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THE EASTERN DIMENSION OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

ABSTRACT The article has been dedicated to the issue of the eastern dimension of NATO, with a special consideration of the evolution of NATO's policy in this regard, the extension of the organization, as well as bilateral relations with Russia, Ukraine and Georgia. In the article, the circumstances of the cooperation between NATO and those countries have been discussed, the instruments and mechanisms of such cooperation, as well as the evolution of the Euro-Atlantic policy of Ukraine and Georgia. The article also describes the consequences of the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in the eastern Ukraine, as well as their impact on NATO's policy. Therefore the decisions made at the NATO summit in Warsaw, directed towards improving the security of the eastern flanks, and Russia's position in this matter are also analysed.

Key words: NATO, Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, security policy

The conflict in Ukraine has led to a complete change of geopolitical situation in the East European region as well as the level of stability and regional security. The conflict indeed influenced also NATO policy, facing new challenges and the necessity to provide adequate answers to the existing threats. The conflict in Ukraine in a significant way shaped NATO policy towards its Eastern partners as well as bilateral relations with Russia, Ukraine and Georgia. Therefore, in this article both the Eastern dimension of NATO will be discussed, as well as the transformation of the North Atlantic Alliance in the face of new challenges and threats, as well as decisions made to strengthen security of the member states and their consequences in terms of relations with NATO's key Eastern partners.

CONDITIONS OF COOPERATION

After the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact were dissolved in 1991, the North Atlantic Alliance had to redefine its functioning under new international conditions and define its new objectives and targets. There were also some suggestions that would indicate the necessity of dissolving these organizations, especially in the situation when the Warsaw Pact – the main enemy of NATO during the Cold War – collapsed. However, considering new threats and the key responsibility for the safety of the member states, NATO has gone through the process of internal transformation and has adjusted its security strategy to the changed international conditions and new geopolitical situation.

One of the most important consequences of the dissolution of the Soviet Union was that new independent states emerged which similarly to the former Warsaw Pact satellite states were willing to start cooperation with the North Atlantic Alliance. NATO was also interested in expanding its relations with the East. Such cooperation was firstly expanded by establishing the North Atlantic Cooperation Council at NATO's summit in Rome in 1991.¹ Initially, it consisted of the former satellite states of the Soviet Union; after dissolution of the USSR, new post-Soviet independent republics also joined in. Over time, some of the states contributing to the Council's work, mainly Poland, Hungary and then Czechoslovakia, started to express their willingness of a closer cooperation with NATO as well as a possibility to join the organization in the future. The Alliance responded to the aspirations claimed by those states during the summit in Brussels in January 1994 by presenting a special program called Partnership for Peace.

The program was directed towards closer cooperation between NATO and the interested countries took a series of various actions towards strengthening military cooperation, as part of Individual Partnership Action Plans specially negotiated with each country. However, Partnership for Peace did not guarantee future membership in NATO for the countries taking part in the program, therefore it was criticized by those countries which were insisting on a closer integration as well as joining NATO in the future.

Despite the critical assessments addressed to the Partnership for Peace, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic eventually joined the program. From that moment, the Partnership for Peace has become an important element of collaboration between the interested countries and the North Atlantic Alliance, as well as a mechanism of influence on the Eastern partners in terms of security and defense sector related reforms. The program also contributed to the development of advanced military cooperation between the interested countries, what has led to narrowing interoperability of their armies with the Alliance's forces. Therefore it should be highlighted that even though the Partnership for Peace did not aim at bringing NATO's membership for its respective countries, it considerably extended the mutual military cooperation. Therefore, it

¹ "North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC)", NATO, 30 January 2017, at <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69344.htm>, 13 June 2017.

should be emphasized that it thereby contributed to the first expansion of NATO in 1999, as a result of which Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic joined the Alliance.

A political decision to expand NATO to the new countries in the Eastern and Central Europe has also influenced the intensification of discussions on NATO establishing new forms of cooperation with Russia as well as the remaining countries in this region. In this aspect, a key role was played by Ukraine interested in developing cooperation with NATO, and later expressing its willingness to apply for membership in the Alliance. A similar process in terms of priorities in the foreign policy and security has been experienced by Georgia which started to express its aspirations towards membership in the Alliance. Relations with those countries are crucial for the Eastern dimension of NATO, therefore further below, there will be presented an analysis of them, their interdependency, as well as consequences of NATO's relations with Russia, Ukraine and Georgia for the geopolitical situation in the regions of Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus.

