



## **MONTHLY FOREIGN MEDIA MONITORING REVIEW**

**(09 March – 13 April)**

*Infographics included*

**Kyiv 2015**

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*- This report is a review of COSA's four weekly overviews of top foreign media resources, official statements of world leaders, international think tanks reports as well as social media information coverage on the Ukrainian crisis issue. A media content analysis helps understanding the current international community's position towards the largest regional conflict since the Cold World. The monthly review as well as the weekly overviews is structured by countries that have substantial influence on the Ukrainian crisis resolution + EU.*

### USA

Throughout the whole period under review, there was a consistent policy with regard to the Russia-Ukraine crisis in the US media. Starting from 9 March 2015, the Washington's discussions on the supply of lethal defence weapons to Ukraine began, however President Barack Obama did not support that decision of the Republicans, limiting to the supply of military aid package to Ukraine including Humvees and small aerial drones.

During the period from 19 March to 25 March, the Pentagon Chief Ashton Carter suggested that the United States, NATO and the EU should provide Ukraine with arms in response to the ongoing actions in the east of the country. However, the US government insisted on keeping sanctions only.

The next week, the US claimed that the result of the sanctions was difficult to assess. Moreover, according to General Philip M. Breedlove, the inaction can become a serious destabilizing factor in the conflict. So, it was decided that the US will send their soldiers to Ukraine in order to conduct training of the Ukrainian National Guard.

In the result, in the beginning of the period under review the level of the US authorities' decisiveness towards resolution of conflict in the east of Ukraine can be described as **“below average”**, and **at the end of the period it became “above average”** due to the decision of sending soldiers, however **it still remains not high** because of absence of open lethal weapons deliveries.

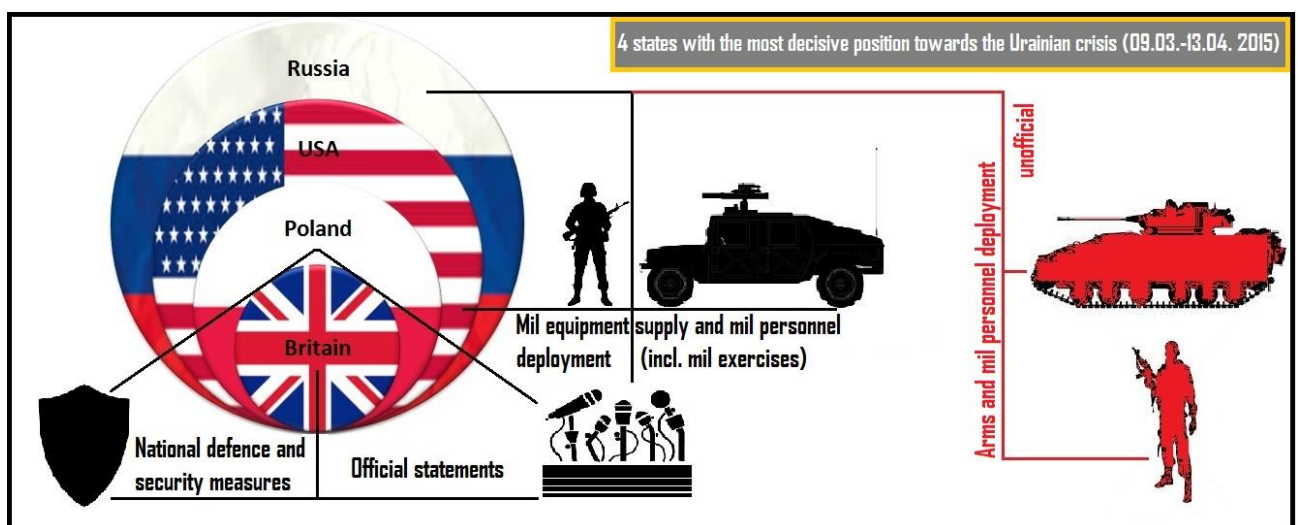
### Russian Federation

Throughout the period under review, the media of the Russian Federation was representing an **unabated interest in the conflict in Ukrainian Donbas**. Throughout this period, Russian authorities were urging Kyiv to withdraw its arms from a conflict line and follow the Minsk agreements.

However, if we compare the statements of Russian authorities in March and April, it becomes obvious that the rhetoric has shifted towards the concrete demands from Kyiv. If at the beginning of the period the vague statements towards resolution of conflict dominated in Russian media, then, starting from 21 March, the particular steps were announced. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov called Ukrainian authorities to implement the Law on special status for Donbas “immediately.” A week later, President Vladimir Putin urged Ukrainian authorities to pay pensions and benefits to the population of Donbas, and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov urged Europe to influence Kyiv regarding the resolution of the crisis which includes steps already mentioned by Russian authorities.

