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### Georgia's and Ukraine's Cooperation With NATO: Past, Status Quo and Future Perspective

Georgia and Ukraine have the strongest institutional, legal, and practical ties to NATO among post-Soviet states. The progressive strengthening of relations with the North Atlantic Alliance is a means for both nations to attain a future strategic objective in this direction – NATO membership. Georgia and Ukraine are implementing reforms for this purpose, displaying their dedication to democratic society's guiding ideals. Furthermore, governments are making systematic efforts to conform to Alliance military standards.

Russia's growing hostility is a major impediment to Georgia and Ukraine joining NATO. The events of the war in August 2008 and the war on Ukrainian territory, which began in 2014, demonstrate that the Kremlin is willing to engage in open military aggression to prevent Georgia and Ukraine from joining NATO.

The Kremlin's geopolitical goals have been severely hampered by Russia's large-scale conflict with Ukraine. But, despite significant help from Western governments to the Ukrainian state, including military aid, the question of Ukraine's and Georgia's participation in NATO remains open.

**Keywords:** Georgia, Ukraine, NATO, cooperation, membership perspective.

### Співпраця Грузії та України з НАТО: минуле, сучасний стан та перспективи

Україна та Грузія вкрай зацікавлені у вступі до альянсу, що відображено у їхніх ключових зовнішньополітичних документах. Обидві країни пережили низку втрат, зумовлених як військовими діями, так і різноманітними видами гібридної війни, породженої агресивними кроками з боку Російської Федерації.

Україна та Грузія віддані курсу на вступ до НАТО, оскільки серед їхніх правлячих еліт існує переконання, що гарантією суверенітету та територіальної цілісності обох держав є підтримка та допомога з боку євроатлантичної спільноти. Відповідно, керівництво обох держав усвідомлює важливість подальшого виконання рекомендацій з боку офіційного Брюсселя з метою підвищення обороноздатності до відповідності стандартам НАТО.

Грузія ще на початку ХХІ ст. заявила про готовність на державному рівні виконати всі вимоги для вступу до НАТО і в 2002 році були внесені відповідні зміни в грузинське законодавство. У 2002 р. про членство в НАТО як стратегічну зовнішньополітичну мету заявило також керівництво України. Щоправда, у наступні роки в міру різних причин, в українській зовнішній політиці можна відзначити коливання від прозахідного до проросійського курсів. Це мало свій негативний вплив для євроатлантичного шляху України.

Вступ до Північноатлантичного альянсу – це добра можливість для Грузії та України реалізувати дієву оборонну політику та зробити внесок у захист миру та регіональної стабільності у Східній Європі та Південному Кавказі. Водночас, опір з боку Росії в цьому контексті є суттєвим стримуючим фактором на шляху Грузії та України до НАТО. Події Серпневої війни та війни на українських територіях, починаючи з 2014 р., свідчить про те, що Кремль заради недопущення входження Грузії та України до НАТО готовий до відкритої військової агресії. Широкомасштабна війна Росії проти України завдала вагомому удару по геополітичних амбіціях Кремля. Водночас попри суттєву, в тому числі військову допомогу для української держави з боку західних держав, питання її членства в НАТО так само як і Грузії залишається відкритим.

**Ключові слова:** Грузія, Україна, НАТО, співпраця, перспективи щодо членства.

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Russia's leadership is using all possible methods to prevent Georgia and Ukraine from approaching the Euro-Atlantic bloc. Accordingly, despite the long journey of both Georgians and Ukrainians, the question of their country's membership in NATO remains open. At the same time, the exceptional importance of the problem outlined in the title of the article for both people determines the relevance of the chosen topic.

Since the ascension of Vladimir Putin to power in Russia, the Russian government has intensified its efforts to expand its geopolitical influence. To attain this objective, it is necessary to establish control over the so-called "near abroad". In this regard, the countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus are having a special place.