NATO'S RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

It should be highlighted that during the post-Cold War period, the relations between NATO and the Russian Federation have experienced a significant transformation. In the 1990s we can speak about some form of cooperation between NATO and Russia. Its confirmation was Russia's participation in the activities of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council as well as the joining of the Partnership for Peace program. An important element shaping bilateral relations was also the signing of the NATO-Russia Charter on 25 May 1997 that mainly described the rules and shape of cooperation between two partners. A significant event which developed bilateral relations was also the creation of a special mechanism of cooperation which was the NATO-Russia Council established in 2002.

It should be indicated, however, that despite developing various forms and shapes of cooperation, the Russian Federation has consequently criticized NATO for the expansion process and accepting new countries from the Eastern and Central Europe. A matter of such criticism from Russia was also the fact of strengthening cooperation with the interested post-Soviet countries, mainly with Ukraine and Georgia. After the Revolution of Roses in Georgia (2003), as well as the Orange Revolution in Ukraine (2004), respective new governments decided to clearly identify their priorities in foreign policy and security, as well as expressed their willingness to become members of the North Atlantic Alliance. Such actions were met with sharp criticism from the Russian Federation, considering them as a breach of its national interests as well as the sphere of influence in this region. During the meeting of the NATO-Russia Council, on the margins of the summit in Bucharest, Putin sharply criticized the Alliance as well as Ukraine and Georgia for considering the perspective of membership for those countries and granting a special program, Membership Action Plan. NATO did not decide to take such

steps, nevertheless it should be mentioned that the recent crises in relations between NATO and the Russian Federation were related to the events concerning Ukraine and Georgia. Freezing of the cooperation between NATO and the Russian Federation happened as a result of the Georgian-Russian war in 2008, as well as Crimea's annexation in 2014, and the ongoing conflict in the Eastern regions of Ukraine.²

After the Georgian-Russian war, NATO decided to suspend formal meetings of the NATO-Russia Council, as well as partially suspended its cooperation with Russia. The Alliance has been consequently supporting also Georgia's territorial integrity and called on the Russian Federation to withdraw from recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent countries.³ However, within the next months NATO has softened its stance. Despite Russia not meeting the above condition during the summit in Strasbourg/Kehl, the leaders decided to change the political strategy towards Russia. It has been agreed that the political cooperation should be developed and various forms of practical cooperation between the partners should be reinstated.⁴

Subsequently, one of the most important aspects was the cooperation between NATO and the Russian Federation as part of ISAF mission, as well as actions to strengthen Afghan security forces. A significant role was to train Afghan services as well as other countries of the Central Asia, dealing with tackling drug smuggling. The next priority actions between NATO and the Russian Federation would be as follows:

- fighting global terrorism,
- Cooperative Airspace Initiative,
- cooperation in terms of ballistic missile defence (Theatre missile defence/ballistic missile defence),
- cooperation in terms of arms control,
- cooperation on non-proliferation of weapons,
- military-to-military cooperation,
- cooperation in terms of fighting against modern piracy,
- cooperation in terms of transparency of the ongoing reform as well as defence sector,
- cooperation in terms of defence and logistics industries,
- cooperation in terms of fighting the consequences of civil disasters,
- scientific cooperation.⁵

The above cooperation between NATO and the Russian Federation at the practical level has been developed regardless of the unfavorable rhetoric of Russia's authorities related to the Alliance's deepening cooperation with Ukraine and Georgia. The next crisis in terms of relations between NATO and Russia was caused by Ukraine and the

² "NATO-Russia Relations: The Background", NATO, May 2017, at <http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_05/20170517_1705-nato-russia-en.pdf>, 13 June 2017.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Relations with Russia. Key Areas of Cooperation Prior to April 2014", NATO, 16 June 2017, at <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50090.htm>, 16 June 2017.

direct reasons of freezing of the relations was annexation of Crimea at the beginning of 2014, as well as the conflict that originated in the Eastern part of Ukraine.

