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MODERN NATO POLICY TOWARDS THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

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Introduction

NATO is a political-military organization that is expanding the geographical scope of its influence, aiming to position itself as an international actor. Without compromising the importance of the Alliance, it is important to note its crucial role exclusively for the security of Western states and the not so obvious impact of NATO activities on the stability and security of the rest of the world. The examples of Yugoslavia and Afghanistan illustrate the destructive impact of the Alliance on the security of these countries. In the case of the countries of the South Caucasus, the political course of the Alliance has a multilayered approach and is discussed in detail in this research. The thesis focuses on the impact of the policy of a political-military alliance such as NATO in the South Caucasus region.

The South Caucasus at the present stage is considered to be a geopolitical clash of interests of various actors of international politics. The region, affected by conflicts, with many contradictions between the countries located on its territory, is a space within the borders of which problems of peace, stability and security periodically arise.

A significant factor in the political processes in the South Caucasus region belongs to the activities of military-political alliances, each of which perceives this region through the perspective of a potential distribution of influence spheres. At the same time, the countries of the South Caucasus, as subjects of the international political process, have their own various priorities in terms of foreign policy. The Republic of Armenia is a member of such military-political organization as Collective Security Treaty Organization, at the same time not neglecting to develop relations with the North-Atlantic Alliance. Georgia has consistently taken a pro-Western stance and is focused on deepening cooperation with NATO. Azerbaijan is making attempts to build a multi-vector foreign policy.

The thesis is dealing with a narrow and specific topic that covers 3 countries of the South Caucasus region being involved in the sphere of NATO interest – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia.

The scientific novelty. The South Caucasus, as a strategically important region, has become a source of regional studies relatively recently, especially within the framework of the study of NATO's interests and its readiness to provide security in the region. This work aims to combine these two very interesting topics into one study that aims to explore, on the one hand, the dynamics of the states of the South Caucasus in the context of independence and, on the other hand, the dynamics of the Alliance and its interaction with the countries of the region. The thesis also examines the evolution of Alliance policy, taking into account the dynamics of regional geopolitical processes.

The analysis is directed towards emphasizing the main features of the chosen countries when cooperating with the Alliance. The main points to be paid attention to would be the methods used by the Alliance in order to gain importance in the region by engaging with all the countries in the given region.

All of the mentioned above prove that security needs in the region are of great importance to the chosen for the research countries and because of this vulnerable position, global political actors compete for spheres of influence in the region. Yet, is NATO ready to take responsibility for the region considering dynamics of regional geopolitical processes? **That is the research question of the thesis.**

Relevance of the topic. It is worth noting the importance of NATO as an international actor, created during the Cold War and experiencing adaptation to contemporary realities. Accordingly, the activities of this organization in the region, which is within the sphere of interest of other international actors, are important to study. The study of NATO activities in the South Caucasus seems important because since the beginning of the XXI century political relations of the North Atlantic Alliance with Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia have been developing more actively than

before. Research into the contemporary developments in the South Caucasus, a geopolitical region with high conflict potential, in the context of mutual relations with NATO appears relevant because at the present stage the countries of the region are faced with the choice of a foreign policy capable of resolving the territorial conflicts in the region.

The chronological framework of this thesis is defined from 1990 to the end of 2021. This is based on the fact that, since 1990, the world order has gone through significant changes with the end of the Cold War, and NATO, in turn, is faced with the need for transformation and adaptation to new realities. The year 2021 is chosen due to the fact that with 2022 a new phase of interaction in geopolitical processes in the West and Eurasia begins.

Object of the thesis is the NATO policy in the South Caucasus.

Subject of the thesis is a system of programs, decisions, and activities of NATO in the field of cooperation of the Alliance with the countries of the South Caucasus.

The aim of the work is to trace the evolution of NATO policy in the South Caucasus in the modern world.

The objectives of the research are:

1. To study the impact of the transformation of NATO strategy, on the activities of the Organization in the South Caucasus;
2. To reveal the main methods of NATO partnership programs;
3. To examine the processes of enlargement of the Alliance in connection with the region;
4. To identify the main problems, prospects of membership, and main directions of NATO cooperation with Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia, analyzing the peculiarities of the relations of the organization with each state separately.

Literature and sources analysis.

NATO's transformation and adaptation to the changing world as well as NATO's interest in the South Caucasus are to some extent studied by some researchers, whose points of view are analyzed in the thesis.

Literature. Especially valuable for this study are the works revealing the issues of the evolution of the North Atlantic Alliance, its adaptation to new security challenges, NATO's eastward enlargement, and partnership programs. The works of these authors were thoroughly studied and analyzed: Gray¹, William², Woodliffe³, Wallander⁴, Katchanovski⁵, Smith⁶, Karaganov⁷, Hunter⁸, Ivanov⁹.

In order to study the dynamics of relations between the countries of the South Caucasus and the North Atlantic Alliance, a thorough secondary analysis was conducted. The topic of the research determines the necessity to review works devoted to the analysis of the condition, dynamics, and prospects of development of military and political processes in the South Caucasus, problems of formation of a stable system of regional security, the nature of relationships developing between the main

¹ Gray, C. *War, Peace and Victory: Strategy and Statecraft for The Next Century* / C. Gray // New York / ed. Simon, Schuster, 1991. 326 p.

² William, R. *NATO in the 21st century* / R. William // ed. V. Senator, North Atlantic Assembly. – 1998. p. 47.

³ Woodliffe, J. *The Evolution of a New NATO for a New Europe* / J. Woodliffe // *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly*. – 1998. №1. - p. 177.

⁴ Wallander, C. *Institutional Assets and Adaptability: NATO after the Cold War*. – 2000. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2601379>, accessed 17.03.2022.

⁵ Katchanovski I. *Puzzles of EU and NATO Accession of Post-Communist Countries* / I. Katchanovski // *University of Ottawa*. – 2011. p. 306.

⁶ Smith, M. *NATO Enlargement During the Cold War: Strategy and System in the Western Alliance* / M. Smith // London: Palgrave Macmillian. – 2000. p.97.

⁷ Karaganov, S. *V NATO proizoshel samyj ser'eznyj raskol za poslednie gody* / S. Karaganov, available at: <http://www.rosbalt.ru/2003/02/10/84833.html>, accessed 15.02.2022.

⁸ Hunter, R. *Toward NATO Enlargement: The Role of US, NATO, in Open Door: NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security After the Cold War* / R. Hunter // ed. D. Hamilton and K. Spohr. Washington, D.C.: Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University. – 2019. P. 307.

⁹ Ivanov, D. *The Effect of NATO Partnerships on Alliance's Smart Defense* / D. Ivanov // *American political Science Annual Meeting: University of Cincinnati, Chicago*. - 2013.

subjects of the region, the involvement of various external actors in regional processes. Thus, there were covered the works of many researchers dealing with this topic, namely Markedonov¹⁰, Socor¹¹, Giragosyan¹², and Cornell¹³.

Sources. In the thesis, special attention was paid to the summit's communiqués¹⁴, strategic concepts¹⁵, the study of NATO Enlargement¹⁶, and statements of the NATO Secretary-General¹⁷. Likewise, documents from the South Caucasus, namely national security strategies¹⁸, military doctrines¹⁹, and statements by leaders²⁰, were reviewed.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study

First of all, it is necessary to note the theoretical basis of the study which is the concept of offensive realism as it describes the willingness of the Alliance and its members to ensure their own security by exercising their ambition for dominance.

¹⁰ Markedonov, S. Pochemu protivorechiya na Yuzhnom Kavkaze ostayutsya nerazreshennymi? / S. Markedonov. – 2017. Available at: https://www.ponarseurasia.org/wp-content/uploads/attachments/Pepm465_rus_Markedonov_March2017.pdf, accessed 19.04.2022.

¹¹ Socor, V. NATO Prospects in the South Caucasus / V. Socor // Report, The Central-Asia Caucasus Institute. – 2004.

¹² Giragosyan R. Zapad i Yuzhnyj Kavkaz v 2010 g. / R. Giragosyan // Ezhegodnik Instituta Kavkaza, ed. A. Iskandaryan. - 2012. P. 156.

¹³ Cornell, S. Azerbaijan since Independence. Studies of Central Asia and the Caucasus Series / S. Cornell // New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc. – 2011.

¹⁴ NATO Press Release, Istanbul Summit Communiqué, issued by the heads of state and government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, abstracts 3 and 31. – 2004. Available at www.nato.int/docu/pr/2004/p04-096e.htm, accessed 20.04.2022.

¹⁵ NATO Strategic Concept 1991. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_23847.htm, accessed 10.01.2022.

¹⁶ Study on NATO Enlargement”, NATO On-line library. – 1995. Available at: <http://www.nato.int/docu/basictxt/enl-9501.htm>, accessed 13.04.2022.

¹⁷ Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, NATO: A Changing Alliance in a Changing World. – 2001. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_73986.htm, accessed 19.04.2022.

¹⁸ Armenian National Security. – 2007. Available at: www.mil.am/eng/index.php?page=49, accessed 15.05.2022.

¹⁹ The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Armenia. – 2007. Available at: www.mil.am/eng/index.php?page=104, accessed 15.05.2022.

²⁰ Statement by President of Georgia Eduard Shevardnadze at the EAPC Summit. – 2002. Available at: <https://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2002/s021122h.htm>, accessed 18.05.2022.

To identify the essence and specifics of the institutionalization of military-political alliances in the modern world there were used general scientific methods: analysis, synthesis, induction, and deduction.

Qualitative methods, namely secondary research in this work reflect the meaning and role of NATO strategic partnerships. A comprehensive documentary analysis in the field of international politics, regional conflicts, and military and political diplomacy was carried out in order to examine the evolution of Alliance policy, taking into account the dynamics of regional geopolitical processes in the region.

The comparative analysis method was used to compare NATO activities in three states of the region to assess the dynamics of the Alliance and its interaction with the countries of the region.

The structure of the thesis consists of an introduction, 2 chapters, including 7 paragraphs, a conclusion, a bibliography and 5 appendixes.

Chapter I. NATO after the end of the Cold War. Evolution of Organization and Policy

1.1 The transformation of NATO policy since 1990

The transformation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization from the perspective of its members is one of the most critical aspects of global security. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, there have been five waves of transformation. These waves were driven by the fall of the Soviet Union, terrorist activities in the United States, military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the global finance and economic crisis.

The process of transformation of the Alliance can be regarded under several criteria, namely geographical, military-political and operative-technical.²¹ The geographic element implies an expansion to the East. The military-political criterion is based on Article 5 of the Washington Treaty and manifests itself in a commitment to the principle of collective defense. At the same time, command structures are preserved and allied forces are adapted to the constantly changing international environment. NATO's operational and technical transformation implied a reduction of the Alliance's collective forces, redeployment, and transformation of NATO forces into more flexible units to respond to new challenges.

The collective defense of NATO member states against external aggression by the bloc of socialist countries was the main strategy of the Alliance during the Cold War. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO was maintaining the defensive nature of the organization by inertia for a certain amount of time, although this has become increasingly irrelevant to the realities of a post-bipolar world. Experts regarded a large-scale conflict in Europe as an unlikely scenario at the end of the 20th century.

²¹ Arbatov, A. *Rasshirenie NATO i nacional'nye interesy Rossii / A. Arbatov // Politiya. Analiz. Hronika. Prognoz. – 2006. №2. – P. 94-103.*

The NATO Summit in London in 1990 served as the starting point for the transformation. In the first phase, the organization was responding to the international factors brought about by the end of the Cold War. First of all, the fact that there was no longer a direct risk of large-scale military conflict between the communist Soviet Union and the capitalist West was of particular importance. Equally important was the fact that local and internal conflicts that did not directly affect the security of NATO member states were coming into focus.

In the 1990s it became clear that the institution was in need of a military transformation. This was due to the reunification of Germany, the withdrawal of Soviet forces, and the entry into force of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. This transformation had a significant impact on the military structure of NATO, namely, there was a restructuring of member states armed forces, their numbers were reduced to increase mobility, and the bloc's nuclear forces were considerably decreased.

For many scholars in the 1990s, it was clear that NATO was adapting relatively slowly to the changing international environment. It was anticipated that the Alliance would either cease to exist or be transformed and go beyond its usual activities. The phrase "Out of area or out of business"²² became rather common in the English-language sources of the 1990s. Thus, it was supposed that the North Atlantic Alliance would go beyond the North Atlantic region or would no longer be a key actor in the previously mentioned region. That is to say, NATO was expected to undergo radical changes due to objective developments.

The year 1991 brought a new era for the world order. The Soviet Union ceased to exist. Russia and several other countries became partners, with some of them becoming members of NATO. For the Alliance, this period was accompanied by dialogue and cooperation, together with other new measures to maintain stability in the world.

²² Lugar, R. Nation-Building is a Role for NATO / R. Lugar // Financial Times. – 2003.

The basis of the transformation was the premise that interethnic and territorial disputes were the most probable threat to the security of Alliance members. In 1991 the first NATO Post-Bipolar Strategic Concept was adopted.²³ This concept was the first step toward the building of a NATO-based European security system. In the 1991 Strategic Concept, Alliance leaders emphasized that security and stability depend on the political, economic, and social spheres in addition to the military one. The Concept noted that NATO intended to strengthen the political component of the organization, as stipulated in Article 2 of the Washington Treaty.

NATO was considered to have a key role in ensuring integration in the European region and elaborating a security system on the continent. The Alliance's tight cooperation with the U.S. was seen as a central factor in reaching the Alliance's newly defined goals. The basic principles continued to be the foundation of the organization's activities. Among the basic principles were Collective Defense and Rapid Response Strategy (RRS). However, this was expanded with the principle of cooperation. Cooperation was interpreted as the establishment of relations and dialogue with Eastern European countries. Eastern Europe and the Baltics were in the area of NATO interest according to the concept of 1991. The concept noted that in regional conflicts, a forceful decision could be taken to prevent a large-scale conflict. In fact, the organization was given the right to intervene in the internal affairs of sovereign states, even outside the Alliance member states.

