



# /SUM MARY

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SCENARIOS  
FORESIGHT UKRAINE



## *“Tired of being divided”*

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in Europe



## **1. Goal:** ***Conceptual discussion outside the box***

The main reason for developing different scenarios for "Foresight Ukraine"<sup>1</sup> was to come up with four plausible future trajectories for the country. Scenarios are not intended to predict the future, but rather indicate different possible developments. This intellectual exercise offers the advantage of making up for the usual lack of imagination displayed by politicians, and of forcing all of us to think about the long term. Developing scenarios requires an intense, continuous dialogue among participants, entailing a productive exchange of commonplace as well as outside-the-box ideas.

After building the scenarios, our task was then to present the results in different European and North American cities and to engage decision makers and experts from Russia, countries of the EU and the Eastern Partnership, as well as Americans, in a debate about the future of Ukraine while forcing them to move outside the usual parameters for such discussions. The aim has been to encourage a focused conceptual discussion on the topic in order to reverse the prevailing trend towards "Ukraine fatigue", while providing realistic options for improving the situation in and around Ukraine. After a strong concentration of attention on Ukrainian developments in the period 2014–2015, interest in Ukrainian affairs has since abated due to the permanent deadlock in the Minsk and Normandy processes as well as the lack of any substantial breakthrough in Ukraine's domestic development.

## **2. Procedure:** ***Ukrainian state and society – the main factors in four scenarios***

A multi-national group of experts was involved in the scenario-building exercise: Oleksandr Chalyi (Grant Thornton, Kyiv), Samuel Charap (RAND Corporation, Washington), Balazs Jarabik (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Bratislava), Andrey Kortunov (Russian International Affairs

Council, Moscow), Reinhard Krumm (FES Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe, Vienna), Simon Weiss (FES Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe, Vienna), Gwendolyn Sasse (Centre for East European and International Studies, Berlin), Oleksiy Semeni, (Institute for Global Transformations, Kyiv). A rigorous methodology was used to produce results. In two workshops, one in Potsdam in April 2016 and the second in Vienna in October 2016, the participants discussed and evaluated a variety of approximately 75 variables that would determine Ukraine's future. Each variable was judged based on its importance and its impact. By process of elimination, the participants decided upon two main variables: the strength/weakness of the Ukrainian state and the cohesion/lack of cohesion of Ukrainian society. The two variants of each variable formed the axes in a 2 x 2 scenario matrix. The group decided not to include the Russian factor as a variable because it was unlikely to vary much during the period under consideration. This produced the following four scenarios, which we have personified with certain behavioural types:

### **1. "Activist"** (based on strong social cohesion and weak state capacity)

This scenario is a positive one positing a close partnership with Western institutions such as the EU or NATO without actual Ukrainian membership in such. It is based on a continuation of decentralisation and anti-corruption policies implemented along the "activist" axis by civil society actors and social movements. This much-needed decentralisation is pushed by society.

### **2. "Ascendant"** (based on strong social cohesion and strong state capacity)

This most positive scenario is founded on successful government performance and a willingness not only to modernise the economy by trade with the EU and Russia, but also to transform the political system in the direction of instituting checks and balances. The country is moving away from a strong presidential towards a parliamentary system. In this scenario, rapprochement between Ukraine and its neighbours is essential.

<sup>1</sup>Four scenarios for the development of Ukraine, Scenario Group Ukraine 2027 - Vienna, 2017, ISBN 978-3-95861-943-2, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/wien/13723.pdf>



### 3. **"Adversary"** (based on weak social cohesion and weak state capacity)

This is the most negative scenario, hypothesising a high degree of militarisation, failed reform processes and a divided national identity. The result is disastrous, with Ukraine being perceived internationally as a battleground for domestic and regional factions. Society is split along the lines of radicals and moderates with antagonistic identities. The only trusted state institution among the population is the military.

### 4. **"Administrator"** (based on weak social cohesion and strong state capacity)

This is the technocratic scenario, which is not unfamiliar to most people in the country. This narrative is based on the desire of Ukrainians for stability and prosperity under a strong leadership. Priorities are social policy, improved health care and the pension system. Membership in Western alliances is not a priority.