The Kremlin applied a variety of strategies to achieve its objectives, including the promotion of "Russian peace", trade conflicts, and energy coercion. When suitable tactics failed to produce the intended outcomes, the Russian leadership resorted to armed force. Georgia and Ukraine are among the victims of Russia's imperial ambitions, along with several other nations. Georgians and Ukrainians have opted for the European development model out of fidelity to democratic principles. Along the way, Georgia and Ukraine have encountered several challenges that Russia is attempting to maintain within its sphere of influence. Georgians and Ukrainians know that joining key Western organizations is the best way to escape official Moscow's pressure. Membership in NATO is crucial in this regard. The NATO membership itself is currently the most effective tool for maintaining the security of European nations. The Russian government is employing all available means to prevent Georgia and Ukraine from joining the Euro-Atlantic bloc. Consequently, despite the long journeys of both Georgians and Ukrainians, the subject of their countries' NATO membership remains unanswered. At the same time, the relevance of the chosen issue is determined by the special significance of the problem mentioned in the article's title to both populations.

Among the authors who study the problems covered in the article, special attention deserves V. Horbulin<sup>2</sup>, S. Dzherdzh<sup>3</sup>, S. Fedunyak<sup>4</sup>, H. Perepelytsia<sup>5</sup>, O. Potekhin<sup>6</sup>, A. Rondeli<sup>7</sup>, T. Sharashenidze<sup>8</sup>, G. Tarkhan-Mouravi<sup>9</sup>, I. Todorov<sup>10</sup> and M. Tsereteli<sup>11</sup>. Based on the work of famous research-

<sup>2</sup> Горбулін, В. (2004), Стратегія взаємовідносин України з НАТО: ретроспективний огляд. *Україна-НАТО*, № 1, с. 4-16; Горбулін, В. (2017), *Світова гібридна війна. Український фронт*. Харків, Фоліо, 496 с.

<sup>3</sup> Джердж, С. (2007), *Україна – НАТО: співробітництво заради безпеки*. Київ, Товариство «Знання» України, 96 р.

<sup>4</sup> Федуняк, С. (2012), Перспективи позаблоковості України у контексті сучасних тенденцій у сфері безпеки. *Актуальні проблеми міжнародних відносин*, № 111, р. 32-36.

<sup>5</sup> Перепелиця, Г. (2001), Вступ до НАТО як результат євроатлантичного вибору України. *Економічний часопис*, № 6. р. 29-30.

<sup>6</sup> Потехін, О. (2017), НАТО і європейська стабільність Частина 3. Ядерне стримування. *Зовнішні справи*, №3, р. 10-15

<sup>7</sup> Rondeli, A. (2000), Security Problems in the Caucasus in: *The Caspian Sea: A Quest for Environmental Security, NATO Science Series book series: 2, ASEN2*, vol. 67, p 125-134; Rondeli, A. (2012), A view from Tbilisi. *European Security*, 21(1), p. 122-127.

<sup>8</sup> შარაშენიძე თ. (2015), *დობრომეტობს ისტორია*, available at: <https://gipa.ge/eng/list/show/510-Presentation-of-Tornike-Sharashenidzes-new-book--The-History-of-Diplomacy> (accessed 26.04.2022); Sharashenidze T. (2019), *Too normal? Georgia, democracy, and the 'Gavrilov crisis'*, available at: <https://ecfr.eu/profile/tornike-sharashenidze/> (accessed 27.04.2022).

<sup>9</sup> Tarkhan-Mouravi, G. (2016), External Political Actors and Influences in the South Caucasus. *Sociology and Anthropology*, Vol. 4(8), p. 698-709; Tarkhan-Mouravi, G., Leszczenko, L. (2019), Cykl polityczny w społeczeństwie w czasach transformacji. Przypadek Gruzji. *Sprawy Międzynarodowe*, 72 (1), p. 157-173.

<sup>10</sup> Тодоров, І. (2018), Річна національна програма як інструмент євроатлантичної інтеграції України. *UA: Ukraine Analytica*, 4 (14), p. 28-33.