If we perceive NATO as an institution that chose a new vector of global policy, it could be, for example, the use of Alliance resources to resolve regional conflicts and crises that impacted world politics, including Europe, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the termination of the Cold War. The civil war in the former Yugoslavia is a case in point. Even though there was no direct military threat to NATO, the confrontation had some impact on the member states' security. Therefore, even

²³ NATO Strategic Concept 1991. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_23847.htm, accessed 10.01.2022.

before the implementation of the new strategic concept in the mid-90s, NATO decided to intervene in the conflict. This intervention in the Yugoslav conflict led to the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in November 1995. This was the Alliance's first "peace enforcement" operation to prevent the conflict from escalating.

It was subsequently necessary to consolidate the new NATO strategy on paper, which ultimately became a reality in 1999 and coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the Alliance's formation. At the Washington summit, it was declared that NATO was now going beyond its normal scope of responsibility and military intervention in conflicts outside the Fifth Article of the Washington Treaty is an option. Under Article 5 of the 1949 Washington Treaty an attack on one NATO member is an attack on the North Atlantic Alliance as a whole. The geographic scope of NATO's activities became even broader with the adoption of the 1999 Strategic Concept, and the defensive activities finally became preventive. The 1999 Strategic Concept marked the transformation of NATO from a collective defense organization to a collective security organization. From that moment, NATO's defense activities and peace enforcement operations were regarded as legal. The Alliance was supposed to be involved if there was a potential threat to the North Atlantic community. In the same year, the new approach was applied in practice in Yugoslavia during the Kosovo crisis.

The 1999 Strategic Concept highlighted NATO's new role in crisis management and peacekeeping. It pointed to the importance of strengthening relations with Alliance partners and of cooperating with international organizations.²⁴

The strategy emphasized the advancement of European cooperation in the field of security and defense. It also focused on the importance of close cooperation between international organizations such as NATO, WEU, and the EU. An analysis of the 1999 concept shows a significant change in the course of the Alliance. The new

²⁴ NATO Strategic Concept 1999. Available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm, accessed 12.01.2022.

strategy implied that NATO would go beyond a regional organization, assuming responsibility for collective defense and crisis operations, even beyond the borders of the allies. Consequently, the concept implied broad participation of NATO countries in the collective planning of nuclear forces and their peacetime deployment on their territories.²⁵

The indivisible security principle, specified in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, as well as the Alliance's new peacekeeping tasks have led to debate about possible NATO expansion and accession of former socialist countries to the Alliance. The issue of eastward enlargement was a turning point in Russian-Alliance relations since 1993.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the prevailing view among Alliance members was that the Strategy was still in need of modification. The geographic scope of the peace enforcement Alliance was mostly limited to Europe, even though the 1999 concept implied an expansion of the area of responsibility. Consequently, the organization remained predominantly defensive. Some Western politicians and experts believed that it would be reasonable to focus not on collective defense, but operations beyond the "fifth article of the Washington agreement". It was to be understood that in the event of aggression by third countries, the joint defense would no longer be the primary mission. The key mission should be to ensure the full security of the North Atlantic community. Initially, it was expected that a modified NATO concept would be released in time for the next anniversary, i.e., by 2009. Yet, a lack of consensus among NATO members on the matter has stalled the process of drafting the document.

In fact, since 2007, the key focus of NATO reformation has been the adoption of a new Strategic Concept. However, the process of developing this concept revealed

²⁵ Ibid, 4.

the conceptual difficulties of trying to reconcile the bloc character of this institution with its new role as an institution for collective (for its members) security, which NATO should acquire as a result of the transformation.

The second stage of transformation was triggered by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States, as well as terrorist attacks in Spain and Britain. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, the threat of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction came to the fore. Protecting the populations of member countries was a necessity. Considerable internal reforms were undertaken to meet the new objectives of the member countries in order to ensure security. Then, in 2002, after the third stage of NATO's transformation, political-military decisions were made on the potential of the Alliance's operations outside the Euro-Atlantic region.

The operation in Afghanistan was another challenge for NATO. The allies not only failed to enhance the number of their forces in the region, but also implemented restrictions on the employment of national military forces, which confirmed the lack of a consolidated position among the NATO member states on this particular issue. The U.S. position was supported either by newer NATO members (Poland, the Baltic states), or by states that were not members of the Alliance.

In 2002, at the Prague Summit, the task of creating a mobile NATO force was made public. Central to this was the decision to create a NATO Response Force capable of rapid deployment and sustained missions.

The war in Iraq in 2003 was a test for the organization. This particular war caused serious disagreement among European countries. As a consequence, serious reservations arose about NATO's continued effectiveness as an instrument of collective defense and security, as well as about future integration in the military sphere. The war in Iraq marked a new stage in the transformation of the Alliance. This stage is primarily connected with the problem of viewpoint unity within the organization.

The transformation continued with the optimization of the Alliance's governing bodies. In 2003 a command on the transformation of the joint armed forces in Europe was created in the NATO structure.

From April 2 to 4, 2008, a NATO summit was held in Bucharest. During this summit, a conflict arose within the bloc. The meeting made clear the divisions among the partner states and demonstrated the supremacy of national interests over partnership commitments. During the meeting, there was a split between the older and newer members of the Alliance over the Afghan mission, as well as over the providing of a membership action plan for Ukraine and Georgia.²⁶

Afterward, Alliance officials released a "Declaration on Alliance Security" in 2009, in which they addressed a renewed strategic concept. This resulted in a major discourse that fostered a prioritization and reformation of the organization.

As a result, it was agreed to draw up a new strategic concept to be endorsed in 2010 during the next NATO summit in Lisbon. There was controversy among the Western European members of NATO, namely the United States, Great Britain, and Canada, over the implementation of the new concept. The Eastern European countries of the Alliance generally tend to side with the U.S. on such issues.

The new Strategic Concept 2010 provides high-level policy directions for the Alliance's political and military means only in very general terms.

The presentation of the new NATO Strategic Concept in the format of a concise "declaration of intent" is largely due to the significant contradictions among member countries in understanding how to reform the Organization.

The fact that Georgia and Ukraine were to receive MAPs proved to be a controversial issue. Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, and Belgium critically disagreed on this issue.²⁷

²⁶ Bucharest Summit Declaration 2008. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm, accessed 15.01.2022.

²⁷ Franciya, Germaniya i Italiya vystupayut protiv predostavleniya Ukraine i Gruzii PDCH v NATO // RIA Novosti. – 2008. Available at: <http://www.rg.ru/2008/12/02/nato-anons.html>, accessed 18.01.2022.

In the fall of the same year, the global community faced a financial crisis, which set the trend for the current stage of NATO's development and the fifth stage of the organization's transformation. Reduced military budgets of member countries implied the abandonment of several programs for the development of new high-tech weapons and their purchasing by defense agencies. In October 2010, NATO leaders endorsed the secretary general's plan to further optimize budgets. And at the Chicago Summit in 2012, a "smart defense" initiative was introduced. The goal of these measures was to maintain overall costs while improving efficiency. The initiative is based on three core elements of the Smart Defense effort. They are prioritization, specialization, and cooperation - putting the utility and efficiency of material investments at the forefront.

NATO proceeded with expanding partnership mechanisms and with accelerating the transformation of the organization to form new political relationships and strengthen a more responsive mechanism for managing global affairs. Such modifications were to be documented in the Alliance's strategic documents.

The first order of business was to formulate principles and priorities for the organization's potential, planning directions, and intelligence for the coming decade. The paper covered an analysis of the projected situation in the political world, especially the problem of security. It was also mentioned that there is a high probability of unforeseeable events.

During summits, the United States tends to convince its European allies of the importance of extending the Alliance's activity beyond Europe and the collective defense of only NATO member states. The U.S. insists that security around the world is the key priority. Washington argues that NATO must not be limited to military tasks, but the organization must also conduct civilian missions. In this way, the United States consolidates its influence.

For the West European countries, namely France, to a lesser extent Italy, Germany, and Spain, NATO should be predominantly defensive, as it had been during

the Cold War. According to their perspective, NATO should not be a global security structure; the organization should retain its original interests and not replace other international organizations. France, Germany, and some other NATO members are rather skeptical about the idea of expanding its usual area of responsibility. The fact is that members of European countries are not eager to incur the financial costs of expanding NATO's area of responsibility. Despite the fact that since the end of the Cold War, European countries have raised the idea of being more military independent from the United States, this has not been made a reality. The reason for this is economical - the U.S. presence on the continent significantly reduced European countries' defense expenditures.

The U.S., in turn, has for many years been stressing that the European countries of NATO should contribute more to the organization's funding, reasoning that there would be a fairer distribution of expenditures. For this reason, after the September 11 terrorist attacks, the United States decided to deal with the situation on its own, avoiding the NATO involvement. In 2001, for the first time in the Alliance's history, NATO was in the position to apply Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, that is, an attack on the United States was considered an aggression against all NATO members. In spite of this, the U.S. concluded that the Alliance's assistance in the fight against terrorism should be rejected and that they should act autonomously due to the military and technical insufficiency of the European members of the organization. The U.S. strategy of independent problem-solving was most clearly exemplified during the 2003 war in Iraq. Not having received the support of European allies, the U.S. administration made the decision to proceed as part of the coalition of the willing. This policy resulted in experts debating the disunity of NATO in 2003 due to the fact that some members of the Alliance, such as France and Germany, did not approve of using force against Saddam Hussein's administration.²⁸

²⁸ Karaganov, S. V NATO proizoshel samyj ser'eznyj raskol za poslednie gody / S. Karaganov, available at: <http://www.rosbalt.ru/2003/02/10/84833.html>, accessed 15.02.2022.

During the Republican period of the U.S. administration, NATO played a supplemental role. As an illustration, one could consider U.S. military operations at the beginning of the 21st century - in Afghanistan and in Iraq. In these two missions, NATO was engaged no sooner than the U.S. had completed all of the essential goals on an independent basis. NATO had only to contribute to the post-conflict settlement.

Summarizing the five waves of NATO transformation, it should be stressed that the Alliance retains its role as a significant actor in world politics and international relations. However, the main aspects of its transformation directly affect Russia's national interests. Geographically, it has come very close to Russia's borders. One of the most acute questions today is the possible membership of Georgia and Ukraine in NATO.

After George W. Bush left office, there has been some change in the U.S. toward the practice of multilateralism that took place under Bill Clinton's presidency. Barack Obama has set a course for establishing relations with European allies in the NATO format. He did describe the Alliance as intrinsic to American defense.

NATO's current military structure is the outcome of incessant transformation over its entire history. Principally, two major factors have directly impacted both the command and the force structures of the Alliance; first, the international security environment, arising risks, threats, and opportunities; and second, the mutual interaction between the political and military branches. Complementing these two factors, the building up of experience and the continual flow of information and knowledge, which foster situational and organizational awareness, have triggered continuity of change in the Alliance's military structure. In this context, NATO's military structure has largely followed the requirements of the organization's strategic conceptual approaches. The command structure of the Alliance has undergone four major transformational stages, while the force structure has seen two major changes since its foundation.

To summarize, the need to transform the Alliance was due to the fact that with the end of the Cold War the world order underwent a change, which pushed the organization to adapt to the new reality, and a broader understanding of security in geographical terms.

Now, after the Cold War, NATO has been transforming, changing its command structure as NATO adapts to its new tasks. Even after 2014, when the Russian issue appeared, the global and broader understanding of security remained on the agenda. Consequently, all the accumulated NATO instruments during the Cold War did not lose their importance in today's realities.

1.2 The impact of NATO partnership program processes

Partnerships are of great importance in the modern world. In close cooperation with partners, many security problems are solved because one international political actor may be more familiar with the problems of a particular region than another, or have a closer relationship with a particular state. It is for these reasons that the Partnership for Peace program is mutually beneficial to partner countries and NATO member states.²⁹ Under this program, partner nations benefit in three aspects: 1) Opportunity for membership status.³⁰ 2) Institutional support, e.g., in case of regime change, etc. 3) Versatile cooperation with the Alliance and long-term military support.³¹

²⁹ Waltz, K. Structural Realism after the Cold War / K. Waltz // *International Security*. – 2000. №25, P. 5-41.

³⁰ Ivanov, D. The Effect of NATO Partnerships on Alliance's Smart Defense / D. Ivanov // *American political Science Annual Meeting: University of Cincinnati, Chicago*. - 2013.

³¹ Gray, C. *War, Peace and Victory: Strategy and Statecraft for The Next Century* / C. Gray // New York / ed. Simon, Schuster, 1991. 326 p.

Partnerships are a way for the Alliance to deepen cooperation throughout its various institutions. Partners enable NATO to have an exchange of views and to formulate a more diverse position on certain issues.³² Partnerships for NATO are critical at current times because of the large number of challenges in the European security environment, making it difficult to solve these problems on its own. The Alliance focuses on deepening relations with non-NATO countries and building relationships to enhance political and military partnership, cooperation, and political dialogue to achieve its key goals: increasing transparency, mutual trust, and acting collectively.³³

The development of partnerships on the part of the Alliance has always been considered a response to the international environment, tensions, and differing perceptions among NATO member states. Despite this, ultimately Alliance policy has largely expressed European support for U.S. foreign policy objectives. Partnership programs are no exception.

The value of the Partnership for Peace program is to share useful experiences among partner countries and to assist the Alliance during crises and defense processes, thereby enhancing NATO's soft and hard power capabilities.³⁴ The program is based upon practical cooperation and a commitment to the democratic principles that define NATO. The core ideas of the Partnership for Peace program are subsequently developed into actions, providing a framework for bilateral and multilateral action by enhancing partner countries' capabilities to participate in NATO, and engaging in military and diplomatic programs.³⁵

³² NATO Defense College and Guillaume Lasconjarias, The Importance of Partnerships for NATO, *YouTube*. – 2017. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFqCan5XO3c>, accessed 10.03.2022.

³³ NATO Public Diplomacy Division. Brussels: NATO Handbook. - 2006. pp. 18-20.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 13.

