

President Yanukovych is setting out his vision for Ukraine's security

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President Viktor Yanukovych's decrees approving the new National Security Strategy 'Ukraine in a Changing World' and the Military Doctrine were published on 8 June. They replaced documents adopted during the presidencies of Leonid Kuchma (the Military Doctrine of 2004) and Viktor Yushchenko (the National Security Strategy of 2007), which became obsolete after President Yanukovych announced in 2010 that Ukraine would no longer aspire to NATO membership and that the principle of remaining outside any blocs would be followed.

The key threats to state security identified in the National Security Strategy include: increasing rivalry between global powers and the crisis of the international security system, the existence of the quasi-states in territories of sovereign countries and the precedents of some of them being recognised as sovereign states, and the intensifying competition for access to natural resources and control of their supply routes. The key regional threats defined in the strategy are: the increasingly active processes of creating spheres of influence, the threat that military forces could be used as a preventive measure and the increasing militarisation of the region. The factors which pose a direct threat to Ukraine's security, according to the strategy, are: the unsettled conflict in Transnistria, the division of the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait, the fact that its state border with Russia, Belarus and Moldova has not been demarcated, and the unsettled issues related to the conditions of the lease the Black Sea Fleet has. The Military Doctrine is a defence doctrine; it does not single out any state as being a military opponent of Ukraine. A local or regional war against Ukraine has been determined as rather unlikely in the medium term.

Commentary

- There is no call to expect the National Security Strategy and the Military Doctrine to lead to any major changes in Ukraine's security and foreign policy. This policy was already revised in 2010 when President Yanukovych announced that Ukraine would no longer aspire to NATO membership and that the principle of remaining outside any blocs would be followed. The fact that the new documents which sanction these changes have only now been adopted proves that security policy is of secondary significance for the Ukrainian government. The declaration of a comprehensive reform of the security sector and the armed forces made in very general terms reiterates the provisions of the previous documents which have not yet been put into practise.

- The fact that the documents have been adopted recently should be understood as a political manifestation of the Ukrainian government in the area of security made ahead of elections. They are aimed at emphasising the role the president plays in forming the country's security policy.
- These documents also demonstrate the inertia of Ukraine's security policy. The abandoned aspirations to NATO membership have not been replaced with any pro-active agenda in the area of security, and the principle of not joining any blocs and self-sufficiency in the area of defence are merely slogans and have not as yet been followed up by any action, especially as regards reinforcing the military potential of the Ukrainian army or a radical increase in expenditure on national defence.