## 3. Discussion and Feedback:

"Foresight Ukraine" with its four scenarios was presented in eleven cities altogether. In Ukraine these were Kyiv, Lviv, Mariupol and the town of Sartana, which is located in the immediate vicinity of the line of contact, as well as Berlin, Brussels, Moscow, Ottawa, Prague and Washington, D.C. The main takeaways of the discussions can be summarised as follows:

### 1. **"Administrator" approach as a way out**

According to the majority of those who participated in the discussions, the status quo Ukraine can be best characterised by scenario 3 (Adversary) or 4 (Administrator), or a combination of the two. Some participants suggested other names, for example calling 3 "Hell" and 4 "Business as usual". Others suggested "Yeltsin" for scenario 3 and "Putin" for scenario 4. Interestingly, scenario 4 was seen as the most probable one in the near future. Interpolating this finding with the previous one could lead to the very surprising conclusion that an administrator such as the Russian President Putin would be

a possible option for Ukraine. Such a desire for a "strong hand" is not uncommon in post-Soviet countries.

Most Ukrainians who participated in the discussions stated that the positive scenarios 1 and 2 are both very attractive but not feasible "because we do not know how to reach them". Others suggested a fifth scenario, which could be termed "muddling through". In general, the most likely – and perhaps not the worst scenario – was seen to be the "Administrator". He or she will be able to improve social standards, guarantee stability and start building the framework for prosperity. Civil society was seen as very important and as the spark in the Maidan uprising, but a strong state is still preferred as the foundation for reforms. The word "khozyaystvennik" was mentioned, denoting a strong leader with a top-down approach.

## 2. Concentrating on Ukraine is important

Even though many participants in the discussions criticised the absence of Russian foreign policy in the two variables used to create the scenarios, the importance of Ukraine's relying on its own strength was mostly supported by the audiences. Even in the at times heated debates that took place in Ukraine, speakers drew attention to the value of scenarios based on the Ukrainian state and Ukrainian society. "We are responsible for our own future", was how one state official put it. And, he added, Ukraine has to act accordingly. Other participants agreed, pointing out the importance of a diversified economy, the rule of law and democracy. One overall statement was that the scenarios oriented around domestic factors "provoke good discussions". One of the main challenges identified in the discussions is that the pre-2014 political-economic system in Ukraine is gone, but no new one has emerged.

The overall mood of self-reliance is backed up by the opinion poll "Security Radar 2019 – Wake-up call for Europe!" published by the FES Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe in 2019. Some 63% of Ukrainians are of the opinion that the conflict in and around Ukraine is a domestic matter and should be left to Ukraine. One of the reasons for looking towards its own strength, according to the discussions, is the perceived changes in



the European Union. It was noted that economic strength and political unity are difficult to sustain in times of geopolitical competition. Divisions in the EU are clearly emerging, and this was held to have a negative impact on Ukraine's association with Western alliances such as the EU or NATO.

### 3. Transformation fatigue

Almost a quarter of a century of political, economic and social transformation following independence – the period from the collapse of the Soviet Union to the so-called "Revolution of Dignity" – could be considered a long time for any polity to accept. But seeking another transformation now, possibly one that could last just as long, as Ukraine is now doing, places considerable additional stress and strain on society: "We have been engaging in constant reform efforts for over 25 years, which is very difficult for society and the economic system." This criticism was mentioned a couple of times. People are growing weary of reforms; they want to see results.

At first glance, the fact that many people in Ukraine were positively inclined toward the fourth scenario would perhaps appear somewhat counterintuitive. It became clear, however, that this is a product of the travails faced by the population in the wake of Euromaidan, characterised by economic crisis, mass out-migration and armed conflict in the Donbas, while there is a desire for restoration of a stable order such as that which prevailed before the period of revolution and war that began in 2014. The people of Ukraine are becoming increasingly disenchanted with the current situation and are longing for a sustainable breakthrough towards a more secure and prosperous future.

### 4. Russia

In almost every discussion, participants voiced their concern that the peaceful modernisation of Ukraine will be very difficult if not impossible without some sort of agreement or understanding with Russia. The options for Ukraine are not good. As long as the war rages in the Donbas, normal relations will not be possible. But the war renders the reform process that is getting much more difficult, by draining the state's coffers, radicalising and polarising society, and disrupting commerce with Russia.

