-2021-10-31> [24.11.2021].

Conclusion

In the 1980s, New Kids on the Block made a revolution in the world's entertainment industry. The spontaneous Ze 'revolution of governance', while making plenty of global socio-political trends, was destined to start comprehending its own grand-region from a more holistic perspective. In an unexpected way, considering the already mentioned factor of both real and perceived *naïveté*, the Ze period can be evidently observed as a time-frame when generic objectives of foreign policy started being transformed into a number of more nuanced direction-specific ideas and projects. This current approach does not symbolise a predetermined success or a recipe to avoid making rookie's mistakes, but it is still a conceptually different one, if compared with the country's classic (and notoriously infamous) multi-vectoral foreign policy, which, eventually, led to February 2014.