³⁵ Reiter, D. Learning, Realism, and Alliances: The Weight of the Shadow of the Past / D. Reiter // *World Politics*. – 1994. № 4. - pp. 490-526.

In addition to the alliance's members, NATO is actively developing partnership programs among other countries around the world. One such program is the "Partners across the globe" or "global partners," with whom the alliance cooperates on an individual basis. NATO's global partners include Afghanistan, Australia, Colombia, Iraq, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand, and Pakistan.³⁶ However, the main program through which the Alliance develops relations with countries outside NATO member states is Partnership for Peace.

Initially, countries wishing to join the Alliance participated in the Partnership for Peace program. Now the Membership Action Plan has become of more relevance. The Partnership for Peace provided an option for partner countries to enhance their military capabilities for further membership in the Alliance.³⁷ The Membership Action Plan "provides a framework for NATO expansion as applicants progress through the reforms required for membership.

The very establishment of NATO's partnerships with other countries is associated with the end of the Cold War and the Alliance's evolution to cooperate with countries that were not previously part of NATO. The starting point can be considered NATO's new strategic concept, adopted in 1991 at the Rome Summit implied the expansion and strengthening of ties with the former Soviet republics, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

With the end of the Cold War, NATO's military and political strategy underwent a transformation. In December 1991 the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) was established as a forum for security dialogue between NATO and its new partners.³⁸ Within the framework of this cooperation, member states and partner

³⁶ Relations with partners across the globe. Official NATO Website. – 2021. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49188.htm, accessed 08.03.2022.

³⁷ Simon, F. *Crossing the Rubicon, NATO After Fifty Years* / F. Simon // ed. S. Papacosma, S. Kay, M. Rubin. – 2001. - 125 p.

³⁸ Partnership for Peace programme. Official NATO Website. – 2020. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-AC4161F2-70190223/natolive/topics_50349.htm, accessed 08.03.2022.

countries negotiated Europe's political security issues, laying the groundwork for the Partnership for Peace program. In the period already after the Cold War, the multi-polar world order provided an opportunity for the Alliance to create one of the strongest tools for cooperation - strategic partnerships as one of the main political practices for strengthening and expanding the Alliance.³⁹

Observing the geographical transformation of NATO, it is worth noting that the policy of enlargement is not only about increasing the number of member countries. Thus, on January 11, 1994, at the NATO summit in Brussels, the aforementioned "Partnership for Peace" program was introduced.

“The Partnership for Peace (PfP) is a program of practical bilateral cooperation between individual Euro-Atlantic partner countries and NATO. It allows partners to build up an individual relationship with NATO, choosing their own priorities for cooperation.”⁴⁰

The intention behind this program was to involve countries located in regions of geopolitical importance to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. First and foremost, this program was targeted at the countries of the former Warsaw Pact.

In 1994, when the Partnership for Peace program was officially announced at the NATO summit, U.S. President Clinton at that summit stated the purpose of the program: "The Partnership for Peace program will advance the process of evolution for the formal enlargement of NATO. It is aimed at the day when NATO will accept new members who will assume all the responsibilities of the Alliance."⁴¹ After the summit, in a Prague speech, he said: "Although the Partnership is not NATO membership, it is also not a permanent waiting room. It changes the entire NATO dialogue, so it is no longer a question of whether NATO will accept new members, but

³⁹ Pasternak, C. From Protecting Some to Security Many: NATO's Journey from A Military Alliance to a Security Manager / C. Pasternak // The Finish Institute of International Affairs. – 2007. №17. - 46 p.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 18.

⁴¹ President Bill Clinton, Remarks to Multinational Audience of Future Leaders of Europe, Brussels, Belgium. – 1994. Available at: <https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/ga6-940109.htm>, accessed 04.04.2022.

when and how."⁴² This speech caused some division within the Alliance between those in favor of enlargement and those in favor of gradual enlargement through the Partnership for Peace program.

In a decade following the end of the Cold War, NATO, following the intentions reflected in the London Declaration, also established an unprecedented system of relations with Central and Eastern Europe, integrating the states of the former Soviet Union. The system was based on engagement, trust, and openness. The Partnership for Peace and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) were the instruments for this. In 1997 the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) was created to replace the NACC.⁴³

This partnership program allows the Alliance to expand its capabilities at a much lower cost, without having to invest a significant amount of resources to achieve stability in other countries and regions. The difference between a partner country and a NATO member country can be seen in the Alliance's Article 5 on collective defense.⁴⁴

Since 1994, the program has expanded stability and security both within and beyond the European continent and is an ongoing element of NATO's European security planning where political and democratic values shared by Allies and partners are an integral part of the PfP's strategic partnership framework.⁴⁵ Partnership for Peace is an explicit process to bring Allies and partners together on security issues.⁴⁶ The main goals of this program can be distinguished as follows:

⁴² The President's News Conference with Visegrad Leaders in Prague. – 1994. Available at: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-with-visegrad-leaders-prague>, accessed 04.04.2022.

⁴³ Ibid, 18.

⁴⁴ Wallander, C. Institutional Assets and Adaptability: NATO after the Cold War. – 2000. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2601379>, accessed 17.03.2022.

⁴⁵ Woodliffe, J. The Evolution of a New NATO for a New Europe / J. Woodliffe // The International and Comparative Law Quarterly. – 1998. №1. - p. 177.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 18.

1. Increasing transparency among countries in national defense planning and military budgeting;
2. Popularizing democratic values;
3. Long-term operational force development among partner countries and NATO member states.

Since the program's creation, it has served as something of a pathway to membership in the organization.⁴⁷ In 1997, by giving the Partnership for Peace program an operational role, the perception of security through partnerships was strongly expanded.⁴⁸ In an era of multipolarity, this became a new approach for the Alliance, extending its diplomatic, political and military planning to non-NATO countries.⁴⁹

Because of the instability in Europe regarding security, the Partnership for Peace was developed as a mechanism capable of integrating the newly independent states into Western organizations. The implication was that the program would enable non-Alliance countries to expand military ties and be operationally connected to the Alliance.⁵⁰ It is worth noting that in the United States the partnership program was seen as an effective and long-term solution to the post-Cold War security problem, and as a stepping stone to possible membership into the Alliance.⁵¹

The partner states committed themselves "to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, to respect existing borders, and to resolve disputes by peaceful means."

⁴⁷ Ibid, 25.

⁴⁸ Lestinska, S. NATO in the Age of Multipolarism : Strategic Partnerships as the New Alliances. – 2020. Available at: https://matheo.uliege.be/bitstream/2268.2/9224/4/Silvie%20Leštinská_Master%20Thesis.pdf, accessed 23.03.2022.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 28.

⁵⁰ Hill, W. No Place for Russia: European Security Institutions since 1989. – 2018. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09700161.2019.1580453?journalCode=rsan20>, accessed 26.03.2022.

⁵¹ Hunter, R. Toward NATO Enlargement: The Role of USNATO, in *Open Door: NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security After the Cold War* / R. Hunter // ed. D. Hamilton and K. Spohr. Washington, D.C.: Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University. – 2019. P. 307.

It should be noted that for the majority of Eastern European states participating in the Partnership for Peace program was a de facto first step for their subsequent membership within NATO. Meanwhile, this program made it possible for the Alliance to proceed to actions for the formation of global geopolitical space, its influence, and the projection of military force.

Since the creation of the Partnership for Peace program, many partner countries have become members of the Alliance. The enlargement of the Alliance has become something of an alternative approach to the NATO policy, replacing the previous policy of containment of the Soviet Union and Russia.⁵²

As Central and Eastern European allies were accepted, the activity of the Partnership for Peace program was becoming increasingly focused on expanding eastward. At the 2004 Istanbul Summit, NATO heads of state and government concluded that in strengthening the Euro-Atlantic partnership, they should pay particular attention to engaging with partners in regions of strategic importance to the Alliance, namely the South Caucasus and Central Asia.⁵³

To meet this objective, NATO made a decision to appoint a special representative to the South Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as two NATO liaison officers in each of the aforementioned regions.

The Alliance's increased interest in these regions has been followed by an increased emphasis on the education and training of partners within the Partnership for Peace program. Since 2007, NATO has conducted defense education improvement programs with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, and Montenegro. Allies and partners were coming together to develop and implement the Defense Education Enhancement Program (DEEP), enabling the partner nations

⁵² Asmus, R. *Opening NATO's Door for a balanced discussion of NATO's enlargement efforts in the post-Cold War era* / R. Asmus // (New York: Columbia University Press. – 2002.

⁵³ NATO, *Istanbul Summit Communiqué*. - 2004. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_21023.htm, accessed 30.03.2022.

to develop their defense education programs. In the case of the South Caucasus, these programs allowed the region to maintain security in the region while avoiding the region becoming a “shatter zone”.⁵⁴

NATO Partners for Peace now cooperate with NATO in a very different manner and use different NATO tools to organize cooperation with the Alliance than those partners who were early Allies (e.g., the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland in 1999). Today, the partners are in quite different positions. Some of them have openly declared their intention to join the Alliance in the future, e.g., Georgia. Others want to advance their cooperation with NATO while maintaining a balance in their relations with Russia and other countries in the east, e.g., Armenia and Kazakhstan. The Alliance encourages this diversity in cooperation with different countries and, therefore, tools have been developed to interact and shape cooperation that is suitable for the countries.

The 2010 Lisbon Summit noted the importance of establishing new ties between NATO and the international organizations and countries concerned. An integral component was the development of partnerships to address the key mission of the Alliance, namely cooperative security. The new Strategic Concept adopted at the Summit established the use of flexible formats that can bring NATO and partner countries together regardless of the current framework of cooperation. In the above-mentioned concept, partnership policies are seen as a tool to strengthen liberal norms in other states.

NATO's Individual Partnership Program was adopted at the Alliance's Prague Summit in 2002. In 2004, Georgia became the first country to adopt the Individual Partnership Program. The program provides a framework for cooperation between a partner country and the Alliance. The IPP allows the partner country to outline the areas of engagement that should be addressed together with the Alliance through the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Work Plan.

⁵⁴ Kaplan, R. *The Revenge of Geography* / R. Kaplan // *Foreign Policy*. – 2009. pp. 96–105.

Although all of the countries of the South Caucasus joined the Partnership for Peace program in 1994, the involvement of these countries varied considerably, as discussed in more detail in Chapter II.

Analyzing the above descriptions of the NATO partnership program, the usefulness of some partnerships for NATO has been questioned, as evidenced by the fact that there were disagreements within the Alliance throughout time about the usefulness of one or another partner for NATO.

The September 11 terrorist attack can be seen as key moment in the importance of partnerships in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, as well as the mission in Afghanistan, which radically changed the status of the partners. Since then, the essence of the partnership has changed. Whereas previously the partnership was seen as to what extent NATO could be useful to partner countries, after these events the question was posed in the opposite way, that is, what the partner countries could be useful to the Alliance.

1.3 NATO enlargement policy

The U.S. regarded enlargement as a "new Europe," that is, enlargement as a path to Europe that is integrated and free. President Bush argued in 1989 to forge a "peaceful and undivided Europe".⁵⁵ For Germany, on the other hand, enlargement represented an element of a strategy to build a favorable role for the country after unification.

Since the London Summit in 1990, the enlargement process has become more controversial as a result of discussions on the integration of the former Eastern Bloc countries. NATO decided to establish more precise criteria for membership in the Alliance. This was considered to be particularly significant given that the states seeking to be members of NATO had previously been part of the former Soviet Union

⁵⁵ Goldgeier, S. Not Whether, But When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO / S. Goldgeier // Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press. – 1999.

for many years. According to Ivan Katchanowski, the states that were once under Soviet authority faced obstacles when trying to join NATO because there were cultural and political objections to the former Soviet republics in the West.⁵⁶

Before the London Summit in 1990, NATO's membership was predominantly limited to Western European countries; hence, enlargement towards Central and Eastern Europe was a new phase in the Alliance's history of enlargement for the organization. It was then that it became clear that for the successful introduction of democratic values in the new states, improved membership criteria for countries planning to join the Alliance should be established (democratic governance, market economy, respect for human and minority rights).

With the collapse of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact, the question of NATO's future was on the table. The debate progressively led to a consensus on the preservation of NATO as an organization, but also on the transformation needed, including a transformation in building ties with the members of the former Warsaw Pact.⁵⁷

The new security environment and challenges of the twenty-first century have made continuous transformation a constant factor for the Alliance. The main challenge for NATO's transformation is its progression from a defense organization to a more flexible security structure that can counter global security threats.⁵⁸ The uncertain regional and international security climate dictated this transformation. It is these challenges that had an impact on the Alliance's goals, membership, and missions.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Katchanovski I. *Puzzles of EU and NATO Accession of Post-Communist Countries* / I. Katchanovski // University of Ottawa. – 2011. p. 306.

⁵⁷ *NATO-s Handbook*. – 2006. p.198. Available at: <https://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2006/hb-en-2006.pdf>, accessed 10.04.2022.

⁵⁸ William, R. *NATO in the 21st century* / R. William // ed. V. Senator, North Atlantic Assembly. – 1998. p. 47.

⁵⁹ Peterson, J. *NATO and Terrorism* / J. Peterson // The Continuum International Publishing Group, New York. - 2011.

Both during and after the Cold War, the grounds for enlargement showed significant differences. The strategic position of the countries outweighed such criteria as democratic values, respect for human rights, and peaceful conflict resolution. In the case of Turkey and Greece, for example, these countries were accepted into the Alliance despite concerns about democratic stability. Until the London Summit in 1990, the main objective of enlargement was to further strengthen the collective defense of Alliance members. Following the Cold War period, NATO understood that there was an opportunity to move entirely to enlargement in order to consolidate peace in Europe.⁶⁰ Furthermore, NATO enlargement also served to provide stability for Central and Eastern European countries, since these countries no longer had a "protector" in the form of the USSR.⁶¹

After the fall of the Soviet Union in order to strengthen NATO's efficiency in the new international reality, in the 1990s its leadership began a major revision of the Alliance's structure and strategy in order to modernize it.