After the referendum in Crimea organized by Russia, the North Atlantic Council on 17 March 2014 adopted a special statement referring to this event. In the document, NATO highlighted that it does not approve the so called referendum, considering it to be illegal and violating international law. It was stressed that NATO does not approve the results of the voting organized by Russia, either. At the same time NATO called on Russia to take some actions directed towards de-escalating the situation and ending the military actions towards Ukraine. They also called on Russian authorities to meet its international commitments as well as to return to dialogue as well as searching for a peaceful way of solving the situation. Russia was also asked to refrain from making a decision to annex Crimea, which would be an obvious breach of the United Nations Charter.⁶

Despite the above calls, on 18 March 2014, the President of Russia decided to annex Crimea as part of the Russian Federation and on that day the respective documents were signed by the representatives of the peninsula. As a result of the annexation of Crimea, NATO decided to take further steps in terms of bilateral cooperation. This matter was one of the most important topics at the meeting of NATO foreign ministers who on 1-2 April 2014 gathered in Brussels. NATO made a decision at that time to suspend all practical cooperation with Russia, at the same time keeping the mechanisms of communication with this country in case of potential discussion on the deepening conflict related issues. Therefore the possibility to organize sittings of the NATO-Russia Council has been kept at the ambassadors' level as well as the communication as part of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council.⁷

Calls from NATO to start negotiations and withdraw from the aggressive policy did not bring about any result and the situation was additionally worsened by the beginning of a military conflict in the Eastern parts of Ukraine.⁸ In one of the articles published at that time the Secretary General of NATO, Anders Fogh Rasmussen even claimed that as a result of the actions taken, Russia was no longer considered a partner and started to be perceived as an enemy.⁹

⁶ "Statement by the North Atlantic Council on the So-called Referendum in Crimea", NATO, 17 March 2014, at <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_108030.htm>, 13 June 2017.

⁷ "Statement by NATO Foreign Ministers", NATO, 1 April 2014, at <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_108501.htm>, 14 June 2017; "NATO-Russia Council", NATO, 16 June 2017, at <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50091.htm>, 16 June 2017; "Measures Following NATO Ministers' Decision to Suspend All Practical Cooperation with Russia", NATO, 7 April 2014, at <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_108902.htm>, 14 June 2017.

⁸ "NATO Secretary General Concerned about Escalation in Eastern Ukraine", NATO, 13 April 2014, at <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_109148.htm>, 14 June 2017.

⁹ A.F. Rasmussen, "De-escalation Starts on the Ground", NATO, 13 April 2014, at <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_109102.htm>, 14 June 2017.

Russia consequently rejected any criticism, accusing NATO of offensive policy and violating its sphere of influence. Such rhetoric was a reflection of a big tension in the bilateral relations as well as their practical freezing.

The annexation of Crimea as well as the conflict in the Eastern Ukraine have led to a serious discussion in NATO on a security threat of some member states from the Russian Federation. Therefore a key topic before the planned NATO summit in Wales was NATO's reaction to this situation. Gathered in Newport on 4-5 September 2014, the leaders decided to accept a special program called Readiness Action Plan as well as referred to the actions taken by Russia. The leaders of NATO states and governments stated that as a result of those actions the Euro-Atlantic security has faced a crucial moment. It was highlighted that Russia's 'aggressive' actions towards Ukraine are a big challenge for the whole European security system. It was also indicated that, with the growing threats in the Middle East as well as in South Africa, Russia's actions can become a serious threat and have long-lasting consequences for security, both in the Euro Atlantic region as well as in the whole world.¹⁰

During the summit NATO also unambiguously condemned Russia's military intervention in the Eastern parts of Ukraine. The leaders once again called on Russia to withdraw its forces from the Ukrainian territory and to end its illegal occupation of the Crimea Peninsula. They called on Russia again to the adherence to the basic principles of international law as well as the international commitments that they have previously accepted. The leaders also stressed that NATO will not decide to accept the annexation of Crimea illegally applied by the Russian Federation. NATO also emphasized the need to solve the conflict only by way of peaceful negotiations and highlighted that all signatories of the Minsk agreement have to meet the commitments they have made.¹¹

Similar arguments on the threats from the Russian Federation the Alliance were put forth at the next summit in Warsaw in July 2016. In the final document issued at that time, the leaders stressed that the situation of security at NATO's borders has been deteriorating and the Alliance has to face many threats directed towards the member states.