<sup>11</sup> Tsereteli, M. (2010), *New Strategic Realities in the Black Sea/Caspian Region*, Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, available at: <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/11998-analytical-articles-cacianalyst-2010-2-17-art-11998.html> (accessed 19.04.2022); Tsereteli M. (2018), *The West Should Stand Stronger With Georgia*, Atlantic Council, available at: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/the-west-should-stand-stronger-with-georgia/> (accessed 21.IV.2022); Tsereteli, M. (2021), *Black Sea Connectivity and the South Caucasus*, available at: [https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/2021-03/Black%20Sea%20Connectivity%20and%20SC%20FINAL%20\\_0.pdf](https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/2021-03/Black%20Sea%20Connectivity%20and%20SC%20FINAL%20_0.pdf) (accessed 20.04.2022).

ers, we tried to show the way Georgia and Ukraine went through to confirm their aspirations to join the NATO allies' family as well as to compare the current status quo for both states in the context of integration into NATO and future membership perspectives.

Georgia and Ukraine are non-alliance members that contribute a lot both within peaceful operations of NATO and participate in quite a several educational and technical programs of the alliance. Countries are utterly interested in joining the alliance as it was mentioned in the foreign policy documents of both states and as it was several times declared by political leaders of Georgia and Ukraine.

Ukraine joined North Atlantic Cooperation Council as soon as regained independence in 1991 and since then developed into one of the most substantial of NATO's partnerships<sup>12</sup>. Ukraine was the first member state of the Commonwealth of the Independent States which in 1994 joined the Partnership for Peace<sup>13</sup>. Georgia took the same path and joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1992<sup>14</sup> and two years later joined Partnership for Peace. Later on, Georgia turned into the country with the largest military contingent in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operation in Afghanistan among non-state countries<sup>15</sup>. The next step for both states was marked by the year 1997, when the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council brought together all Allies and partner countries in the Euro-Atlantic area, after signing the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership<sup>16</sup>.

Georgia declared its readiness at the state level to meet all the requirements for NATO membership at the beginning of the XXI century. In 2002 Georgian legislation was amended accordingly<sup>17</sup>. A year after Rose Revolution in 2003, when a new government initiated more ambitious reforms, Georgia became the first partner to develop an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO<sup>18</sup>.

In 2005, during his visit to Georgia, President George Bush said: "No country stood closer to Georgia than the US"<sup>19</sup>. Eleven years later Damon Wilson, Executive Vice President of the Atlantic Council mentioned that the military cooperation between the United States and Georgia would not have a place without the strong will and support of the Georgian government. As he stressed during the visit to Tbilisi: "We have not seen any other country that has such a strong relationship before its membership in NATO"<sup>20</sup>. If it comes to the NATO-Ukraine Commission – was established 9 years earlier than in Georgia, namely, in 1997, while in Georgia NATO-Georgia Commission was created after Russia invaded Georgian territory in 2008<sup>21</sup>.

In the case of Ukraine, the beginning of the XXI century in the sense of Euro-Atlantic integration was a very ambiguous period. The situation in Ukraine changed several times diametrically not only due to the ruling elite change but as well due to the amendment of the approach towards NATO itself. In general, at the beginning of the XXI century relations between Ukraine and NATO were influenced

<sup>12</sup> NATO, Relations with Ukraine, 11.03.2022, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_37750.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm) (accessed 29.04.2022).

<sup>13</sup> NATO Ukraine. A Distinctive Partnership. 2007, available at: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2007\\_06/20090304\\_nato-ukraine2007-e.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2007_06/20090304_nato-ukraine2007-e.pdf) (accessed 28.04.2022).

<sup>14</sup> Relations with Georgia. 12.04.2022, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_38988.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_38988.htm), (accessed 26.04.2022).

<sup>15</sup> NATO, Relations with Georgia, 12.04.2022, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_38988.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_38988.htm) (accessed 30.04.2022).

<sup>16</sup> Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Ukraine. 04.03.2009, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_25457.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25457.htm) (accessed 10.04.2022).