In December 1994, the North Atlantic Council began a process of internal research on the Alliance to explore opportunities for NATO enlargement. There were also determined principles for enlargement and possible consequences.⁶²

In December 1995, Alliance foreign ministers decided, on the basis of a study of NATO enlargement and partner nations' reactions to it, that the next phase of the enlargement process would be based on three elements: an intensive individual dialogue with interested partners; further consideration of what NATO must do internally to ensure that enlargement maintains Alliance effectiveness; and further strengthening the Partnership for Peace to help interested partners prepare to assume responsibility for the membership.

⁶⁰ Smith, M. *NATO Enlargement During the Cold War: Strategy and System in the Western Alliance* / M. Smith // London: Palgrave Macmillian. – 2000. p.97.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 32.

⁶² Declaration of the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council, Brussels, Belgium. – 1994. Paragraph 6.

In 1995, NATO decided to enlarge and a study on NATO enlargement was developed. That study showed the pros and cons of accepting new members into the organization and how they would be applied. The study was forwarded by the U.S. and Germany to examine the ways, principles, and consequences of such a decision.

This was the starting point of the Alliance to provide the candidates with the ability to meet the prescribed conditions of membership.

As for membership criteria, the allies reached an agreement on the political and military actions to be taken by future members of the Alliance. These also became known as the "Perry Principles," after William Perry, who was then secretary of defense of the United States. In early 1995, Perry insisted that NATO's past achievements were based on four principles: collective defense, democracy, consensus, and cooperative security. However, enlargement meant that prospective new members had to be able to protect the Alliance, be democratic and have free market, and respect the human rights and sovereignty of other nations. Also, there was a need to recognize that the consensus of the North Atlantic Alliance was fundamental and that it had authority that operated with existing NATO members.⁶³

Countries interested in joining the Alliance had to meet the following conditions specified in the study:

- Democratic political system which includes a free electoral process, respect for freedom and human rights, market economy;
- Respect for minorities under the OSCE;
- Settlement of controversial issues with neighboring countries and their peaceful resolution;

⁶³ Perry, W. Remarks by Secretary of Defense to the Wehrkunde Conference on Security Policy, Munich, Germany. - 1996. Available at: <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/1996/2/28/senate-section/article/S1395-1>, accessed 13.04.2022.

- Readiness to make a military contribution to the Alliance and to cooperate with its other member states.⁶⁴

The geographic scope of the enlargement has been a source of debate among the Alliance's members for many years. After the Cold War, the Baltic states and several Eastern European countries joined the Alliance. However, the membership of Georgia and Ukraine was not as certain and created some division of opinion regarding enlargement. The 2008 Bucharest Summit Declaration stated that the countries would eventually become members of NATO, but the French and German leaders objected to further expansion of the Alliance with those countries. They argued that future enlargement should be at the expense of security providers, not consumers.⁶⁵

The 1990s were a notable time for the Alliance when it came to enlargement. It was a major challenge for many countries since it affected the interests of the member countries as well as those of the international community as a whole. In 1999, the Alliance enlarged for the first time since the end of the Cold War, bringing in three new members.

Following the end of the Cold War, enlargement progressed gradually. In 1999, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary joined NATO. Then, in 2004, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia became members. Albania and Croatia followed this expansion process in 2009. Montenegro and North Macedonia made the final list in 2017 and 2020, respectively. The table of NATO waves of enlargement is given in Appendix A.

Thus, NATO began to fill progressively in Europe created after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact.

As a rule, the United States had the final say in NATO. However, the United States was hesitant to make a decision on enlargement, highlighting disagreements

⁶⁴ Study on NATO Enlargement”, NATO On-line library. – 1995. Available at: <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/enl-9501.htm>, accessed 13.04.2022.

⁶⁵ John. M. After Balkans duo, NATO enlargement to slow / M. John // Reuters. – 2009. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/newsMaps/idUSTRE5304ZU20090401>, accessed 13.04.2022.

within the administration about the practicability of enlargement. As a result, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland were invited to join the Alliance. But it was made clear that NATO's door would remain open to other countries. There were four factors behind this decision. First, while Romania and Slovenia had advocates in the U.S. Senate, it was considered easier to get the necessary Senate support for these three new members only. Second, NATO initially needed to handle the enlargement step by step. As one senior official said, "NATO enlargement is a great leap into the unknown and it will be anything but easy to make it work."⁶⁶

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's 12th Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen estimates this development to be favorable. NATO enlargement, in his words, has never proved to be a threat to Russia or any other country. "After the end of the Cold War, some felt that the Alliance lost its reason to exist. Instead, NATO turned into a real engine for positive change, reaching out to countries all over Europe, helping former foes to become friends, and opening its doors to new members," he said.⁶⁷

In 2022 the current NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg stated at the press conference that NATO enlargement has been a historic success, spreading democracy, freedom, and prosperity across Europe.⁶⁸

Enlargement of NATO's "open-door policy" is an ongoing and dynamic process based on Article 10 of the Washington Treaty. This article establishes that membership is an option available to any European state that can adopt the principles of the treaty and contribute to the security of the North Atlantic region.⁶⁹ As stated on the

⁶⁶ Drozdiak, W. U.S., Allies Split on NATO / W. Drozdiak // Washington Post. - 1997, p. A25.

⁶⁷ Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, NATO: A Changing Alliance in a Changing World. - 2001. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_73986.htm, accessed 19.04.2022.

⁶⁸ Press conference by NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg following the extraordinary Summit of NATO Heads of State and Government/ - 2022. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_193613.htm?selectedLocale=en, accessed 19.04.2022.

⁶⁹ The North Atlantic Treaty, published by the North Atlantic Assembly. -1949. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm, accessed 15.04.2022.

official NATO website, NATO enlargement has helped increase stability and prosperity in Europe. It is aimed at promoting stability and cooperation, and at building a Europe united in peace, democracy, and common values.⁷⁰

It is worth emphasizing that the basic principle for enlargement is that it is a win-win process, not a one-way partnership. That is, new member countries should not only benefit from the Alliance but also be contributing to collective defense and be committed to participate in other Alliance missions.⁷¹

As such they are to be expected to meet the political, economic, and military requirements that are particularly covered in the NATO Enlargement Study, 1995.

NATO enlargement has undeniably provoked many controversies among NATO members and candidate countries as well, especially concerning relations between NATO and Russia. It is clearly evident that the process of NATO enlargement has not been an uncomplicated process with no disagreements.

Although the issue of enlargement does not occur as a theme of discussion in all summit declarations, after the Prague Summit of 2002, special attention has been paid to NATO's expectations and goals for future enlargement.

The main argument in favor of NATO enlargement is that in case of a threat, an enlarged NATO will be more prepared to deal with the problem. However, experience shows that NATO enlargement will not affect the willingness or unwillingness of the countries to deal with ethnic, racial, and religious issues. NATO enlargement, on the contrary, carries with it the possibility of weakening the Alliance by admitting countries unprepared to join and unable to bring anything to the Alliance, but only to gain benefits for themselves.

⁷⁰ NATO Enlargement & Open Door. – 2016. Available at: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_07/20160627_1607-factsheet-enlargement-eng.pdf, accessed 15.04.2022.

⁷¹ Trifunovska, S. The Transatlantic alliance on the eve of the new millennium / S. Trifunovska. - 1996. p.305.

In summary, the beginning of enlargement that preceded the end of the Cold War has become weaker in the new millennium. In the 21st century, the issue of homogeneity and manageability of the Alliance and how this might affect security in Europe is on the agenda.

Thus, while the emphasis in the nineties was on enlargement, the focus has now shifted slightly. Organizations were admitting new states that were not ready for membership. Expansion during the Cold War and the post-Cold War period took very different paths, but both had the goal of uniting Europe and bringing a sense of stability and security to the European continent.

Furthermore, the matter of continued NATO expansion is not officially off the agenda, although most analysts understand that it risks further straining relations with Russia and weakening the Alliance's actual capabilities as it takes on responsibility for the security of an increasing number of weaker states.

Conclusion to the first chapter

Thus, after the end of the Cold War, NATO faced a legitimization crisis. During the Cold War, NATO served as the territorial defense of member countries. At the present stage, NATO is being restructured, taking on new functions, and adapting to the new tasks that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Tools for such adaptation are various partnership programs, including the Partnership for Peace program, the involvement of former Soviet republics in the Alliance's security activities, and the enlargement of the Alliance to include countries that got their independence after the aforementioned disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, as part of this transformation, NATO has rethought its partnership programs so that the Alliance's partners can contribute to the organization instead of simply being a participant, a receiver rather than a giver. This clearly demonstrates the Alliance's interest in seeking to benefit itself rather than partner countries.

Chapter II. Key challenges and opportunities for NATO cooperation with the countries of the South Caucasus

2.1 The dynamics of NATO's relations with the South Caucasus states

In Western scientific literature, it is customary to use the term "South Caucasus" in relation to three states of the region - Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia.

In recent years, the term "South Caucasus" has become widespread in international documents to designate Transcaucasia, the former name of the Russian-language word *Zakavkazye*, meaning the area beyond the Caucasus. In fact, these terms are synonymous and interchangeable.

In the same region, there are Abkhazia and South Ossetia, whose independence is recognized only by Russia and three other countries, as well as the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. They do not exist as independent countries for NATO, but they pose security challenges.

To begin with, it is necessary to define what the South Caucasus represents as a region. For example, according to D. Lanko, countries such as Turkey, Israel, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan may be seen by some leaders as European and by others as Middle Eastern. The position towards these countries will depend on whether they are considered European or Middle Eastern. "Thus, the "Greater Caucasus" region, which included both the Russian North Caucasus and the South Caucasus states, disappeared from Russian perceptions of the regional structure of the world. This happened because part of the Russian elite, responsible for the development of the concept of foreign policy, in the period from 2000 to 2008, ceased to perceive the Transcaucasia as a region directly affecting the Russian North Caucasus."⁷²

Brzezinski defined the region of the South Caucasus as part of the Eurasian Balkans, making the situation in the region dependent on Central Asia and other external

⁷² Lanko, D. *Regional'nyj podhod v mezhdunarodnoj politike* / D. Lanko. – 2015. Available at: <https://www.prlib.ru/item/394322>, accessed 19.04.2022.

actors of world politics, including NATO, the EU, and the US, China, and the states bordering the region.

Oznobishchev defined the uniqueness of the region in the fact that it plays a special role in the geopolitical processes taking place in Eurasia, as it occupies a favorable position between North and South, West and East.⁷³

For the South Caucasus region, the new political reality after the collapse of the USSR resulted in a number of serious ethnopolitical conflicts, the causes of which have been accumulating for a long time.

By the year 2005, the system of state governance in the South Caucasus had been built to take into account the secession of Abkhazia and Ossetia, and the inclusion of Nagorno-Karabakh. By that time the geopolitical interests of the region's countries had become clearly differentiated: Georgia, which was interested in cooperation with the West, Azerbaijan, which was balancing between Russia and Iran, and Armenia, which was interested in cooperation with Russia.

After the 2008 war in the South Caucasus, the situation in the region became less predictable. If in the post-Soviet period, the map of the South Caucasus looked as follows: three recognized states, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, and three unrecognized states (Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, Abkhazia, South Ossetia). Subsequently, in 2008, Abkhazia and South Ossetia were partially recognized by Russia and a number of Latin American countries, and in 2018 by Syria.

At present, the South Caucasus is characterized by political instability due to many tensions (ethnic, territorial, and confessional). The most acute is the confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh. This conflict has rather deep historical roots, and the prospects for the resolution of the conflict are currently rather vague. In addition, the countries differ noticeably in their

⁷³ Oznobishchev, S. Kogo lechit' ot Gruzii? / S. Oznobishchev // *Mezhdunarodnye process*, - №2. - 2008 - p. 123-128.

choice of foreign policy course, which is reflected in the foreign policy strategies of the states in the region.

According to Markedonov, the South Caucasus is a strategically important region for both Russia and the Western EU and NATO, in particular, because of its territorial location at the junction of Europe and Eurasia, which is advantageous in the context of energy supplies. That gives the countries of the region a competitive advantage and the need to balance between the European and Eurasian organizations.⁷⁴

NATO's interest in the region

In the early 1990s, the South Caucasus was identified as one of the important regions for the foreign policy of the United States. There is an opinion that the main task of the United States and NATO is the political integration of the countries of the South Caucasus and, consequently, reducing the influence of Russia in this region. However, accession of the countries of the region to the Alliance is quite a controversial topic, with a number of opposing views on the issue. The dominant view is that accession of the South Caucasus countries to NATO is unlikely in the near future.

According to the 1997 Madrid Declaration of NATO, we can conclude that the South Caucasus was not particularly important for the Alliance at that time, because the region, as well as individual states, were not mentioned in the declaration. There was also no reference to the region in the 1999 Washington Summit either.

When NATO Secretary-General Robertson (1999-2004) visited Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2001, he indicated that the South Caucasus had no particular significance for the North Atlantic Alliance. He told both sides that NATO enlargement to the South Caucasus was unrealistic "for the foreseeable future". He commented that

⁷⁴ Markedonov, S. Pochemu protivorechiya na Yuzhnom Kavkaze ostayutsya nerazreshennymi? / S. Markedonov. – 2017. Available at: https://www.ponarseurasia.org/wp-content/uploads/attachments/Pepm465_rus_Markedonov_March2017.pdf, accessed 19.04.2022.

while any country can apply to join NATO, applications from South Caucasus states are mostly "theoretical".⁷⁵

This statement can be reasoned by the fact that prior to the NATO Prague Summit in 2002, when Georgia expressed its willingness to join the Alliance, there was no specific policy toward the region. Before that time, the South Caucasus had only been mentioned in the Brussels Summit Declaration of 1994, in the context of resolving conflicts in the region. However, after the 2002 Prague Summit, Robertson visited the region again in 2003 and declared the significance of the region for the security of Europe.