Thus, taking into account the involvement of the Russian military (who are officially declared as volunteers) in the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, we can say that **Ukrainian issue has been extremely important for Russian media**, and the **decisiveness of the government of the Russian Federation can be described as “sufficiently high”** (especially regarding the informal participation of the Russian military).

Moreover, such an active participation of the Russian Federation in the conflict is expected by the West – naturally, in the event of realization of the pessimistic scenario of further escalation of the conflict.



Infographics by COSA

## EU

As the foreign media monitoring review was conducted a month after “Normandy Four” negotiations in Minsk, most of the **European media sources considered Ukrainian conflict primarily in relation to the implementation of the signed peace agreement on February 12.** There is clear evidence that the EU was not consolidated in its further foreign policy towards the crisis over Ukraine. It is tracked through the member states’ fluctuate strength of claims in respect to Russia. The key issue for discussions remained the EU’s impact tools, in particular the economic sanctions against Russia. EU governments were divided on whether

to act now to renew sanctions on Russia which expire in July or to wait several months before taking a decision to see if the Ukraine ceasefire holds.

Analysis of four weekly media monitoring reports indicates that the EU member countries were permanent in their positions towards the Ukrainian crisis despite their separate state-members governments' degree of loyalty to Russia's policy. Therefore, if the particular country's authority was deemed to be more loyal before the conflict in Ukraine, it continued its "pro-Russian policy" afterwards. Russia's aggression slightly influenced the EU states' decisions. However, the EU common foreign policy rules and its decision-making process impacted the positions of these countries, in particular as regards to the voting. The European media articles suggested that while Britain, Poland and the Baltic states took a tough line, many other EU members, including Italy, Spain, Austria, Cyprus, Hungary, and Slovakia were sceptical about sanctions. Furthermore, Polish analysts think if there is no any escalation of the conflict on the East of Ukraine till June, it is highly likely to expect further pressure from the EU countries that are loyal to Russia promoting to abolish the imposed sanctions.

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini evaluated the ceasefire as "not perfect" but improving. As a result, most EU foreign ministers pinned their hopes on the latest Minsk agreement succeeding and were convinced the EU should only consider tightening sanctions if the ceasefire was seriously violated, such as by a separatist offensive on the Ukrainian port of Mariupol. "No easing of sanctions until Russia had fulfilled all of its commitments under Minsk". It was another key statement repeated by the EU chief diplomat during the last month. In addition, the **EU leaders called on the EU's foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini to draw up a strategy to counter Russian attempts to spread "disinformation" about the crisis.**

### United Kingdom

Britain following the EU's common foreign policy strategy, supported firmly Ukraine and seemed to be **ready for further steps in case of any escalation of Ukraine-Russia conflict in Donbas**. In particular, British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond was more decisive than other EU diplomats in his statements. He claimed that Russia could one day pose as great a threat to Britain's security as it did during the Cold War. Additionally, Britain's defence secretary Michael Fallon considered Russian president as great a danger to Europe as "Islamic State". Furthermore, the UK was the first EU country to state that there was violation of the Minsk II agreement in the mid of March when Britain's U.N. Ambassador Mark Lyall Grant appealing to the peace deal provisions said that "Russia committed to releasing all prisoners, but yet Ms Savchenko and many others remained in captivity".

Only part of the EU states is conscious of the scope of Russia's threat to the European countries. **The UK is one of the most decisive** in that context. For example, UK's concerns in regards to the security issue are related not only to the conflict on the territory of Ukraine

but to its national threat as well. Britain's diplomats make it clear for Russia that their country is ready to defend its territory. For instance, a large bi-annual military exercise was set to take place across various UK locations in the week 6-13 April, involving the Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Airforce.

## Germany

During the period 9 March 2015 – 13 April 2015, the media in Germany was not representing much of harsh statements in regard to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Chancellor Angela Merkel for the most part advocated the peaceful settlement of the conflict, as well as the financial assistance at the end of the period (that can be described as **increasing of the interest towards Ukraine**).

In general, the **Ukrainian issue was raised less frequently in the media of Germany**, compared to the United States and the Russian Federation. This can illustrate the unwillingness of Germany to upset relations with Russia. What is more, that can be proved by the assumption made by Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier in regard to possible Russia's returning to the G8 which means maintaining the status of the Russian Federation as a strategic partner for Germany.