Serving as a bridge between the EU and Russia is not in the interest of Ukraine "because no one wants to live on or under a bridge". This metaphor was used to describe a possible economic and political model for Central Eastern European countries in the nineties, but this is no longer an option, according to the Ukrainian participants. Thus, there is either a clear Western orientation, which was favoured in most discussion rounds, or a constant balancing between the West and Russia, which did not receive very much support in any of the discussions. One participant mentioned that "Ukrainians are tired of being divided by East and West". Ukraine is one country, but quite large by European standards, with many nuances and differences. This fact was emphasised in the discussion in Mariupol, where the central government was criticised for not doing enough, whereby Russia was regarded neither as a saviour nor as an evil empire.

## 4. Three take-aways

### 1. Need for social improvement

Reform fatigue is very prominent among Ukrainians. Very ambitious scenarios such as "Ascendant" or "Activist" are seen as very desirable, but unachievable. People's daily lives need to be improved, and time is running out. For the sake of so many Ukrainians, much would be gained if external players would concentrate more on social policy and on laying the foundation for the rule of law.

Although the "Administrator" scenario was considered more realistic by the majority of participants, this does not mean that there was no support for the more ambitious "Ascendant" and "Activist" scenarios. There was widespread support, but equally widespread scepticism, mainly because of a lack of trust in state institutions.

### 2. Relying on its own capabilities

In general, the majority of the participants, whether from the east or the west of the country, are aware of the fact that their future depends on themselves, rather than on possible membership in the EU or NATO. As positively as both organisations are viewed in general – the EU more so than NATO –



substantial improvement in Ukrainians' personal lives will come from their own initiative.

Despite the difficult environment, foremost the conflict in and around Ukraine, the Ukrainian participants in almost all the discussions we had in that country are realistic about their future and willing to participate in making the reforms a success. It was in the discussions outside Ukraine that the future of the country was seen as more strongly reliant on outside support.

### **3. Prudent but tangible support from outside**

Given recent developments in the wake of the presidential elections, the call for self-reliance and for less dependence on other states or foreign organisations can frequently be heard, especially from those in central and eastern Ukraine. This aligns very closely with the core base of Zelenskiy votes cast in the first round of the presidential elections. Here outside actors such as the EU should be seen as facilitators providing the Ukrainian state and Ukrainian society the instruments with which to build their Ukrainian dream. A Ukrainian "success story" is urgently needed and is being called for, both inside, but also outside, the country.

The EU should be aware that in 2019 the Ukrainian dream is being built in different times than the dreams of Central-Eastern European states like Poland or Hungary in the 1990s. Back then, the Zeitgeist was conducive to an expansion of the EU at all costs, while today it is leaning more towards avoiding expansion at all costs. Still, the orientation towards the EU and full implementation of the Association Agreement should be supported by every means. At the same time, the EU should be open and fair towards Ukraine and its people in terms of what they can expect from Brussels and what they cannot. And Ukraine should not be instrumentalised by EU Member States for their own devices.

## ***FES ROCPE in Vienna***

The goal of the FES Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe (FES ROCPE) of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Vienna is to come to terms with the challenges to peace and security in Europe since the collapse of the Soviet Union a quarter of a century ago. These issues should be discussed primarily with the countries of Eastern Europe – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – and with Russia, as well as with the countries of the EU and with the US. The security order of Europe, based until recently on the Helsinki Final Act (1975) and the Paris Charter (1990), is under threat. This is, among others, a result of different perceptions of the development of international relations and threats over the last 25 years, resulting in divergent interests among the various states.

For these reasons, FES ROCPE supports the revival of a peace and security dialogue and the development of new concepts in the spirit of a solution-oriented policy. The aim is to bring scholars and politicians from Eastern Europe, Russia, the EU and the US together to develop a common approach to tackle these challenges, to reduce tensions and to aim towards conflict resolution. It is our belief that organisations such as the FES have the responsibility to come up with new ideas and to integrate them into the political process in Europe.

We support the following activities:

- Regional and international meetings for developing new concepts on cooperation and peace in Europe;
- A regional network of young professionals in the field of cooperation and peace in Europe;
- Cooperation with the OSCE in the three dimensions: the politico-military, the economic and the human.

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