<sup>17</sup> საქართველოს პარლამენტის დადგენილება, საქართველოს ჩრდილოატლანტიკური ხელშეკრულების ორგანიზაციაში (ნატოში) გაწევრიანების პროცესის დაწყების შესახებ. 13.09.2002, available at: <https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/41536?publication=0> (accessed 28.04.2022).

<sup>18</sup> NATO-Georgia Cooperation. N. d., available at: <https://mod.gov.ge/en/page/38/nato-georgia-cooperation> (accessed 29.04.2022).

<sup>19</sup> Bush praises Georgian democracy. 10.05.2005, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4531273.stm> (accessed 10.02.2022).

<sup>20</sup> უილსონი დ. (2016), ვარშავის სამიტზე არსებითი ცვლილებები მოსალოდნელი არ არის, available at: <http://www.amerikiskhma.com/a/damon-wilson-on-joint-drills-and-nato/3329345.html> (accessed 23.04.2022).

<sup>21</sup> NATO-Georgia Cooperation. N. d., available at: <https://mod.gov.ge/en/page/38/nato-georgia-cooperation> (accessed 29.04.2022).

by the so-called “Cassette Scandal” and accusations of the Ukrainian leadership by the United States in the sale to Iraq Kolchuga passive sensor<sup>22</sup>.

At the same time, in 2002, in several official documents, official Kyiv declared that Ukraine was moving toward NATO and intended to become a member of the North Atlantic Alliance in the future<sup>23</sup>. Already in 2004, the provision on Ukraine's aspirations to join NATO was included in the “Military Doctrine of Ukraine”. Simultaneously, official Kyiv took practical steps toward NATO. Therefore, in 2003, a Ukrainian peacekeeping contingent was sent to Iraq, which remained there until the end of 2005. In the second half of 2004, due to Ukraine's closer cooperation with Russia, the Ukrainian leadership briefly deviated from its stated goals, and only after the election of Viktor Yushchenko in 2005 performed another stage of rapprochement toward NATO.

In many ways, 2008 was a landmark for NATO-Ukraine-Georgia relations. It was in early April 2008, when the NATO Bucharest Summit took place. In the frame of the summit was considered the issue of providing Ukraine and Georgia with the Membership Action Plan. Despite the United States' support, several Western European countries, led by Germany and France, have opposed it. They argued that providing Ukraine and Georgia with the relevant document would be detrimental to the balance of power in Europe and would negatively affect relations with Russia. The position of these countries has not changed even after the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008 and moreover after Russia's official recognition of the “independence” of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. After a short break, in March 2009 the North Atlantic Alliance resumed full-fledged cooperation with Russia<sup>24</sup>.

According to the authors of the study “A Western Strategy for the South Caucasus”: “Western powers further damaged their interests in this period by continuing to pay lip service to the Russian led “peacekeeping missions” in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and by failing to respond to the blatant transformation of Russia as well as its “peacekeepers” into a direct party to the conflicts”<sup>25</sup>. Even though during the summit in Bucharest Heads of Government of Allie states agreed that Georgia will become a member of NATO<sup>26</sup>, which was reconfirmed during the next NATO summits in 2009, 2010, and 2012<sup>27</sup> in practice this had no practical consequences.

Notwithstanding the active involvement of both Georgia and Ukraine in processes of integration and the positioning of the state in the international arena, infringed territorial integrity represents the major threat to Georgia's and Ukraine's statehood. Hence, this represents the main task of foreign policy for both states: to ensure active involvement of the international community in the process of peaceful resolution of the conflicts on Georgian and Ukrainian territories, aimed at restoration of territorial integrity. The last is clearly shown in the State Strategy on Occupied Territories of Georgia<sup>28</sup> and in the case of Ukraine<sup>29</sup> – represented within the concept of Temporarily Occupied Territories of

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<sup>22</sup> Гурак, І. (2018), Республіка Польща як один із ключових партнерів України на міжнародній арені. *Sprawy Międzynarodowe*, tom LXXI, Nr. 3, p. 207.