At the same time, it was highlighted that the source of regional instability are the aggressive actions taken by Russia that have infringed the current Euro-Atlantic security system. The key actions of the Russian Federation that have had an impact on this process are as follows:

- illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol,
- violating sovereign borders by force,
- deliberate destabilization of Eastern parts of Ukraine,
- conducting extensive military exercises and maneuvers that would contradict the Vienna Document,

¹⁰ "Wales Summit Declaration. Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales", NATO, 5 September 2014, at <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm?mode=pressrelease>, 14 June 2017.

¹¹ "Relations with Russia. Response to the Russia-Ukraine Conflict", NATO, 16 June 2017, at <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50090.htm>, 16 June 2017.

- Russia's provocative military actions in the vicinity of NATO's borders, both at the northern section, as well as eastern and southern one,
- conducting irresponsible and aggressive nuclear rhetoric,
- continuous violation of the airspace of NATO's member states,
- intervention in Syria, keeping a significant military presence in this country as well as supporting Bashar al-Assad's regime.¹²

In the further part of the document NATO highlighted its lack of interest in confronting Russia and that it does not consider Russia as a threat. At the same time, NATO declared its willingness for further discussions and the resumption of cooperation, providing Russia will restrain from its aggressive policy. NATO stressed, however, that will not agree to any compromise regarding basic values on which the Transatlantic Community has been built.¹³

THE RUSSIAN PERCEPTION OF NATO

Considering the current tension and divergent interests of both actors, Russia has consequently been accusing NATO of violating the statements adopted at the end of the Cold War that were related to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It also has reproached NATO for conducting aggressive military policy as well as violating Russia's sphere of influence. Such Russian approach has been reflected in many of the recently adopted strategic documents, relating to this country's security policy.

In a military doctrine adopted on 25 December 2014, the Russian Federation referred directly to its relations with NATO. It was highlighted that the North Atlantic Alliance is still considered as the most important threat to Russia's security. Russia also accused NATO of violating the basic norms and principles of the international law. In the document, it was also stressed that NATO has been conducting an aggressive policy towards Russia and takes actions directed to weaken its growing position at the international arena. It was also indicated that, for this purpose, NATO attempts to carry out a coup d'état in Russia and to topple legitimate authorities.¹⁴

In the military doctrine, as one of the most important military threats for the Russian Federation was also strengthening the military potential of NATO and the member

¹² "Warsaw Summit Communiqué. Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016", NATO, 9 July 2016, at <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm?selectedLocale=en>, 14 June 2017.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ "Военная доктрина Российской Федерации (редакция от 2014 г.)", Министерство иностранных дел Российской Федерации, 26 December 2014, at <http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6BZ29/content/id/589760>, 14 June 2017; "The President Approved New Edition of Military Doctrine", President of Russia, 26 December 2014, at <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47334>>, 14 June 2017. See also "The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation. Approved by the President of the Russian Federation on December 25, 2014", Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 29 June 2015, at <<http://www.rusemb.org.uk/press/2029>>, 14 June 2017.

states. Placing new military infrastructure near Russian borders was also considered as a threat. It was emphasized that a relevant threat for the Russian Federation is also taking actions directed towards further expansion of NATO and accepting new members.¹⁵

A matter of NATO and the way Russia perceived this organization was also included in the newest Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. The document was adopted based on a decree issued by the president Vladimir Putin on 30 November 2016. In the concept, it was highlighted that the 'systemic problems', that have been accumulated during the last 25 years are a result of geopolitical expansion conducted both by the North Atlantic Alliance as well as the European Union.

Russia stressed that this expansive policy along with the fact that NATO and EU refused to create common European security and cooperation framework, have led to a serious crisis in their mutual relations. The Russian Federation also stated that the containment policy adopted by the United States and its allies has been weakening both regional and global stability. In the document, it was emphasized that political and informational pressure, as well as the economic one, continuously put on the Russian Federation by the eastern countries, also affect the level of security. It was indicated that such policy negatively impacts cooperation that is necessary in order to effectively fight many threats of a modern world, as well as in a long-lasting perspective will affect the interests of both sides.¹⁶

In the concept, Russia also expressed its interest in a further development of its relations with NATO. In this matter, however, it was stressed that NATO will have to meet some relevant conditions. First of all, it was indicated that NATO would have to express its willingness for equal partnership, as well as respect basic principles and norms of the international law. They also highlighted the need for cooperation and taking specific actions in order to create common space, peace, stability, and security of the Euro-Atlantic area. Russia also concluded that some particular countries should restrain from strengthening their own security at the expense of other partners.