At the NATO summit in Istanbul in 2004, the theme of partnership with the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia was addressed, emphasizing the importance of partnership, which led to the creation of the position of special representatives of the Secretary-General in the regions. The declaration identified the South Caucasus as a strategically important region.

«Towards that end, NATO has agreed on improved liaison arrangements, including the assignment of two liaison officers, as well as a special representative for the two regions from within the International Staff. We welcome the decision by Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan to develop Individual Partnership Action Plans with NATO. This constitutes a significant step in these countries' efforts to develop closer partnership relations with the Alliance. We welcome the commitment of the new government of Georgia to reform».⁷⁶

The declaration of the NATO Riga Summit in 2006 referred to peaceful resolution of the conflicts in the South Caucasus, but without a clear definition of the format for resolving these conflicts. Despite the fact that the main goal of the Alliance

⁷⁵ Tadevosian, A. NATO Refuses to Take Sides. – 2001. Available at: <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/nato-refuses-take-sides>, accessed 20.04.2022.

⁷⁶ NATO Press Release, Istanbul Summit Communiqué, issued by the heads of state and government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, abstracts 3 and 31. – 2004. Available at www.nato.int/docu/pr/2004/p04-096e.htm, accessed 20.04.2022.

in the region was to achieve global stability, NATO was not ready to commit itself to ensure this very security.⁷⁷ According to the statements of NATO Military Committee Chairman R. Eno, in 2006 it was unacceptable for NATO peacekeeping forces to be involved in ensuring security in the South Caucasus.⁷⁸

A considerable amount of interest in the document was devoted to Georgia in the context of the state's intentions to join the Alliance. The document stated in paragraph 37 that there would be an "intensified dialogue" on the issue. However, membership was not explicitly mentioned. Georgia's contribution was assessed in the context of its contribution to international peace and security operations.

At the Bucharest Summit in 2008, a separate paragraph in the declaration highlighted that NATO is concerned about the continuing conflicts in the region. According to the declaration, the Alliance "supports the territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia and will continue to support efforts to resolve these regional conflicts peacefully". In the declaration, it was also stated that the Alliance welcomes Georgia's membership aspirations and supports the country's application for a membership action plan.⁷⁹

Analyzing the 2009 Strasbourg / Kehl summit declaration, it can be noted that the language on the South Caucasus region remains the same: the Alliance is concerned about the persistence of protracted conflicts in the region and supports territorial integrity of the South Caucasus countries. In addition, the paragraph on the South Caucasus was supplemented with an appeal to avoid actions that would endanger security and stability in the region and to respect the negotiation formats. In

⁷⁷ Riga Summit Declaration, NATO Press Releases, paragraphs 39 and 43. – 2006. Available at: <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2006/p06-150e.htm>, accessed 20.04.2022.

⁷⁸ Malek, M. NATO and the South Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia on different tracks / M. Malek // Partnership for Peace consortium of defense academies and security studies institutes. – 2008. Vol. 7, № 3. P. 49.

⁷⁹ NATO Press Release, Bucharest Summit Declaration, issued by the heads of state and government. – 2008. Available at: www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-049e.html, accessed 21.04.2022.

addition, it was said that the organization welcomes the efforts of the OSCE in the South Caucasus.⁸⁰

At the following NATO summits in Lisbon 2010, Chicago 2012, Wales 2014, Warsaw 2016, and Brussels 2018, the South Caucasus was not given much attention in the declarations. The language regarding the situation in the region remained at the same level as in previous Alliance summits, which indicated that NATO was concerned about the protracted conflicts in the region and supported the territorial integrity of the countries.

In 2013 the region was stated of significant importance in the official NATO website: “Since the early 1990s, NATO has gradually deepened dialogue and cooperation with Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. All three partners have provided valuable support for NATO-led operations and have also benefited from NATO's support in strengthening and reforming security and defense-related capabilities.”⁸¹

Particular attention should be paid to the Brussels Summit Declaration 2021, where the South Caucasus was not mentioned as a region at all. Of the entire region, only Georgia, whose territorial integrity the Alliance supports, was singled out. In the declaration, the Alliance also calls on Russia to refuse to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states.⁸²

We can see changes in the dynamics of relations between the countries of the region and NATO members. Since their independence, the relations of the South Caucasus countries and NATO reached the level of active interaction, as demonstrated by various cooperation programs. However, in the 21st century, cooperation lost the intensity that was in the relations in the previous century. Since 2002, the

⁸⁰ NATO Press Release, Strasbourg / Kehl Summit Declaration, issued by the heads of state and government. – 2009. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52837.htm, accessed 22.04.2022.

⁸¹ NATO's partners in the South Caucasus, NATO Web-site. – 2012. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_89866.htm?selectedLocale=en, accessed 23.04.2022.

⁸² NATO Press Release, Brussels Summit Communiqué, issued by the heads of state and government. – 2021. Available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm, accessed 25.04.2022.

Alliance's documents have mostly paid attention to Georgia of all the South Caucasian countries. As can be seen from the table (Appendix B), only Georgia among the South Caucasian countries received special attention in the declarations of the NATO summits. Meanwhile, the South Caucasus region itself was touched upon at the summits in repetitive language regarding the expectation of security in the region, without offering specific measures to combat local conflicts, which makes it clear that the Alliance is not ready to take responsibility for the events taking place in the region.

In addition, interest in the South Caucasus region has been sparked by a change in U.S. policy toward countering the global threat of terrorism. According to V. Sokor, the United States has placed great emphasis on combating international terrorism, while ignoring traditional military threats.⁸³ However, there is an opinion that the US and NATO only use the factor of terrorism to justify their attempts to expand their spheres of influence in various regions, including the South Caucasus. In this context, the role of the South Caucasus countries has become much more important. In a 2010 Congressional Research Service report, Azerbaijan was cited as an important energy supplier, Georgia as a model of democratic reform in the post-Soviet space and a key channel through which Caspian energy resources flow. Nevertheless, the document pays relatively little attention to Armenia, which is mentioned only in the context of international crime and the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Thus, we can conclude that the South Caucasus countries can be classified into two categories in the context of cooperation with NATO: 1) those interested in membership and further strengthening cooperation (Georgia); 2) those interested in partial cooperation due to different internal or external interests (Armenia and Azerbaijan).

⁸³ Sokor, V. NATO Prospects in the South Caucasus / V. Sokor // Report, The Central-Asia Caucasus Institute. – 2004.

Speaking of NATO interests in the region, the South Caucasus started to get a lot of attention in NATO Summit declarations since 2002. However, having analyzed Summit documents from 1990 to 2021, we can conclude that NATO does not consider serious political or military actions to enhance the Alliance's peacekeeping role in the region.

2.2 Specifics of NATO-Armenia relations

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, all of the former republics were facing political and socio-economic challenges.

After gaining independence, Armenia began to develop a foreign policy course to secure its national interests. Gaining independence led to the need to build its foreign policy from the ground up. During the collapse of the USSR, the Armenian authorities found themselves in a difficult position, having to search for a way out of the difficult economic and political situation, which led to the definition of the foreign policy doctrine of the state based on the principle of complementarity, i.e., the refusal to focus on any single external center of power.

Furthermore, the situation was complicated by the escalation of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, which emerged in parallel with the collapse of the USSR. With the collapse of the USSR, the two newly independent states of Armenia and Azerbaijan were engaged in a military-political confrontation.

Throughout the conflict, Karabakh became a crucial element of the national identity of post-Soviet Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the elites of these countries learnt to use the confrontation to strengthen their power.

Relations between Armenia and NATO began in 1992 when the country joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. Later it was renamed the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). Armenia has been a member of EAPC since 1997. An important milestone in NATO-Armenia relations was the country's accession to the Partnership for Peace program in 1994.

In 2004, at the NATO summit in Istanbul, it was proposed to establish a special representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia, who would also "supervise" Armenia.

Political scientist R. Giragosian believes that after the gaining of independence by Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, the West immediately began to pursue the following policy in the region:

- Supporting democratization and political reforms, despite the fact that elections in the countries of the region are still held with violations;
- Targeted support and assistance for privatization and marketization of the economies;
- Increasingly unfolding security and counterterrorism measures;
- Efforts to resolve conflicts in the region, including Western mediation.⁸⁴

On September 27, 2020, hostilities resumed between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. On November 9, 2020, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia signed a cease-fire agreement imposed by Russia, under which Armenia loses territories acquired during the first conflict of 1988-1994. NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Central Asia and the Caucasus James Appathurai said that NATO is concerned about the situation: "The sides should immediately cease hostilities, which have already caused civilian casualties. There is no military solution to this conflict. The parties should resume negotiations towards a peaceful resolution".⁸⁵

The main aspects of cooperation

NATO and Armenia cooperate in different areas within the framework of the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP), which was first presented by Armenia in

⁸⁴ Giragosyan R. Zapad i Yuzhnyj Kavkaz v 2010 g. / R. Giragosyan // Ezhegodnik Instituta Kavkaza, ed. A. Iskandaryan. - 2012. P. 156.

⁸⁵ Statement by James Appathurai, the Secretary General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia. - 2020. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_178333.htm, accessed 19.05.2022, accessed 29.04.2022.

2005, and since 2006 the first implementation cycle was initiated. Implementation is aimed at strengthening and reinforcing democratic control of the armed forces and at raising public awareness of cooperation with the Alliance. Armenia's participation in the IPAP includes strategy development and periodic consultations with NATO on regional security, and improvement of the defense and budget planning process.

At the same time, the IPAP is quite extensive, which means Armenia is cooperating with the Alliance not only in the defense sphere. The country regularly consults with the member countries of the Alliance about a number of problems, such as combating terrorism and the problems of corruption. It is important to note that the IPAP is a flexible document, which allows it to be amended which happens once in a few years period of time.

Another area of Armenia-NATO cooperation is the Science for Peace and Security program. The Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister commented on the usefulness of the program, saying that it is one of NATO's tools for ensuring security. He added that this program serves as a tool in the fight against terrorism, cybercrime, biological and nuclear weapons, etc.⁸⁶

Through public diplomacy activities, Armenia regularly educates the public about its partnership with the Alliance. On this basis, NATO Weeks are held annually in Armenia.

In 2004 Armenia joined NATO-led peacekeeping operations in Kosovo, in 2010 in Afghanistan (ISAF), and in 2015 "Resolute Support". Armenia's participation in these peacekeeping operations allowed the country to be a contributor rather than a consumer.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Armenia attaches importance to NATO's "Science for Peace and Security" Program, ArmenPress. – 2016. Available at: <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/868257/armenia-attaches-importance-to-nato's-“science-for-peace-and-security”-program.html>, accessed 01.05.2022.

⁸⁷ Armenia-NATO relations, Official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia. Available at: <https://www.mfa.am/ru/international-organisations/3>, accessed 01.05.2022.

Since 2007 a NATO Information Center has been officially established in Armenia, which also raises public awareness of the partnership between Armenia and NATO.

NATO-Armenia cooperation is aimed at reforms in the defense and security areas, which are carried out according to an individual partnership plan with NATO. This requires strengthening democratic control and civilian oversight of the country's armed forces.

Cooperation with NATO is important for Armenia to develop bilateral relations with member countries of the Alliance, develop personal armed forces and balance Azerbaijan's efforts in the local conflict in the South Caucasus. Armenian Minister of Defense S. Ohanyan made a statement at a joint press conference with Lithuanian Minister of Defense Y. Olekas on April 23, 2014: "Our relations with the North Atlantic Alliance are permanent; the obligations that result from the development of cooperation in relevant areas will remain, and we will implement these arrangements until the completion."⁸⁸

The main element of NATO's policy towards the South Caucasus was the regional approach. Because of the rather confusing security situation in the region and the importance of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, it was important to note the importance of addressing security concerns in the region. Defense Minister David Tonoyan stressed that Armenia's perceptions of security are strongly influenced by Turkey's position in the region, which influences Armenian policy towards NATO, as well as the importance of Russia to the country.³⁷ At the same time, the importance of NATO for Armenia cannot be underestimated due to the global significance of the international organization. According to *Baltic Defense Review*, deepening relations between Armenia and NATO is very beneficial and is aimed at achieving the following goals:

⁸⁸ Ministr oborony Armenii kvalificiruet sotrudnichestvo s NATO kak «postoyannoe», Radio azatutyun. – 2014. Available at: <https://rus.azatutyun.am/a/25359991.html>, accessed 10.05.2022.

- Fostering a political dialogue on international security issues;
- Creating units that are interoperable with NATO and capable of participating in international peacekeeping missions;
- Using PfP programs to reform Armenia's armed forces;
- Strengthening bilateral political-military ties with NATO members and partners.⁸⁹

U.S. and NATO's interests

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, relations between Armenia and the United States were well established. Initially, the United States supported the rights of Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh to self-determination. However, despite Armenia receiving U.S. support in this issue, the U.S. authorities understood the strategic importance of Azerbaijan, thereby weakening support for Armenia. Strategic interests include energy wealth and advantageous strategic location.

Relations between Armenia and the U.S. are complicated by Armenia's close relations with Iran and difficulties with Turkey. Nevertheless, the U.S. encouraged Armenia's participation in the NATO Partnership for Peace program. However, despite the possibility of close cooperation, Armenia declared that it does not seek permanent membership in NATO.⁹⁰

According to American analyst Ariel Cohen, the U.S. has the following interests in the South Caucasus:

- 1) Ensuring the territorial independence of the states within the region, namely Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan;
- 2) Containment of Iran until the emergence of pro-Western policies in the country, or until another regime comes to power;

⁸⁹ Aghabekyan, A. National Security Policy and Defense Structures' Development Programme of Armenia / A. Aghabekyan // *Baltic Defense Review* 3. – 2003. P.26.

⁹⁰ NATO, NATO's Relations with Armenia. – 2009. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_48893.htm, accessed 10.05.2022.