<sup>23</sup> Послання Президента України до Верховної Ради України. Європейський вибір. Концептуальні засади стратегії економічного та соціального розвитку України на 2002-2011 роки. 30.04.2002, available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/n0001100-02#Text> (accessed 27.01.2022); Постанова Верховної ради України. Про Рекомендації парламентських слухань про взаємовідносини та співробітництво України з НАТО. 21.11.2002, available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/233-IV#Text6> (accessed 27.01.2022).

<sup>24</sup> Гурак, І. (2016), Реакция НАТО на российскую агрессию в Украине: имитация сдерживания в контексте „политики умиротворения” или реальная деятельность. *Wschód Europy. Studia humanistyczne-społeczne*, vol. 2, Nr. 1, p. 133-134.

<sup>25</sup> Cornell S.E., Starr S.F., Tsereteli, M., (2015), A Western Strategy for the South Caucasus. *Silk Road Paper*, p. 23-24.

<sup>26</sup> Bucharest Summit Declaration, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008. 08.04.2008, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_8443.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm) (accessed 10.02.2022).

<sup>27</sup> NATO-Georgia Relations. 01.04.2014, available at: [nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2014\\_04/20140331\\_140401-media-background-georgia\\_en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2014_04/20140331_140401-media-background-georgia_en.pdf) (accessed 27.04.2022).

<sup>28</sup> State Strategy on Occupied Territories: Engagement Through Cooperation, Government of Georgia. N. d., available at: <http://www.civil.ge/files/files/SMR-Strategy-en.pdf> (accessed 28.09.2021).

<sup>29</sup> Тимчасово окуповані території. N. d., available at: <https://minre.gov.ua/section/tymchasovo-okupovani-terytoryi> (accessed 22.04.2022).

Ukraine and De-occupation plan of Donbas<sup>30</sup>.

Taking into consideration that significant attention during the Bucharest summit was paid to the institutional reforms in both states as well as to the democratic elections it has to be underlined that the states have invested enormous efforts to implement a whole range of complex reforms, which made both Georgia and Ukraine leading example of institutional transformation on the post-Soviet space.

Despite the fact that the institutional and legal framework for the dialogue between Brussels on the one hand and Kyiv and Tbilisi, on the other, did not change fundamentally in the following years, further cooperation with NATO includes essential support in the defense policy for both states. The substantial NATO-Georgia Package<sup>31</sup> aims to strengthen defense capabilities and support the security vision of the state<sup>32</sup> has to act as a catalyst for the realization of Georgia's defense reforms to promote regional stability in the South Caucasus. The cooperation within the military context between Ukraine and NATO has shaped in Annual National Programme for NATO – Ukraine cooperation<sup>33</sup>. Ukraine adopted both a national security strategy and a national military strategy, which systematized national strategic objectives and put down conditions for reforms in Ukraine<sup>34</sup>.

The presence of military conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine played a catalyst role in the context of understanding and defining the threat to their country's population. In the case of Georgia, this was manifested through a referendum. According to the Central Election Commission of Georgia during the referendum on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2008 – 77 percent answered positively to the question “do you support membership of Georgia in NATO”<sup>35</sup>. The part of the society that was against NATO membership, feel that membership would bring back a high risk of Russian aggression toward Georgia. But the majority of the population, as the referendum results show, sees the possibility to join NATO as the only solution to gaining security in Georgia<sup>36</sup>.

Significant growth in public support for Ukraine's accession to NATO has been observed since Russia seized Ukraine's Crimea and started hostilities in Donbas. In 2013, the level of public support for Ukraine's accession to NATO was only 18%. Right after the beginning of the Russian aggression, this figure reached almost 48%. According to statistics, during the following years, more than 40% of Ukrainians traditionally supported Ukraine's accession to NATO, but considering the background of Russia's preparations for the invasion in February 2022, the level of support reached 62%<sup>37</sup>.

In recent years the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the people of Georgia and Ukraine represent one of the factors that determine further progress in terms of democratization of the society of both countries. On the other hand, they determine the formation of new institutional foundations for cooperation between the countries and the Alliance. Thus, according to David Zalkaliani, in 2012 the parliamentary elections in Georgia and a year later, presidential elections allowed for a democratic transfer of power

<sup>30</sup> De-occupation plan called “Small Steps Mechanism”. N. d., available at: <https://mvs.gov.ua/ministry/projekti-mvs/deokupaciya-donbasu-1096> (accessed 26.04.2021).