In the document, Russia criticized the policy of further extension of NATO, assessing it as further 'expansion' of the organization. They also criticized strengthening military infrastructure in the member states of NATO bordering Russia, as well as deepening cooperation with the states located in its neighborhood. The authorities of the Russian Federation stressed that such actions are the infringement of the principle of indivisible security, and they not only lead to deepening existing differences on the European continent but also are a reason of creating new tensions and confrontations.¹⁷

From the above analysis, it appears that the Russian Federation perceives NATO as one of the most important threats for its own security. A similar approach in this matter has been presented by NATO, which, considering Russia as a threat, decided to strengthen

¹⁵ "Военная доктрина Российской Федерации..."

¹⁶ "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on November 30, 2016)", The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 1 December 2016, at <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6BZ29/content/id/2542248>, 14 June 2017.

¹⁷ Ibid.

the eastern flank of the organization. In conclusion, it should be stated that, currently, the NATO-Russia relations are de facto frozen, and the possibility to change this situation will depend mainly on the further course of the military conflict in the eastern Ukraine.

In conclusion, after 1991, the Russian Federation responded very vividly to the expansion of the North Atlantic Alliance, perceiving this process as the most important and direct threat to its own security. An extension of the organization to additional member states located in the east was considered by Russia as violation of its sphere of influence, and – by re-gaining its international position – more and more explicitly opposed the process. The Georgian-Russian war taking place in August 2008, as well as the Ukrainian-Russian conflict, can be considered as an expression of such policy. Starting military actions can be perceived as Russia's reaction resulting from closer collaboration between Ukraine and Georgia with NATO, as well as the westward-looking direction in the foreign and security policy of those countries. A crucial part of Russian actions was also – as indicated by the Baltic states – using provocation and movements with the aim to interfere with the internal affairs, and creating threats to their internal security. The situation of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia is completely different in this regard, as they are members of NATO, however, as it was already mentioned, the member states – considering the direct threat to their security – during the most recent summits, decided to confirm the Alliance commitments and to strengthen this territorial part of the North Atlantic Alliance.

UKRAINE-NATO RELATIONS

After gaining independence, Ukraine has been expressing its interest in developing comprehensive relations with NATO. The authorities in Kiev decided to join the North-Atlantic Partnership Council, and subsequently Ukraine became an active member of the Partnership for Peace program. Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic policy after 1991 has significantly evolved and resulted from a complicated internal situation in the country and the international conditioning as Ukraine was a country that in 1990s did not express any willingness to become a member of NATO. Contrary to Russia, it did not oppose the planned extension of NATO to the new countries from the Eastern and Central Europe. They did express, however, their concerns on their own security. Therefore, in 1997, they signed NATO-Ukraine Charter that was directed towards deepening mutual cooperation.

The year 2002 can be considered a breakthrough in Ukraine's policy towards NATO, when the authorities in Kiev declared their intension to apply for a membership in this organization. The above decision, however, was not motivated by the national interests of Ukraine. It was President Leonid Kuchma's instrumental reaction on the ongoing internal crisis as well as Ukraine's international isolation.

A decisive shift to the Euro-Atlantic policy happened after the Orange revolution and when Viktor Yushchenko came to power in 2005. The new president clearly stated

breaking with the multi-vector policy and announced that the priority for Ukraine's foreign policy and security is integration as well as becoming a member of NATO and the European Union in the future. Under Yushchenko's presidential rule, Ukraine significantly deepened its cooperation with NATO, although was not offered any plausible membership perspective. The issue of membership was discussed at the NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008, and at that time the representatives of the Alliance did not decide to include Ukraine and Georgia in the Membership Action Plan (MAP).

The next decisive moment for Ukraine-NATO relations came in 2010, when the presidential elections were won by Viktor Yanukovych, standing for restricting the cooperation with NATO. Therefore, the government of Ukraine declared its resignation from attempting to become a member of this organization. They also decided that Ukraine will remain a neutral and non-unitary country.