3) Ensuring access to energy resources.⁹¹

Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)

An important aspect is the fact that Armenia is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Nonetheless, the charter of the organization does not restrict member countries from cooperation with other international organizations. Despite this, Armenia's membership in the CSTO and close security relations with Russia strengthened the view in the West that close cooperation between Armenia and NATO is not very probable.

Armenian President Robert Kocharyan (1998-2008) said that Armenia's membership in NATO would mean deteriorating relations with neighboring countries and unlikely improvements in national security. His successor S. Sarkisyan agreed with this position. Consequently, this course was set in the Armenian National Security Strategy that was approved on January 26, 2007. In this document, cooperation with the CSTO is of higher priority than cooperation with NATO.⁹²

In December 2007, President Kocharian signed Armenia's defense doctrine, which continued the course of strengthening ties with the CSTO. The document clearly displayed the idea that the strategic partnership with Russia is a priority for Armenia. Only one paragraph mentions the cooperation with NATO in the framework of the Partnership for Peace program.⁹³

Currently, Armenia's national security strategy 2020 has a separate clause on cooperation with NATO, which states that defense sector reform and support for international peacekeeping operations is one of the main areas of cooperation between Armenia and NATO. The strategy states that Armenia will continue the political

⁹¹ Koen A. SSHA, Strany Central'noj Azii i Kavkaza: Problemy i perspektivy vzaimootnoshenij / A. Koen // Central'naya Aziya i Kavkaz. - 2000. № 2 (8). P. 29–50. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325991880_The_US_Strategy_in_the_Central_Asian_Region, accessed 08.05.2022.

⁹² Armenian National Security. – 2007. Available at: www.mil.am/eng/index.php?page=49, accessed 15.05.2022.

⁹³ The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Armenia. – 2007. Available at: www.mil.am/eng/index.php?page=104, accessed 15.05.2022.

dialogue with NATO in the sphere of defense and security, as an element of strengthening Armenia's defense capabilities. As for the CSTO, the strategy says that Armenia actively participates in joint initiatives within the CSTO, aimed at effective protection of mutual interests of member states and development of institutional capacity. This paragraph states that the country will continue to work to ensure the fulfillment of allied obligations by the CSTO member states and increase its organizational effectiveness.⁹⁴ It can be concluded that Armenia is currently in a position of having to balance between the two organizations without turning to one side or the other.

As for NATO enlargement policies, Armenia viewed NATO enlargement in 1999 and 2004 with quite a skepticism. Kocharian was critical of Georgia's application to join the Alliance. This skepticism was partly due to the fact that Turkey is a member of NATO, and relations between Turkey and Armenia have not been straightforward for many years. Turkey has also been accused in Armenia of hindering cooperation between Armenia and NATO.

Accordingly, Armenia has to balance between the two Alliances. In this regard, cooperation with the Alliance within the framework of the Partnership for Peace program is a rather useful tool for security cooperation. Every year Armenia participates in many of the activities under this program. The program is useful for the country to increase the level of the army's efficiency. The Alliance is also beneficial to the country from the political point of view, i.e., through cooperation with NATO, Armenia can establish bilateral relations with the member countries of the Alliance.

It is also worth mentioning that despite its close cooperation with NATO, Armenia keeps a respectful distance from the Alliance because of its dependence on Russia in the security sphere. Armenia's closest neighbors, Georgia and Azerbaijan, are

⁹⁴ National security strategy of the republic of Armenia. – 2020. Available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1J-IsxkqsWOJ8YhmKTnizWtu6-vKadGXe/view>, accessed 15.05.2022.

pursuing an entirely different policy, seeking to strengthen ties with NATO and its members.

Despite the fact that Armenia intends to intensify practical and political cooperation with NATO to bring it closer to the Alliance, the country does not seek membership in NATO.⁹⁵

Thus, we can draw the following conclusions about NATO-Armenia relations:

First, cooperation with the Alliance is firmly established in Armenia's national political agenda as an important objective in line with the country's security interests.

Second, for Armenia, the benefits of cooperation with NATO are to improve the country's military capabilities, given the tense relations with Azerbaijan in the context of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, which is reflected in the national strategic documents. This is clearly visible in the consistent repetition of the same statements in all IPAP documents.

Third, with regard to the country's participation in the Partnership for Peace program, the main motivating factors for joining the program were the risk of falling behind their neighbors, Georgia and Azerbaijan, and the need to be informed about the assistance and training provided to Azerbaijan.

Fourth, it can be said that obligations under the CSTO treaty and Russia's military guarantees do not prevent Armenia from forming close relations with NATO.

At the same time, NATO has interests in the entire region due to its geopolitical position and the current conflict situation. However, the Alliance is in a position to structure its policy according to the priorities of the countries in the region and does not seek to take the side of one or the other country. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, the Alliance comments on the conflict from an outsider's perspective, expressing concern about the situation in the region and calling on countries to resolve the conflict peacefully, while not singling out any side.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 67.

2.3 Specifics of NATO-Azerbaijan relations

On August 30, 1991, Azerbaijan declared its independence from the Soviet Union. The new government was headed by Ayaz Mutalibov. Mutalibov was counting on a strategic partnership with Russia and considered Russia as the main mediator of the South Caucasus.⁹⁶ Besides that, he also expected Russia's help in the territorial issue concerning the disputed territories with Armenia.

Following Azerbaijan's independence in 1991, the republic faced the challenges of the post-Soviet period. Among the many challenges the country faced, the most acute for Azerbaijan was the territorial conflict caused by the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. Fighting over the disputed territory saddened the independence almost immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union and lasted until 1994, when a cease-fire was signed, as a result of which Azerbaijan lost the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. It was only possible to regain control of the territories after the military intensification of the conflict in the fall of 2020.

The Karabakh conflict consumed considerable Azerbaijani resources for territorial integrity and security efforts. Despite this, through successful energy projects, the country managed to solve many internal and external political problems and overcome the consequences of the post-independence crisis.

In the first years after independence, Azerbaijan was determined to strengthen relations with the West, but the situation was aggravated by failure in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Due to the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan looked vulnerable in terms of security. Therefore, the national security and energy projects of the country became a priority.

The problem of integration into the world community became the key one for the newly formed country. Thus, an orientation towards an external force was as-

⁹⁶ Cornell, S. *Azerbaijan since Independence. Studies of Central Asia and the Caucasus Series / S. Cornell // New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc. – 2011.*

sumed in order to build the country's national interests. At various times after Azerbaijan's independence, such forces were Russia, the United States, Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, and Iran. However, the key players in this context were Russia and the US. Thus, Azerbaijan has been and remains an arena of the struggle of stronger and more significant states.

Since the 1990s, Azerbaijan's foreign policy advisor V. Guluzadeh actively defended the position that Azerbaijan should become a member of NATO. However, this opinion caused a negative reaction from Russia, and NATO, in turn, reacted by keeping silent. Therefore, the country's leadership refrained from such statements and built relations with the Alliance outside the framework of membership. In 2007 the President of Azerbaijan stated in an interview with Deutsche Welle that Azerbaijan was not ready for membership in the Alliance, calling accession an unrealistic goal.⁹⁷ In spite of this, according to Azerbaijan's National Security Concept 2007, there was a whole chapter dedicated to the country's integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures.⁹⁸

On the other hand, it is important for Azerbaijan to maintain balanced relations with Russia. Yet, the country's membership in the CSTO is not a goal, nor is membership in NATO. Assessing the events in Georgia in 2008, it can be concluded that Azerbaijan is seeking to avoid confrontation with Russia. Nevertheless, in the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh Russia tends to support Armenia, which does not prevent Moscow and Baku from maintaining and developing close military-technical cooperation.

NATO interests

Azerbaijan's cooperation with the United States and NATO began in the 1990s. The main factor for the development of relations with NATO was the Nagorno-

⁹⁷ Azerbaidzhan mozhets vstupit v NATO. – 2007. Available at www.day.az/print/news/politics/71190.html, accessed 15.05.2022.

⁹⁸ Azerbaijan National Security Concept. – 2007. Available at: www.mfa.gov.az/ssi_eng/foreign_policy/inter_affairs/nsc/NSC.pdf, accessed 15.05.2022.

Karabakh conflict with Armenia. In connection with this conflict, cooperation with the North Atlantic Alliance has always been important for Azerbaijan.

According to the annual reports of the US Department of State on the CIS countries, the priority directions of the US policy in Azerbaijan are the strengthening of the regional security, in particular, the solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the fight against international terrorism, energy security, support for economic and political reforms.⁹⁹

The country is reconstructing its army according to Alliance standards. And NATO's interest in Azerbaijan is that the South Caucasus region is of great strategic importance. Moreover, important is the fact that Azerbaijan has large natural resources, which is an area of interest for many NATO member states.

It should be noted that the geopolitical position of Azerbaijan has always interested the actors of world politics, both neighboring and beyond. The leading countries of the world are interested in the country not only because of its abundance of useful natural resources but also because of its geopolitical position. It is in the South Caucasus the vital interests of the world's leading countries. It is a region of complex political, social, national, religious, and ethnic tensions that could lead to the use of military force at any level, as the Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgian-Abkhaz, and Georgian-Ossetian conflicts in the 1990s so clearly showed. Thus, Azerbaijan is in a very favorable position due to the struggle of international actors for spheres of influence in the Caspian region. According to Zbigniew Brzezinski, Azerbaijan is of key importance in the geopolitical aspect, despite its relatively small territory.

In addition, NATO's interest in Azerbaijan lies in the country's independent policy and principled policy to strengthen its sovereignty. Also, after Azerbaijan concluded oil contracts with major foreign companies, Azerbaijan's influence on international relations increased significantly. Through the territory of Azerbaijan, as

⁹⁹ U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with Eurasia. Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. - 2006. Available at: <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rpt/c17328.htm>, accessed 15.05.2022.

well as through the territory of Georgia, there are ways of supply bypassing the territory of Russia, for example, hydrocarbons from Central Asia. In addition, there was an unrealized project of the Nabucco gas pipeline, running from Iran to the EU countries through Azerbaijan. U.S. interests in this context were to stabilize the Caspian region in order to preserve the flow of goods to the West, instead of allowing Russia, China, and Iran to monopolize it.

Cooperation with the Alliance

Relations between NATO and Azerbaijan began to develop in 1992 when Azerbaijan joined the North Atlantic Partnership Council. The President of Azerbaijan A. Elchibey (17.06.1992 - 24.06.1993) stated that the country intended to give preference to the deepening of relations with the Alliance and the USA. This policy was continued under the presidency of H. Aliyev (10.10.1993 - 31.10.2003). The intention to deepen relations with NATO was conditioned by the fact that Azerbaijan did not receive the expected support from Russia in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. In addition, Turkey, as a member of the Alliance, supported Azerbaijan on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.

In 1991, the idea of Azerbaijan joining NATO was first mentioned by Foreign Minister G. Sadikhov. In his opinion, Azerbaijan's accession to the Alliance was necessary.¹⁰⁰ And in 1992, Azerbaijan signed a military cooperation treaty with Turkey, under which Azerbaijan received considerable assistance in the defense sphere from the member country of the Alliance.

NATO's interest toward Azerbaijan increased significantly in 1993 after the announcement of the Alliance's going beyond its area of responsibility to the South Caucasus.

¹⁰⁰ NATO i Azerbajdzhan. IAP «NATO.RF». Available at: <https://nato.pf/ru/azerbaijan.html>, accessed 29.05.2022.

The deep relationship between the Alliance and the country began in 1994, when Azerbaijan, like its closest neighbors, joined NATO's Partnership for Peace program. President Aliyev signed the partnership agreement and declared that he hoped the Alliance would help Azerbaijan and the Western countries build close and multilateral relations and help resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.¹⁰¹

By joining the PfP, Azerbaijan was able to join the collective security system provided by the Alliance. It was beneficial for Azerbaijan in terms of using NATO's authority to strengthen its independence and resolve regional conflicts. In addition, cooperation with the Alliance gave Azerbaijan the opportunity to strengthen relations with the U.S. and European countries, which was beneficial in terms of strengthening its position as a newly formed country. In addition to economic benefits, Azerbaijan cooperated with the military structures of the Alliance and conducted joint exercises.

Azerbaijan has participated in NATO-led peacekeeping operations authorized by UN Security Council resolutions. Azerbaijan participated in the NATO KFOR operation in 1999-2008 and in the NATO-led ISAF operation in Afghanistan in 2002-2014.

In 2005, Azerbaijan signed the first Individual Partnership Action Plan. It allows for regular political dialogue, systematizes bilateral cooperation to be a major tool, and agrees on new cooperation projects of mutual interest in a more flexible way.

Starting from 2011, the intensity of cooperation between Azerbaijan and the Alliance decreased considerably due to the fact that this year Azerbaijan joined the Non-Aligned Movement, which is based on non-participation in military-political blocs. Although Azerbaijan's Constitution does not define neutrality as a mandatory approach in international relations, problems related to regional instability, as well

¹⁰¹ Azerbajdzhan - NATO. Nezvisimyj Azerbajdzhan. Available at: https://republic.preslib.az/ru_a7-8.html, accessed 19.05.2022.

as the problem with Nagorno-Karabakh, have made this strategy necessary in foreign policy. Azerbaijan always declares that it pursues a balanced foreign policy, trying to play maneuver in the games of major powers for influence in the region.

Cooperation between Azerbaijan and NATO in the first two decades of relations included military reforms of the country in accordance with the organization's standards, cooperation in the fight against international terrorism, and the country's participation in NATO peacekeeping operations. In addition, an important focus is on awareness of the country's population about the Alliance and its programs. In 2006, the Euro-Atlantic Center was opened in Baku, which serves the function of informing the public about NATO.

Despite the joint activities, Azerbaijan's leaders didn't declare their intention to join NATO, emphasizing that the partnership program is quite suitable for the country. In addition, relations between Azerbaijan and NATO were not been as deep as in a number of other partner countries, such as Georgia.