<sup>31</sup> Substantial NATO-Georgia Package. N. d., available at: <https://mod.gov.ge/en/page/65/substantial-package> (accessed 26.04.2022).

<sup>32</sup> Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP). N. d., available at: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2016\\_02/20160303\\_160209-factsheet-sngp-full-eng.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_02/20160303_160209-factsheet-sngp-full-eng.pdf) (accessed 29.04.2022).

<sup>33</sup> Annual National Programme under the auspices of NATO-Ukraine Commission for 2020, Mission of Ukraine to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation 17.07.2020, available at: <https://nato.mfa.gov.ua/en/documents/annual-national-programme-under-auspices-nato-ukraine-commission-2018> (accessed 01.08.2021).

<sup>34</sup> Vergun, D. (2021), *Ukraine Making Progress on Defense Reforms*, available at: <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2648670/ukraine-making-progress-on-defense-reforms-official-says/> (accessed 27.04.2022).

<sup>35</sup> Report summarizing the results of the referendum on January 5, 2008. 15.01.2021, available at: <https://cesko.ge/geo/list/show/1167-saqartvelos-centraluri-saarchevno-komisiis-2008-wlis-5-ianvriv> (accessed 10.05.2022).

<sup>36</sup> გოგუა გ. (2018), *იპოვე შენი გვარი 1907 წლის პეტციში რუსეთის წინააღმდეგ*, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/ipove-sheni-gvari-peticiashi-rusetis-cinaagmdg/29127639.html?fbclid=IwAR2NyKOWW0tHsKb4bMHNJVkDSnkg4ytD4SJDdEEozwbUos3mbx-MuPutEiig#f> (accessed 21.04.2022).

<sup>37</sup> 30 років Незалежності: як змінювалося ставлення українців до членства в НАТО. 24.08.2021, available at: <https://www.slovoidilo.ua/2021/08/24/infografika/suspilstvo/30-rokiv-nezalezhnosti-yak-zmynivalosyavstavlennya-ukrayincziv-chlenstva-nato> (accessed 15.01.2022); Підтримка вступу України до НАТО найвища з 2014 року – “Рейтинг”. 17.02.2022, available at: <https://www.euointegration.com.ua/news/2022/02/17/7134181/> (accessed 25.03.2022).

under the rule of law<sup>38</sup>. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 2013 after intensive cooperation between governmental structures and non-governmental organizations of Georgia together with foreign experts' significant input was approved "Communication and Information Strategy of the Government of Georgia in the sphere of EU Integration for the period of 2014-2017"<sup>39</sup>. Later on, in frames of the given strategy were established "EU and NATO Information Centers"-s in the majority of state universities and/or local self-government. But though all states of the South Caucasus were engaged on the same level of membership via the Partnership for Peace program, Georgia was the most active in its attempts to grow closer to NATO<sup>40</sup>. In 2014 at the NATO Wales Summit, Georgia was recognized as the fifth NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner<sup>41</sup>.

In Ukraine, the Strategy for Communication of National Euro-Atlantic Integration Policy by Presidential Decree was approved in 2021<sup>42</sup>, which includes clear action and monitoring plans till 2025. On the level of non-governmental organizations earlier were created Center for Strategic Communications StratComm Ukraine<sup>43</sup> accordingly. In 2020 Ukraine was promoted to the status of "NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner" out of six Enhanced Opportunities Partners, alongside Georgia, Australia, Finland, Jordan, and Sweden<sup>44</sup>.