REORIENTATION OF THE EURO-ATLANTIC POLICY OF UKRAINE

It should be stressed that the annexation of Crimea as well as the war in the eastern regions of Ukraine have led to a complete revision of the security policy of Ukraine. As a result, Ukraine reassured that its priority in the foreign and security policy is to become a member of NATO. In regard to a complete change of national and international circumstances, the government of Ukraine also decided to adopt a new version of strategic documents regarding the country's security policy. During the recent years, the authorities of Ukraine accepted a review of four key documents that serve as the basis of the country's defense policy.

Table 1. Key documents on the security policy of Ukraine after 2014

Document	Date of adoption
National Security Strategy of Ukraine	26 May 2015
Military Doctrine of Ukraine	24 September 2015
Concept for the Development of the Security and Defense Sector	14 March 2016
Strategic Defence Bulletin	6 June 2016
State Program for the Building and Development of the Armed Forces of Ukraine until 2020	22 March 2017

Source: own study based on source documents.

First of the key documents adopted by Ukraine after the annexation of Crimea and starting military actions in the eastern regions was the National Security Strategy on 26 May 2015. In the document, it was highlighted that the revolution of dignity has

provided an opportunity for Ukraine to build a new country and new principles of relations with its citizens, based on such values as freedom and democracy. It was emphasized that Euromaidan was a result of a social protest against corrupted and infringing basic civil rights government.

In the further part of the strategy, it was indicated that Russia, willing to contradict the European perspective of Ukrainians, decided to occupy Crimea and started military aggression against Ukraine in its eastern parts. It was stressed that Russia's aim is to destroy the basics of the international order built after World War II, as well as destructing the unity of a democratic world. In the further part of the document it was indicated that the threats from Russia are of a long-term nature. Therefore, it was highlighted that Ukraine has been forced to take all necessary steps in order to strengthen its defense and perform necessary changes in the security policy.¹⁸

One of the key aspects of the upcoming changes was therefore the matter of co-operation with NATO. It was emphasized that developing a special partnership with NATO is a priority for Ukraine's security policy. It was indicated that one of the basic aims of this policy should be to gain full interoperability of the armed forces of Ukraine with the armies of the NATO member states. It was also announced that some consistent actions will be taken in order to fulfill the criteria necessary to gain a membership in NATO in the future.¹⁹

The next key document describing security policy is the Military Doctrine of Ukraine that was adopted on 24 September 2015. The military doctrine is a specification of the above-mentioned strategy. In the document, again, there was an indication to a matter of cooperation with NATO. It was highlighted that the priority for Ukraine is to fully accept NATO standards, implement a reform of the armed forces based on those standards, as well as achieve full interoperability with the armies of the member states of NATO by the year 2020.²⁰

Some concrete actions in terms of such priorities were included in the next two documents that were adopted by the government of Ukraine. First of them was the Concept for the Development of the Security and Defense Sector on 14 March 2016. In this document, the Ukraine Security and Defense Council decided that the Ministry of Defense up to two months would prepare a project of Strategic Defense Bulletin.²¹

¹⁸ "Указ Президента України Про рішення Ради національної безпеки і оборони України від 6 травня 2015 року 'Про Стратегію національної безпеки України'", Законодавство України, 26 May 2015, at <<http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/287/2015>>, 14 June 2017.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ "Указ Президента України Про рішення Ради національної безпеки і оборони України від 2 вересня 2015 року 'Про нову редакцію Военної доктрини України'", Законодавство України, 29 September 2015, at <<http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/555/2015/page>>, 14 June 2017.

²¹ "Указ Президента України № 92/2016 Про рішення Ради національної безпеки і оборони України від 4 березня 2016 року 'Про Концепцію розвитку сектору безпеки і оборони України'", Офіційне інтернет-представництво Президента України, 14 March 2016, at <<http://www.president.gov.ua/documents/922016-19832>>, 14 June 2017.