Azerbaijan's attitude to the Alliance can be characterized as one of waiting. On the one hand, the country declares its readiness to deepen partnership relations, but on the other hand, it is in no hurry to move to a new level of relations with NATO. The reasons for this may be the unwillingness to complicate relations with such neighbors like Russia and Iran, the preservation of freedom of choice for itself, and the fear of the authorities about liberal reforms and the fight against corruption in the country.

Thus, after gaining independence, when the country was in search of political orientation, relations between Azerbaijan and Georgia started quite intensively, given the geopolitical interests of NATO countries in the region and in the country in particular. However, over time, Azerbaijan's policy has undergone evolutionary changes and has become more balanced. In the 21st century Azerbaijan, realizing

the advantageous geographical position and the interest of global actors in the country in connection with the development of energy projects, preferred to pursue a balancing policy between Russia and the North Atlantic Alliance.

The countries capable of influencing Azerbaijani policy are primarily the United States and Russia, each pursuing its own interests in the country. However, Azerbaijan's close cooperation with Turkey and Iran plays an important role in shaping the country's policy and has the greatest impact on the country.

NATO is interested in the cooperation with Azerbaijan due to the two main reasons, i.e., the country's geostrategic position which makes the country an area of interest for major international players; and the fact that Azerbaijan being a supplier of hydrocarbons, and the country's geographical position allows to supply natural resources bypassing Russia.

With NATO, Azerbaijan seeks a relationship that could diversify its policies and make it more strategic. NATO and Azerbaijan cooperate closely with low-level commitments, and Azerbaijan has no prospect of applying for full NATO membership in the near future. In its relations with NATO member Turkey, Azerbaijan enjoys cooperation with a greater degree of ease and flexibility. Currently, military cooperation between NATO and Azerbaijan is not detrimental to Russian interests in Azerbaijan, as it might be in the case of Armenia.

2. 4 Specifics of NATO-Georgia relations

The overall foreign policy situation in Georgia after independence was quite complicated. The situation was aggravated by problems in the economy of the country, a lack of conflict resolution methods, and a number of other factors that former Soviet republics had to deal with after the collapse of the Soviet Union. One of the main objectives for the newly formed country was to establish security and stability in the region. Friendly relations with neighboring countries could help achieve this goal.

The climate in Georgia since independence has been complicated by the following factors: the ethnopolitical conflict in South Ossetia, the war over the Republic of Abkhazia, and the violent struggle for power between rival political parties.

Since gaining independence, Georgia's political course has been focused on integration with the West, including NATO. The course was proclaimed in Georgia's defense doctrine in order to turn Georgia into a bridge between East and West.¹⁰²

Under Georgian President E. Shevardnadze (1995-2003) many initiatives to end conflicts were undertaken by the Georgian government. The republics that declared independence were also looking for ways to resolve conflicts, driven by the fact that the world community strongly continued to deny their independence.

An important stage for the country was the Rose Revolution, which caused serious changes in Georgia's political course. The change in Georgia's leadership after the Rose Revolution caused serious changes in both the domestic and foreign policy course of the country. After Saakashvili's coming to power (2004-2007; 2008-2013), the course followed by the new Georgian government was not fully in line with his declared intention to accelerate Georgia's integration into the Euro-Atlantic community. Saakashvili began to openly pursue a pro-Western course aimed at closer ties with NATO and the EU, directly contradicting Russian interests.

Georgia's foreign policy course in the early 1990s was adjusted by the events in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which led the country to join the CIS. However, this accession did not exclude a multi-vector policy to ensure state security.

The lack of progress in resolving local conflicts led the country's leadership to pursue a pro-Western and, at the same time, anti-Russian policy. Beginning in the 1990s, Georgian politicians began to talk more frequently about the need to integrate the country into NATO. This policy course is fixed in the official political documents of the country and remains constant with the replacement of leaders in the country.

¹⁰² Law of Georgia, on the defense of Georgia. – 1997. Available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/download/28330/12/en/pdf>, accessed 16.05.2022.

Among the political elite in the United States and NATO, it was commonly assumed that Georgia had been in a rather distressed condition since gaining independence and being an independent state, it was vulnerable to a lot of internal conflicts. The integrity of the country was being questioned, so the issue of Georgia's security was seen as one of the most urgent.

According to former U.S. Ambassador to Georgia W. Courtney, Georgia's economic position at the time of gaining independence posed a great threat to the country's security and, moreover, depended on humanitarian aid, including from the United States.¹⁰³

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the West was concerned about the possibility of radical Islam spreading to the newly formed countries of the South Caucasus, so NATO and US involvement in Georgia became important to prevent Islamic terrorism in the region.

In addition, NATO and the U.S. interest in Georgia lies in the possession of oil and gas resources in the country. The U.S. approved numerous pipeline strategies to bypass Russia and Iran, leading to the creation of an oil pipeline through Georgia.

Cooperation with the Alliance

Official cooperation between Georgia and NATO began after the country gained independence. In 1992, the country became a member of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (now the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC)). It was with the accession to the EAPC that military cooperation between Georgia and NATO began. However, during that time, there was no real impact of that cooperation.

An important objective for Georgia was to draw the Alliance's attention to the conflict in Abkhazia in order to gain NATO support. However, the most important purpose of the interaction with the Alliance was to obtain guarantees from NATO

¹⁰³ Gamkrelidze, N. From failing state to strategic partner: analyzing US and NATO political elite images of Georgia and policy implications from 1991 to 2020 / N. Gamkrelidze // *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol.37 (6). – 2021.

regarding Georgia's territorial integrity, which could then allow the Alliance to become involved in resolving regional conflicts while making NATO a guarantee for Georgia's security.

An important stage in Georgia's relations with NATO is Georgia's accession to the Partnership for Peace Program in 1994. It was with the accession to the PfP that actual cooperation between Georgia and the Alliance began. In 1994, NATO Secretary-General M. Werner and Georgian Foreign Minister A. Chikvaidze declared their intentions to turn Georgia into a "bastion of transatlantic security".¹⁰⁴

It is important to note Turkey's role in Georgia's relations with NATO. Turkey has greatly contributed to the advancement of the Western foreign policy course of Georgia's policy. For Georgia, Turkey was perceived as a country belonging to the Western world and with which close foreign policy relations should be built. Turkey, in turn, took responsibility for Georgia's promotion to NATO. It was due to Turkey's facilitation that the first contacts between Georgia and NATO in the framework of the NACC took place.¹⁰⁵

The first document of multilateral cooperation between Georgia and the Alliance was the Status of Forces Agreement, SOFA, ratified as part of the Partnership for Peace program. According to that agreement, it respects the principle of territorial integrity, which implies stationing foreign military forces on the Georgian territory.¹⁰⁶ Recognition of territorial integrity by the Alliance was considered important for Georgia, and it was subsequently reflected in the majority of NATO summit declarations.

¹⁰⁴ Gudiashvili, D. Integraciya v struktury NATO – vneshnepoliticheskij prioritet Gruzii / D. Gudiashvili // Central'naya Aziya i Kavkaz, No4 (28), CA&CC Press, Sweden. - 2003.

¹⁰⁵ Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. – 2020. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49276.htm, accessed 16.05.2022.

¹⁰⁶ Partnership for Peace Status of Forces Agreement, NATO Official Website. – 2014. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50086.htm, accessed 16.05.2022.

In 1997, Georgia participated for the first time in a joint operation with NATO forces in Kosovo. Since then, the country has been actively participating in the Alliance's peacekeeping missions. And from the beginning of the 2000s, exercises with Alliance partner countries began to be actively conducted in Georgia.¹⁰⁷ According to the official NATO website, "Georgia is one of the largest non-NATO troop contributors to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan."¹⁰⁸ Thus, Georgia shows its seriousness in joining the row of NATO member states and shows that the already existing cooperation is being paid off.

In 1999, Georgia joined the special program of cooperation between NATO and partner countries in the field of defense planning "Planning and Review Process" (PARP). These processes brought about changes in Georgia's foreign policy: first of all, in the same year, Georgia withdrew from the Collective Security Treaty Organization, thereby finally opting for a pro-American foreign policy orientation. These actions led to the fact that Georgia, with the assistance and approval of NATO countries, especially the United States, decided to demand the withdrawal of Russian troops from its territory.

A significant episode in the history of NATO-Georgia relations was the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council meeting in Prague in 2002, at which Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze expressed the country's desire to become a NATO member.¹⁰⁹ He noted that Georgia was ready to do its utmost to prepare worthily for admission. However, expectations about potential integration were exaggerated.

One likely reason for that decision was the widespread perception that Georgia, being a small state, was incapable of ensuring its own military security on its own,

¹⁰⁷ Georgia and NATO: Key Dates / Information center on NATO and EU. Available at: <https://old.infocenter.gov.ge/eng-nato-important-dates/>, accessed 17.05.2022.

¹⁰⁸ NATO-Georgia relations, NATO website. – 2014. Available at: https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2014_04/20140331_140401-media-backgrounder-georgia_en.pdf, accessed 19.05.2022.

¹⁰⁹ Statement by President of Georgia Eduard Shevardnadze at the EAPC Summit. – 2002. Available at: <https://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2002/s021122h.htm>, accessed 18.05.2022.

and needed the proper support from NATO. The second reason for the shift in Georgian foreign policy was that the country's political elite was dissatisfied with the peacekeeping efforts of Russia and the CIS in resolving the frozen conflicts, accusing Russia of supporting separatism.

Because Georgia did not qualify for membership in the Alliance, it was offered an Individual Partnership Action Plan for political partnership. Compared to the Membership Action Plan, the Individual Partnership Action Plan did not offer membership in the future. In 2004, the first individual action plan was approved for a period of 2 years, which was seen in Georgia as an important stage in its integration into the Euro-Atlantic community.

The pre-existing relationship was strengthened after the creation of this program, which included an individual working scheme between Eastern European and post-Soviet countries. The central part of the document states that Georgia is committed to strengthening the Euro-Atlantic security system. It also emphasizes that the Individual Partnership Program should be reviewed and updated annually, taking into account the interests of both sides. The main objectives of the IPP with regard to Georgia are the modernization of the Georgian armed forces, strengthening ties with NATO structures, and ensuring national security.

After the 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia, cooperation between the country and NATO became more intense. Cooperation between Georgia and NATO deepened after Saakashvili came to power in 2004. The new authorities were able to implement political declarations regarding the military sphere.¹¹⁰

Already in 2006 Georgia was offered an "Intensified Dialogue" (ID) with intention to become a member of the Alliance. ID provides an opportunity for Georgia to discuss in detail with NATO what standards are necessary to join the organization and how reforms should be built in Georgia to achieve these standards.

¹¹⁰ Amelina, Y. Kuda privodyat «rozovye mechty» / Y, Amelina // Centr strategicheskoy kon'yunktury. M.: Pushkino. - 2015. P. 332.

Despite U.S. interests in Georgia, there is no consensus on the Georgian issue within the Alliance. Such states as Germany and France oppose Georgia's accession to NATO. The motives for this approach are as follows: Berlin and Paris are opposed because of the possibility of deteriorating relations with Russia, whose principled position is to oppose the expansion of NATO.

Another milestone was the NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008, at which it was decided that Georgia would eventually become a member of NATO. From that moment on, intensified interaction began, addressing issues related to Georgia's application for membership in the Alliance and NATO's assurance of acceptance of the Membership Action Plan (MAP).

Georgia's membership is causing a great deal of debate. There is a view that by granting Georgia membership, the Alliance would only undermine NATO's credibility as a defense Alliance since extending security commitments to Georgia would expand NATO requirements beyond any degree of realism.¹¹¹

In 2008, a special meeting of Alliance foreign ministers was held in Brussels, where actions of the Russian Federation against Georgia were condemned. At the meeting, it was decided to establish the NATO Commission on Georgia (NGC). Then, the founding meeting of the NATO Georgia Commission was held as part of the visit of the North Atlantic Council to Georgia.

Up to 20 meetings of the NATO-Georgia Commission are held annually on issues such as ongoing defense, security, justice, and human rights reforms, as well as the situation in the occupied territories.

The aftermath of the 2008 war is still affecting the country's political and economic instability, pushing Georgia further away from Alliance membership standards. However, in addition to external problems, there are also internal ones. The country needs to remove obstacles before it can talk about real integration.

¹¹¹ Larsen, H. Why NATO should not offer Ukraine and Georgia Membership Action Plan / H. Larsen // Texas National security review. – 2021. Available at: <https://warontherocks.com/2021/06/why-nato-should-not-offer-ukraine-and-georgia-membership-action-plans/>, accessed 25.05.2022.

At subsequent NATO summits it has also been mentioned that Georgia will become a member of the Alliance, but the prospects of joining the Alliance are very vague, and the main reason for this insecurity is not at all the weakness of the democratic institutions of the country. The main obstacle to Georgia's accession to NATO is unresolved territorial problems.

Thus, we can conclude that Georgia, in comparison with the other South Caucasus countries, has advanced relatively further in the process of integration with NATO. At the same time, the prospects of the country joining the Alliance in the near future are unlikely. The 2008 Bucharest Summit denoted an achievement for the NATO-Georgia relations. Even though Georgia meets the requirement of having a skilled, defense-capable army and has been proving so by successfully taking part in NATO-led peacekeeping operations, an actual membership date is still not known.

The evolution of Georgia's relations with NATO since independence can be traced as follows. At the very beginning, the relationship became quite intensive, and Georgia has chosen as its political course its intention to become a member of the North-Atlantic Alliance. The first decade of the 21st century, when Georgia declared its intention to become a member in 2002, and the decision of countries of the block to accept the country in 2008, can be marked as the peak of interaction. However, since then, Georgia has never managed to get a MAP, despite many assurances from the Alliance that it would be provided. Since 2008, at every summit, Georgia has been assured that the Alliance's intentions have not changed, but there has been no evidence of action by the Alliance behind these words. Thus, from 2008 to 2021 the dynamics of the relations between Georgia and NATO cannot be assessed as positive or negative.

