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**COULD THE EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION OF UKRAINE
“GUARANTEE ITS SECURITY”? CONTROVERSY OF PUBLIC
SUPPORT FOR JOINING NATO THROUGHOUT 2008-2018 IN
UKRAINE.**

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Шевченка

Formal relations between NATO and Ukraine began when Ukraine joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council¹⁶ (later renamed the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council), immediately upon achieving independence following the break-up of the Soviet Union. It is worth mentioning, that Ukraine was the first member state of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to join the Partnership for Peace (PfP)¹⁷ in 1994. Nearly 16 years ago Ukraine announced its official decision to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. However, nothing has changed significantly since then.

In conformity with Article 1 of the North Atlantic Treaty¹⁸, the State-Parties «should settle any international dispute ... in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered». Despite these endeavors, that reflect Article 18 of Ukraine`s Constitution¹⁹ the population didn`t feel safe to be on the NATO side. In one of the surveys the question, “Which model of securing the national defense of Ukraine is the most optimal?” most citizens (37.1%) chose the beyond – bloc status, 19.3% the Collective

16 **NATO-Ukraine “A Distinctive Partnership”.** Режим доступу: https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2007_06/20090304_nato-ukraine2007-e.pdf

17 **Signatures of Partnership for Peace Framework Document** Режим доступу: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_82584.htm

¹⁸ **The North Atlantic Treaty.** Режим доступу: https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm

¹⁹ **Constitution of Ukraine.** Режим доступу: <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254к/96-вр>

Security Treaty Organization, and only 12.8% NATO²⁰. (The assessment was carried out in 2008 by Razumkov Centre.)

The leader of the Party of Regions, who won the elections in 2010, decided to change the policy of his predecessors and stop the further alignment with NATO. At that time the Ukrainian parliament passed the bill²¹ on the rules of internal and external policy, in which Art. 11 describes Ukraine as a beyond – block state avoiding dependence on particular states, group of states or international organizations. In October 2013 Ukraine had finally decided to abandon its long – lasting attempts to join NATO. It was believed that NATO 1) is an aggressive imperialist block, 2) that needs a lot of additional funds. Moreover, 3) it could have ultimately spoiled relations with Russia. (The poll was conducted by the Center for Democratic Initiatives in October 2012²².)

A sharp change in the opinion of Ukrainian society about NATO took place in the beginning of 2014. Undoubtedly, the Russian military aggression in 2014 has become the starting point for the most significant in the history of independent Ukraine's transformation of public opinion about NATO. Since then the support for the idea of Ukraine's accession to the Alliance has grown considerably: 33% in support of NATO was achieved in May 2014, and in September 44% supported the country's entry into the North Atlantic Alliance.

At the same time, it is indicative that the upward dynamics was observed not only in more Atlantic-oriented regions of the West and the Center, but also in the South and East of Ukraine²³, as well as in the Donbass, where the prospect of Euro-Atlantic integration had not previously found tangible support.

Political elites in Ukraine, in turn, have tried to capture a new wave of rapidly changing social sentiment towards NATO. And already at the end of 2014, the Ukrainian parliament abolished the so-called "non-aligned status" of

²⁰ **The Difficult and Long Way of Ukraine to NATO.** Режим доступу: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298730730_The_Difficult_and_Long_Way_of_Ukraine_to_NATO

²¹ **BBC News. Ukraine's parliament votes to abandon NATO ambitions.** Режим доступу: <http://www.bbc.com/news/10229626>

²² **Center for Democratic Initiatives.** Режим доступу: <http://dif.org.ua/category/opinion-polls>

²³ **Razumkov Center. Ukrainians supporting NATO membership in minority – poll.** Режим доступу: <http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/204811.html>

Ukraine, which was approved by the submission of former President Viktor Yanukovich in 2010, although he did not proclaim a clear course for membership in NATO. However, in February 2017, the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko in an interview for the German edition made an unexpected statement about the intention to hold a referendum on Ukraine's membership in NATO²⁴, while appealing to the current trends of public opinion. Later, on the initiative of the President, a new approach to tighten the relations with NATO was approved at the level of Ukrainian legislation.

On June 8, 2017, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine made some legislative changes in the part of the Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine which defined, in particular, "the membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization" as a foreign policy priority of the country. At the same time, Ukrainian president during his meeting with the Secretary-General NATO Jens Stoltenberg in July 2017 noted that "Ukraine has a clear timetable or road map on what needs to be done to meet the criteria for NATO membership by 2020. Thus, the official policy vector of Ukraine pointed at the Euro-Atlantic integration was gradually transformed in line with actual changes in public opinion and progressive development of State policy.

The last events, including aggressive action of the Russian president Vladimir Putin towards Ukraine, have increased the positive attitude of the Ukrainian society towards NATO, which is shown in the sociological research.

It is not hard to notice, having taken into consideration the occupation of Crimea by Russian troops and the conflict in the East of the country, that as a partner of NATO Ukraine does not enjoy the safety guarantees. In the situation of the prolonged conflict, Ukraine cannot become a member of NATO either, since the laws and internal procedures of the Treaty forbid accepting states that are objects of arguments or aggression.

24 Reuters. Ukraine's Poroshenko plans referendum on NATO membership: German media. РЕЖИМ доступу: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-nato/ukraines-poroshenko-plans-referendum-on-nato-membership-german-media-idUSKBN15H05K>

The Euro-Atlantic integration is Ukraine's strategic goal. However, one should keep in his mind that intensified Dialogue never guaranteed an invitation to join the Alliance. According to the Secretary of the NSDC of Ukraine, in comparison with 2014, today Ukraine has a qualitatively new army capable of defending the country.

This Article is intended to demonstrate the correlation between the increasing threat to a State and decreasing skepticism concerning the NATO in a state of emergency. The threshold for the recognition of the NATO as an only organization which membership may gain cease-fire regime is extremely high. Thus, the Ukrainians, including me, rely mostly on their individual capacities to protect both territorial and cultural integrity of Ukraine.

Even if para. 11 of Article 6 of the Law “On the National Security of Ukraine”²⁵, provides that the aim of Ukraine is Membership in NATO, one should not ignore para. 1 of Article 6 of the same law, «the Priorities of Ukraine's national interests are to safeguard the constitutional rights and freedoms of its citizens.»

²⁵ *Law “On the National Security of Ukraine”*. Режим доступу: <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/964-15>