It is well known that, according to an unwritten rule, NATO distances itself from enlargement in countries that have unresolved territorial disputes or conflicts with neighboring countries. This principle is especially important when an aggressive state with nuclear weapons is involved in a dispute or conflict. The corresponding situation deprives both Georgia and Ukraine of hope for NATO membership in the nearest future. At the same time, in the context of Russia's large-scale aggression against Ukraine, we can speak about the end of the post-polar period of international relations, which was marked by the USSR's collapse. As a result of the war in Ukraine, no doubt, the new world order will be formed. In such situations, new international institutions emerge, and the fundamental principles of cooperation between international actors change. We are on the verge of significant changes and have to consider whether the transformation of the international system will open a window of opportunity for Ukraine, followed by Georgia, in terms of accession to the North Atlantic Alliance.

During the NATO summit on 24 March, 2022 and the meeting of Allied foreign ministers on 6-7 April 2022, the unity of the Allies, the "iron-clad" commitment to Article 5 was stressed, the Russian aggression against Ukraine were condemned. The demands were made on the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukrainian territory as well as emphasized support for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Ukraine. At the same time, despite the mentioning commitment to the open-door policy in the final statement of the summit in March, none of the meetings raised neither Ukraine's membership in the Alliance, nor anything related to the perspective of obtaining the Membership Action Plan<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> Zalkaliani, D. (2014), *Georgian Foreign Policy in a New Era. Russia, and Eurasia Programme Meeting Summary*, Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 4 p., available at: [https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/home/chatham/public\\_html/sites/default/files/20140318GeorgianForeignPolicyZalkaliani.pdf](https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/home/chatham/public_html/sites/default/files/20140318GeorgianForeignPolicyZalkaliani.pdf) (accessed 21.04.2022).

<sup>39</sup> Kintsurashvili, T. (2016), *Assessment of the EU Integration Communication and Information Strategy and its Action Plan of the Government of Georgia 2016. Survey Report*. Media development foundation, p. 20-31.

<sup>40</sup> Piergo, A. (2008), NATO Cooperation Towards South Caucasus. *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, no. 1, available at: [http://cria-online.org/2\\_7.html](http://cria-online.org/2_7.html) (accessed 25.04.2022).

<sup>41</sup> NATO-Georgia Cooperation. N. d., available at: <https://mod.gov.ge/en/page/38/nato-georgia-cooperation> (accessed 29.04.2022).

<sup>42</sup> Government approves draft Presidential Decree on Strategy for Communication of National Euro-Atlantic Integration Policy, 20.05.2021, available at: <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/uryad-shvaliv-proekt-ukazu-prezidenta-pro-strategiyu-komunikaciyi-derzhavnoyi-politiki-yevroatlantichnoyi-integraciyi> (accessed 23.04.2022).

<sup>43</sup> Centre for Strategic Communications StratCom Ukraine. N. d., available at: <https://stratcomua.org/en/about> (accessed 10.04.2022).

<sup>44</sup> NATO's Enhanced Opportunities Program for Ukraine, Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, 24.07.2020, available at: <https://www.mil.gov.ua/en/news/2020/07/24/natos-enhanced-opportunities-program-for-ukraine/> (accessed 03.05.2022).

<sup>45</sup> Statement by NATO Heads of State and Government. 24.03.2022, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_193719.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_193719.htm) (accessed 25.03.2022); NATO Allies agree to further strengthen and

Eight conversations between French President Francois Macron and President of the Russian Federation Putin on February 24-May 3, 2022, confirm the readiness of Western capitals to take into consideration the position of official Moscow, despite the criminal orders given by the Russian leadership and criminal actions committed by the Russian military in Ukraine<sup>46</sup>. Similarly, Hungary's ban on arms transportation to Ukraine through its territory<sup>47</sup> demonstrates that there is a high probability that one of the countries due to a variety of reasons, may use a veto for the NATO new member candidate. On the other hand, several facts indicate a fundamental transformation of the leading Western states' approaches to Eastern European policy. The agreement of Western European governments on the supply of heavy weapons to Ukraine can be a dominant marker here. Equally important is the agreement reached on the American base Ramstein by NATO member states and ten other countries on the provision of state-of-the-art NATO weapons for the needs of the Ukrainian army. As well as noteworthy is the adoption of the Lend Lease Act for Ukraine<sup>48</sup> by the United States<sup>49</sup>. Given facts prove de facto the formation of an anti-Russian coalition by Western countries, which focuses on military aid to Ukraine. Many experts agree that these developments are a significant step toward Ukraine's membership in NATO<sup>50</sup>.