Based on the guidelines, such document on 6 June 2016 was accepted by the president Petro Poroshenko.²²

Based on the above documents, Ukraine has completely changed its security policy and started implementing key reforms in the security and defence sector. There were still some ongoing works, however, related to the complex changes in terms of the army's functioning. Eventually, on 22 March 2017, the State Program for the Building and Development of the Armed Forces of Ukraine until 2020 was adopted.²³ The most important provisions of this document are confidential, however, from the information from the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine it can be explained that the planned reforms are directed towards achieving five strategic aims, that is:

- improving the effectiveness of managing the army,
- innovating and improving the system of defence planning,
- increasing transparency and usage of army resources,
- increasing effectiveness and army capability,
- innovating armed forces and delivering effective country defence, its sovereignty, as well as territorial integrity,
- creating a consistent logistic system as well as efficient organization of medical help for soldiers,
- professionalization of the armed forces of Ukraine and creating a special system of military reserve force.²⁴

It should be stressed that quite recently it has been decided to use the next means of cooperation between NATO and Ukraine. Thanks to it, Ukraine has been receiving support from NATO during the implementation of reforms of the country's security and defense sector. The matters of cooperation in this regard were one of the most important topics at the NATO summit in Warsaw in 2016. During the summit, a special support program for Ukraine has been adopted, called Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP), being a relevant mechanism of a deepened, bilateral cooperation.²⁵

During the summit, NATO again expressed its support for Ukraine's sovereignty as well as its territorial integrity. The leaders also highlighted that Ukraine, as a sovereign

²² "Указ Президента України Про рішення Ради національної безпеки і оборони України від 20 травня 2016 року 'Про Стратегічний оборонний бюлетень України'", Офіційне інтернет-представництво Президента України, 6 June 2016, at <<http://www.president.gov.ua/documents/2402016-20137>>, 14 June 2017.

²³ "Указ Президента України № 73/2017 Про рішення Ради національної безпеки і оборони України від 29 грудня 2016 року 'Про Державну програму розвитку Збройних Сил України на період до 2020 року'", Офіційне інтернет-представництво Президента України, 22 March 2017, at <<http://www.president.gov.ua/documents/732017-21498>>, 14 June 2017.

²⁴ "Державна програма розвитку Збройних Сил України до 2020 року визначає стратегічні напрямки військової реформи", Міністерство оборони України, 16 May 2017, at <<http://www.mil.gov.ua/news/2017/05/16/derzhavna-programa-rozvitku-zbrojnih-sil-ukraini-do-2020-roku-viznachae-strategichni-napryamki-vijskovoi-reformi/>>, 14 June 2017.

²⁵ "Joint Statement of the NATO-Ukraine Commission at the Level of Heads of State and Government, 9 July 2016, Warsaw, Poland", NATO, 9 July 2016, at <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133173.htm?selectedLocale=en>, 14 June 2017.

country, has a right to independently make decisions regarding its future and priorities in terms of foreign and security policy.²⁶

It should be mentioned, however, that defining a strategic plan of membership in NATO by Ukraine has not changed significantly the Alliance's position in this matter. During the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in the eastern parts, NATO clearly supported Ukraine and sharply criticized the Russian Federation, at the same time suspending all practical cooperation with this country. Precarious geopolitical circumstances and the increasing number of threats in the region did not change, however, the negative attitude of some of NATO's member states towards the perspective of Ukraine's membership. Therefore, Ukraine, in the near term, can only count on continuing a deepened form of cooperation, however, without the possibility to join the organization.

NATO-GEORGIA RELATIONS

Georgia is the next post-Soviet country that has experienced the evolution from a loose cooperation with the Alliance to the willingness to apply for a membership in NATO. Similarly to Ukraine, in the 1990s, Georgia was interested in developing the cooperation, what was proved by taking part in the North-Atlantic Partnership Council, as well as the Partnership for Peace program. A significant change in Georgia's policy towards NATO happened during the government of Eduard Shevardnadze. This politician announced Georgia's intention to apply for a membership in NATO. It should be stressed, however, that following these declarations, no specific actions were taken that would be directed towards a deepened integration with NATO.

The Revolution of Roses in 2003 and Mikheil Saakashvili's coming to power were of key importance in this aspect. The politician declared that a key direction of Georgia's foreign and security policy will be integration with the western structures, as well as applying for membership in NATO and the European Union. During the tenure of Saakashvili, Georgia and Ukraine have been tightly cooperating in this matter. As it was already mentioned, during the NATO summit in Bucharest, the Alliance made a political decision that Georgia and Ukraine will become members of NATO in the future. Despite such declaration, NATO did not decide, however, to grant them the MAP.