Thus, the **decisiveness of German authorities can be described as "low"**.

## Poland

Poland as well as Britain is among the least of EU members to keep on condemning the annexation of Crimea in their official statements. For example, on March 27 Poland's President called Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula as the "first forceful annexation of a European country's territory since World War Two" and accused Russia of "throwing a challenge to European order and security". Furthermore, Polish president Bronislaw Komarowski stated in the end of March about the necessity of a new transatlantic strategy in response to the challenges posed by Russia, and stressed during his visit to Kyiv on April 9-10 that "changes of the borders of Ukraine will never be accepted". What is more, **Polish officials are firm in their position towards Russia's aggression**: "Russian tanks, armoured vehicles and heavy weapons are not invisible in Donbas. The West should recognise that fact".

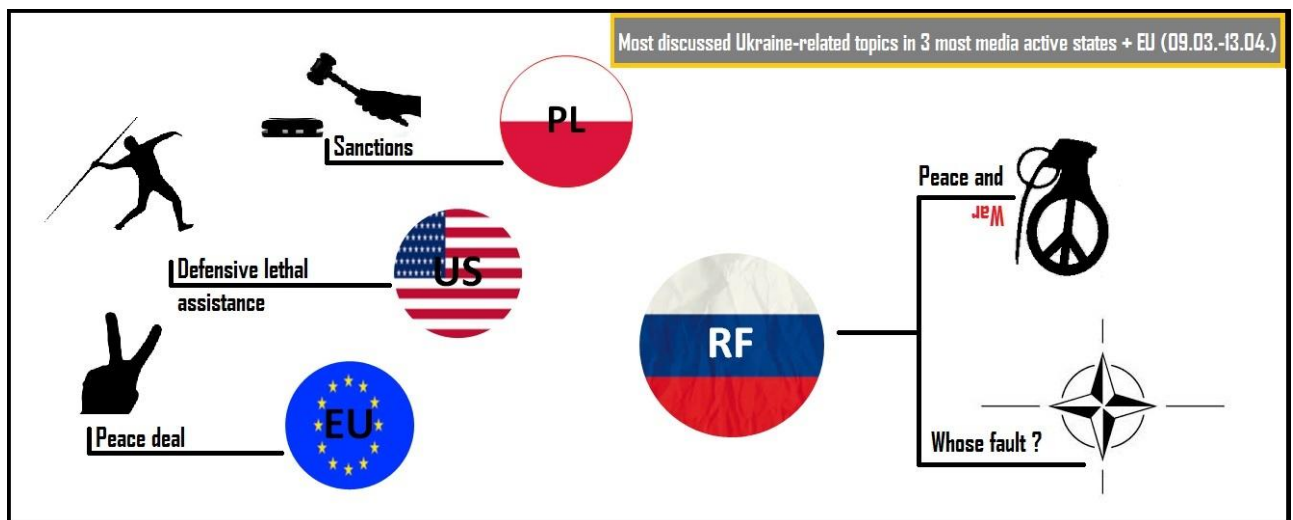
One of the base lines in Polish rhetoric throughout the period under review was the implementation and keeping the **sanctions against Russia on the current or higher level**.

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Evaluating the **rate of interest to the Ukrainian issue** during the last month it can be stated the Ukrainian conflict was more frequently discussed in March than in first half of April. The

deaths of six Ukrainian servicemen killed in separatist attacks on April, 5 as well as the silencing of a TV station for the Tatar people in Crimea, annexed by Russia from Ukraine a year ago, on April 3 was condemned by the media. But, most publications in that period were concerned about the further gas talks between Russia and Ukraine in regards to the EU energy security issue. In addition, media was focused on the security issue of Baltic States in case of Russia's further military aggression towards Europe. Even **new "Normandy four" meeting of foreign ministers on April 13 in Berlin had no high but moderate interest in the media**. Furthermore, no official statements by EU chief diplomats regarding the Ukrainian conflict were made since postponing of Federica Mogherini and Jean-Claude Juncker's visit to Ukraine on March 30.

Therefore, the Ukrainian conflict seems not to be the top EU's foreign policy issue to solve as it was claimed several months ago. EU countries continue insisting on the strict implementation of Minsk II peace deal and do not propose any alternative steps for the solution of the conflict in the East of Ukraine. In particular, the EU monitoring mission to Ukraine was supposed to be discussed during the last Berlin negotiations in "Normandy format" including the EU representatives but it was not.



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