An important signal to Georgia and Ukraine from NATO is its agreement for speedily accept Sweden and Finland. This development lets us assume that, under certain circumstances, both Georgia and Ukraine could gain membership in the Alliance fairly quickly. Therefore, at this stage, Georgians and Ukrainians need to get as close as possible to NATO standards, so that at a time when a situation will be favorable, to take advantage of the window of opportunity as quickly as possible.

Ukraine and Georgia are utterly interested in joining the alliance as it is mentioned in the foreign policy documents of the states. Both Ukraine and Georgia endured a series of deprivations, cyber-attacks, and various manifestations of hybrid warfare generated by the Russian Federation. Countries are committed to NATO membership, as there is a belief among their ruling elites that the Euro-Atlantic community's support and assistance is a guarantee of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both states. Accordingly, the leadership of both governments is aware of the importance of further recommendations implementation of official Brussels aiming to increase defense capabilities in line with NATO standards.

Both Georgia and Ukraine are following a path toward their pro-European future. Georgia declared readiness on the state level to complete all requirements to join the EU and amendments declared by Parliament were made in 2002. The government of Ukraine even provided amendments in the constitution, which clearly indicates the goal of state integration into the North Atlantic Alliance<sup>51</sup>, which represents an absolute readiness to reshape the institutional architecture and legislative framework of the state to provide strategic protection to its population. NATO's membership is a opportunity for Georgia and Ukraine to build substantial defense policies and contribute to the peace protection in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus.

Georgia and Ukraine have shoved a big progress in the context of both states' institutional transformation, implementation of a significant number of reforms, including anti-corruption reforms, im-

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sustain support for Ukraine. 07.04.2022, available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_194319.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_194319.htm) (accessed 10.04.2022).

<sup>46</sup> Макрон поговорив з Путіним вперше після місяця перерви, 03.05.2022, available at: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/05/3/7343761/>, (accessed 04.05.2022).

<sup>47</sup> Угорщина не дозволить постачання зброї Україні через свою територію і не відмовиться від російських нафти та газу – глава МЗС. 25.03.2022, available at: <https://ua.interfax.com.ua/news/political/817802.html> (accessed 30.03.2022).

<sup>48</sup> Public Law 117–118. 117th Congress. 09.05.2022, available at: <https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ118/PLAW-117publ118.pdf> (accessed 10.05.2022).

<sup>49</sup> All Information (Except Text) for S.3522 – Ukraine Democracy Defense Lend-Lease Act of 2022. 19.01.2022, available at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/3522/all-info> (accessed 25.01.2022).

<sup>50</sup> Рішення саміту в «Рамштайні»: наскільки воно наблизило Україну до НАТО. 27.04.2022, available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3469153-risenna-samitu-v-rajmstajni-naskilki-vono-nablizilo-ukrainu-do-nato.html> (accessed 28.04.2022).

<sup>51</sup> Закон України «Про внесення змін до Конституції України (щодо стратегічного курсу держави на набуття повноправного членства України в Європейському Союзі та в Організації Північноатлантичного договору)». 07.02.2019, available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/rada/show/2680-19#Text> (accessed 28.04.2022).

provement, and harmonization of national law platforms, modernization of the country's militaries, the realization of various educational and information campaigns across the country. But until now none of them was offered MAP.

Russia's resistance in this context is a significant deterrent to Georgia's and Ukraine's path to NATO. The events of the war in August 2008 and the war on Ukrainian territory, which began in 2014, demonstrate that the Kremlin is willing to engage in open military aggression to prevent Georgia and Ukraine from joining NATO. The Kremlin's geopolitical goals have been severely hampered by Russia's large-scale conflict with Ukraine. But, despite significant help from Western governments to the Ukrainian state, including military aid, the question of Ukraine's and Georgia's participation in NATO remains open.

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