It should also be highlighted that after Saakashvili's tenure, when the opposition came to power, Georgia has kept its Euro-Atlantic course. The authorities in Tbilisi still stand for joining NATO and are interested in a tight cooperation in terms of the country's security and defense sector reforms.

It should be indicated that during the NATO summit in Warsaw, for the first time the NATO-Georgia Commission had its sitting at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. During that time, the Head of Georgia's Diplomacy Department, Mikheil

²⁶ Ibid.

Janelidze clearly confirmed that Georgia is interested in a further extension of bilateral cooperation, and joining the North-Atlantic Alliance in the future.²⁷

NATO, however, confirmed that the decisions made at the summit in Bucharest in 2008 are still valid, and Georgia will become a member of this organization in the future. They also announced to consequently support the reforms in the security sector and the functionality of Georgia's armed forces. The key aspects of this cooperation are annual national plans including specific actions of changes (the Annual National Program), as well as the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package adopted at the summit in Wales in 2014. An important means of cooperation is also The Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) Initiative, the Partnership Interoperability Initiative, The Joint Training and Evaluation Centre functioning in Georgia, as well as Georgia's contribution in NATO's Response Force and taking part in a Resolute Support training mission in Afghanistan.²⁸

The above analysis shows that during the past couple of years the cooperation between NATO and Georgia has significantly deepened, and NATO's support towards the reforms of the security sector pursued by the Tbilisi authorities has been strengthened. A key role in this aspect has been played by Georgia, which, despite the change of authorities in this country, has kept priority directions of foreign and security industry, as well as has still been in favor of deepening the cooperation with NATO and gaining a membership in this organization in the future.

After the dissolution of the USSR, NATO's eastern policy that has been shaped by the changing international circumstances and the geopolitical situation in the region of Central-Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus, has significantly evolved. At that time, a few vital changes in the process of shaping relations with the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Georgia took place. A key factor impacting such cooperation in the 1990s was the decision on extending NATO and accepting the countries that during the cold war were under the Soviet sphere of influence. Russia sharply criticized such decision accusing NATO of expansionist actions and violating stability in the region. Similar approach was presented by the Russian Federation during the second extension of NATO, as a result of which the post-Soviet republics have been accepted to the organization.

It is worth stressing, however, that despite divergent interests, there were different forms of cooperation and actions between NATO and Russia, taken to strengthen international security. Within the next years, Russia has consequently criticized, however, the integration of Ukraine and Georgia with NATO, as well as their willingness to join the organization. This matter was one of the most important factors that have recently been influencing the cooperation between NATO and the Russian Federation. The di-

²⁷ "Joint Statement of the NATO-Georgia Commission at the Level of Foreign Ministers, 8 July 2016, Warsaw, Poland", NATO, 8 July 2016, at <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133175.htm?selectedLocale=en>, 14 June 2017.

²⁸ "Warsaw Summit Communiqué..."; "Joint Statement of the NATO-Georgia Commission..."

minished interest in maintaining bilateral relations has been triggered firstly due to the Georgian-Russian war, and after a few years, a similar situation happened due to the annexation of Crimea and the ongoing conflict in the eastern parts of Ukraine.

Considering different interests, as well as the lack of perspective to peacefully regulate the conflict in Donbas, it can be stated that, in the foreseeable future, it will not come to a breakthrough in the relations between NATO and Russia. They will still be characterized by a huge tension and bilateral lack of trust, as well as further actions taken by both sides directed towards strengthening their own military potential, being a key element of a deterrent policy.

It should be stressed that a significant role in terms of the eastern dimension of NATO has been played by the cooperation with Ukraine and Georgia. The policies pursued by those countries towards NATO have gone down a similar road and initially they were interested in a loose cooperation, its deepening, and subsequently, gaining membership. It should be emphasized, however, that there has been no consensus in this matter among the member states. Therefore, considering the circumstances of such cooperation, the geopolitical situation in the region, as well as Russia's approach towards the process of the extension of NATO, it can be stated that, in the nearest future, we should not expect any change in the approach of the member states towards the extension. Therefore, NATO's relations with Ukraine and Georgia will be oriented only towards further extension and deepening practical aspects of the current cooperation.

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