Despite the assurances at the Bucharest Summit in 2008 that Georgia would eventually become a member of the Alliance, years later, at subsequent summits, the assurances remained in the same words. And at the last summit analyzed in this paper in 2021, it was stated that the Alliance does not retract its previous statements

and Georgia would anyway receive a MAP. Similar statements were made at previous summits from 2008 to 2021, but there has been no progress on this issue.

One of the reasons why Georgia has not joined NATO is the fact that the potential member state has unresolved territorial problems and the Alliance's unwillingness to take on additional risks in the event of a possible deterioration in relations with Russia.

Another reason for the delay in admitting Georgia to the Alliance is that granting the membership might undermine NATO credibility, since the Alliance would need to be prepared to adequately provide guarantees to its new member and demonstrate willingness, mainly by the U.S., to significantly strengthen its existing initiative to contain Russia and bear the financial burden.

Conclusion to the second chapter

The military and political picture in the South Caucasus continues to be highly complex and contradictory. The states of the region continue to pursue different foreign policy orientations, and they associate their security with participation in different security systems. Georgia and Azerbaijan are most affected by the influence of NATO member states, hoping for the support of the Alliance in their interests. However, the Alliance itself benefits from this and the close cooperation with the countries of the region within the framework of member states' interests serves as a goal for the Alliance to demonstrate its influence in international politics. Therefore, at a certain point, close cooperation is replaced by a balancing policy. As for Armenia, the country, which since independence has been considered to pursue a pro-Russian policy and at the same time cooperating with the Alliance, is actively cooperating with the Alliance under the pretext of a multi-vector policy.

The countries of the South Caucasus do not show a willingness to cooperate in finding solutions to regional security problems. In practice, it seems that the countries of the region are more focused on interacting with external political actors than with each other because of historical contradictions. At the same time, with external

partners, the South Caucasus countries do not opt for a policy aimed at one integration association, instead preferring to balance between organizations.

When it comes to NATO policy in the region, the Alliance acts as a kind of external observer, not ready to take responsibility for ensuring security in the region. Based on the analysis of the documentary basis of NATO policy in the South Caucasus we can conclude that the framework of the Alliance activities in this region is based on the recognition of the region as a strategically important one, deepening of relations in various partnerships, support for the territorial integrity of the region and the call for the resolution of ethnic conflicts. However, it should be stressed that while proclaiming certain principles of its policy in the South Caucasus, NATO has not yet been able to formulate a comprehensive and unified strategy toward the South Caucasus republics. Probably the main reason for this is that the organization of 30 nations has a consensus problem on a policy for the South Caucasus that would suit all member countries.

Conclusion

Since the end of the Cold War, NATO's transformation has been necessary in a changing world. The aim of this paper was to examine the dynamics of the North Atlantic Alliance and its interaction with the countries of the region, taking into account the dynamics of regional geopolitical processes. The study leads to a number of conclusions.

The first chapter examines the evolution and policies of NATO since the beginning of the transformation of the organization, namely since 1990 when the declaration on the transformation of the North Atlantic Alliance was adopted at the London Summit. According to the first chapter, it was concluded that the transformation of NATO is certainly an important stage for the organization because the Alliance was founded during the Cold War and after its termination, given the globalizing world, it was not relevant to leave the organization in its original state. Consequently, the use of partnership programs and the expansion of the Alliance opened up a new way for the organization to meet its objectives.

It should not be overlooked that NATO is an organization with 30 member states, each of which acts out of motives of their own safety and interests and the views of all its members should be taken into account. However, the analysis of this thesis shows that, as a rule, the last word in NATO belongs to the United States, which, in turn, under the framework of the fight against terrorism, especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, is doing its utmost to protect its national interests and enhance its power.

The second chapter analyzed the relations of the North Atlantic Alliance with the countries of the South Caucasus. Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia have different objectives with regard to NATO. As the analysis of these relations has shown, the countries of the region, with the exception of Georgia, do not seek membership in the Alliance but see it as one of the possible ways to resolve internal ethnic conflicts. The study leads to a number of conclusions. A serious destabilizing factor in the

South Caucasus region remains the lack of settlement of a number of regional ethnopolitical conflicts. This fact stimulates the conflicting sides to actively seek external forces capable of providing political, diplomatic, military, and financial support for the resolution of these conflicts according to their own scenarios. At the same time, in the zones of Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgian-Abkhazian, and Georgian-South Ossetian conflicts, NATO does not show readiness to intervene, which proves that NATO does not act as a peacekeeper ready to help solve the conflicts, but only as an outside observer. Because of the transformation of the organization during the period chosen for this thesis, it has approached the region differently at different periods of time. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO's interest in the region has gradually increased. After the end of the Cold War, NATO struggled to consolidate its influence in regions freed from Moscow's dominance. But progress in the South Caucasus so far has been contradictory.

This leads us to one key conclusion drawn from the analysis of the Alliance conditionality policy. The thesis analyzed the official documents of the Alliance regarding the region, which leads to the conclusion that of all the countries in the region, Georgia receives comparatively more attention regarding its membership intentions. At the same time, the region as a whole is in the zone of interest of the Alliance, but the South Caucasus region itself was touched upon in the documents in repetitive formulations about the expectation of security in the region, without offering specific measures to deal with regional conflicts, which makes it clear that the Alliance is not ready to take responsibility for the events taking place in the region, given the dynamics of geopolitical processes.

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Appendix A

NATO Waves of Enlargement

Country	Year of NATO Accession
Turkey	1952
Greece	1952
Germany	1955
Spain	1982
Czech Republic	1999
Poland	1999
Hungary	1999
Estonia	2004
Cyprus	2004
Latvia	2004
Lithuania	2004
Malta	2004
Slovakia	2004
Slovenia	2004
Bulgaria	2004
Romania	2004
Albania	2009
Croatia	2009
Montenegro	2017
North Macedonia	2020

This table shows the main dates of NATO enlargement according to the official website of the North Atlantic Alliance.

Appendix B

Comparative Table "The South Caucasus in NATO Summit Declarations"

Year	Documents on Summits	Reference to the region	Reference to Georgia
1994	The Brussels Summit Declaration	1) "The situation in Southern Caucasus continues to be of special concern"; 2) Condemnation of the use of force for territorial gains; 3) Respect for the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty.	No country of the region was singled out.
2002	Prague Summit Declaration	1) Encouraging countries to take advantage of the mechanisms provided by the Alliance (EAPC, PFP).	"We urge swift fulfilment of the outstanding Istanbul commitments on Georgia".
2004	Istanbul Summit Communiqué	1) SC as a strategically important region; 2) The need to strengthen the partnership; 3) The assignment of two liaison officers; 4) A special representative for the region; 5) Welcome of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan to develop IPAP.	Welcome of the commitment of the new government of Georgia to reform.
2006	Riga Summit Declaration	1) "The situation in Southern Caucasus continues to be of special concern"; 2) Respect for the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty. 3) Support of continued efforts to achieve peaceful settlements to the conflicts.	1) Intensified dialogues with Georgia related to membership aspirations; 2) Welcome Georgia's contribution to international peacekeeping and security operations; 3) Encourage Georgia to continue progress on political, economic and military reforms;

2008	Bucharest Summit Declaration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Concern with the persistence of regional conflicts in the South Caucasus; 2) Respect for the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty; 3) Support of continued efforts to achieve peaceful settlements to the conflicts; 4) Commitment to engage SC partners. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Welcome of Georgia's aspirations for membership in NATO; 2) Agreement to provide membership for Georgia.
2009	Strasbourg / Kehl Summit Declaration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Concern with the persistence of regional conflicts in the South Caucasus; 2) Respect for the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty; 3) Support of continued efforts to achieve peaceful settlements to the conflicts. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Maximizing advice, assistance and support for reform efforts in the framework of NATO-Georgia Commission; 2) Welcome of the valuable contributions made by Georgia; 3) Encourage Georgia to continue implementing democratic, electoral, and judicial reforms.
2010	Lisbon Summit Declaration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The persistence of protracted regional conflicts in SC continues to be a matter of great concern; 2) Call to avoid steps that undermine regional security and stability; 3) Respect for the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty; 4) Support of continued efforts to achieve peaceful settlements to the conflicts. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Stability and successful political and economic reform in Georgia are important; 2) Foster political dialogue and practical cooperation with Georgia; 3) Welcome the opening of the NATO Liaison Office in Georgia; 4) Welcome Georgia's important contributions to NATO operations, in particular to ISAF; 5) call on Russia to reverse its recognition of the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions of Georgia as independent states.

2012	Chicago Summit Declaration	<p>1) The persistence of protracted regional conflicts in SC continues to be a matter of great concern;</p> <p>2) Respect for the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty;</p> <p>3) Support of continued efforts to achieve peaceful settlements to the conflicts.</p>	<p>1) Welcome Georgia's progress since the Bucharest Summit;</p> <p>2) Further strengthening our political dialogue, practical cooperation, and interoperability with Georgia;</p> <p>3) Appreciate Georgia's substantial contribution, in particular to ISAF;</p> <p>4) Welcome Georgia's full compliance with the EU-mediated cease-fire agreement.</p>
2014	Wales Summit Declaration	<p>1) Support of continued efforts to achieve peaceful settlements to the conflicts;</p> <p>2) The persistence of these protracted conflicts continues to be a matter of particular concern;</p> <p>3) Urge all parties to engage constructively in peaceful conflict resolution, within the established negotiation frameworks.</p>	<p>1) Defense and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative to be extended to Georgia;</p> <p>2) A substantial package for Georgia that includes defense capacity building, training, exercises, strengthened liaison;</p> <p>3) Encourage Georgia to continue implementation of reforms.</p>
2016	Warsaw Summit Communiqué	<p>1) Continue to support efforts towards a peaceful settlement of the conflicts;</p> <p>2) Committed in our support for the territorial integrity;</p>	<p>1) Strengthen the dialogue and cooperation with Georgia;</p> <p>2) Georgia's relationship with the Alliance contains all the practical tools to prepare for eventual membership;</p> <p>3) NATO highly appreciates Georgia's significant and continuous contributions to the NATO Response Force and the Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan;</p>

2018	Brussels Summit Declaration	<p>1) Remain committed in our support for the territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty;</p> <p>2) Continue to support efforts towards a peaceful settlement of the conflicts;</p> <p>3) Urge all parties to engage constructively in peaceful conflict resolution, within the established negotiation frameworks.</p>	<p>1) Call on Russia to reverse its recognition of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia as independent states;</p> <p>2) Deepening political dialogue and cooperation between NATO and Georgia;</p> <p>3) Recognize the significant progress on reforms of Georgia;</p> <p>4) Enhance further our support to Georgia;</p>
2021	Brussels Summit Communiqué	No specific paragraph concerning the region.	<p>1) Georgia will become a member of the Alliance;</p> <p>2) Appreciate Georgia's substantial contributions to NATO operations;</p> <p>3) Stand ready to enhance support to Georgia, including in building resilience against hybrid threats;</p>

This comparative table is intended to illustrate the difference in the dynamics of the Alliance's relations with the countries of the South Caucasus. The table contains quotations from the communiqués of the NATO Summits from 1994 to 2021, when the South Caucasus was given attention in the documents.

Appendix C

Key milestones of Armenia-NATO Cooperation

Year	Armenia
1992	Joining the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), later EAPC.
1994	Joining PfP.
1997	Joining the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC).
2002	Becoming an Associate Member of NATO Parliamentary Assembly.
2004	Joining KFOR Mission; Establishment of a position of NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia.
2005	First Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP);
2007	The first "NATO week"; Opening of a NATO Information Centre.
2010	Contributing troops to ISAF in Afghanistan.
2011	Third IPAP Document.
2014	Fourth Armenia - NATO IPAP.
2015	"Resolute Support" mission in Afghanistan.
2017	Fifth Armenia - NATO IPAP.

The table provides key milestones in NATO-Armenia relations, allowing to trace the dynamics of the relations between the South Caucasus country and the North Atlantic Alliance.

Appendix D

Key milestones of Azerbaijan-NATO Cooperation

Year	Azerbaijan
1992	Joining the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), later EAPC.
1994	Joining Pfp.
1995	Signing the Security Agreement for the protection of sensitive or/and privileged information.
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Joining the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC);- Signing a decree on measures to strengthen the cooperation with NATO;- Signing a decree to establish a diplomatic Mission of Azerbaijan to NATO;- Joining PARP aimed at involving Azerbaijan more closely to NATO's defense planning for operations, among the first partner countries.
1999	Azerbaijan sends a unit to support the NATO-led peacekeeping operation in Kosovo.
2002	Azerbaijan sends a unit to support the ISAF operation in Afghanistan.
2004	Appointing his first Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia.
2005	First Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP).
2007	Azerbaijan doubles its military contingent in Afghanistan.
2008	Azerbaijan contingent completes its mission in KFOR; Azerbaijan and NATO agree the second IPAP document.
2011	Azerbaijan's third IPAP.
2017	The fifth cycle of Azerbaijan IPAP.

The table provides key milestones in NATO-Azerbaijan relations, allowing to trace the dynamics of the relations between the South Caucasus country and the North Atlantic Alliance.

Appendix E

Key milestones of Georgia-NATO Cooperation

Year	Georgia
1992	Georgia joins the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (now the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council).
1994	Georgia joins the Partnership for Peace (PfP).
1995	Georgia signs the PfP Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) - ratified by parliament in 1997.
1999	Georgia joins the PfP Planning and Review Process. Georgian peacekeepers deploy as part of the Kosovo Force (KFOR).
2002	Georgia declares its aspirations to NATO membership.
2003	Georgia supports the election security force of the NATO-led operation in Afghanistan.
2005	Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO.
2006	NATO offers an Intensified Dialogue to Georgia on its membership aspirations.
2008	At Bucharest, Allied leaders agree Georgia will become a member of NATO. The NATO-Georgia Commission (NGC) is established.
2010	At Lisbon, Allied leaders recall their agreement that Georgia will become a member of NATO.

The table provides key milestones in NATO-Georgia relations, allowing us to trace the dynamics of the relations between the South Caucasus country and the North Atlantic Alliance.