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WHAT'S NEXT AFTER ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP?

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Ukraine-NATO relations received a new lease of life after Ukraine became an Enhanced Opportunities Partner (EOP) in June this year. By prior agreement with the Alliance, this event took place almost as a quotidian matter, without proper communication both in Ukraine itself and, still less, NATO members. At the same time, Ukraine's obtaining this status and giving substance to it requires a more careful analysis, as does a further dialogue with the Alliance in general. All the more so since the question of inviting Ukraine to participate in the Enhanced Opportunities Partnership was billed by the Government of Ukraine as the number one priority in Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration for 2020.

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ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP WITH A SIX-YEAR DELAY

In 2014, on the eve of the Wales Summit, NATO decided to launch the Enhanced Opportunities Partnership (EOP), which is compared in NATO to the sort of "gold card", as part of the

new Interoperability Initiative. According to some sources¹, it was Sweden which put forward the idea of equating the future partnership with a kind of NATO's "gold card" providing partner countries with specific benefits and rewards in cooperation with NATO in exchange for their contribution to transatlantic security.

Sweden, which as early as the times of the Cold War was named NATO's "sixteenth member" for its vigorous cooperation with the Alliance, promoted the launching of a similar program for its closest partners following the ISAF operation in Afghanistan, during which the difference between member states and non-member states could hardly be felt due to their very close daily cooperation. With the end of the operation and especially the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014, partner countries began to feel even more isolated from the private club of members.

The first list of future holders of the "gold card" – i.e. EOP participants in 2014 – included Ukraine. However, on the eve of the summit, the NATO International Staff decided to remove the name of our country from the list². The arguments in favor of such a decision were, first, that the topic of Ukraine at the summit had already been well covered, and second (if to hazard a guess, the main reason), that at that time the illegal annexation of Crimea had already taken place and active hostilities in Donbas were

raging. Obviously, some NATO representatives wanted to look at the further development of the situation in order "not to provoke Russia any further" by inviting Ukraine to the Enhanced Opportunities Partnership. The preliminary decision at that time was that Ukraine would join the other five participants of the Enhanced Opportunities Partnership in a year – that is, in 2015. However, this happened neither in a year, nor three years later, when the Partnership was formally reviewed. Initially, it was explained to Ukraine that the revision of the Partnership should be carried out triennially, therefore ruling out unscheduled updates of membership. When the three-year deadline came in 2017, Ukraine failed to ensure adequate political support for this step, and, according to some reports, did not fully follow the relevant procedure, namely the timely receipt of the so-called military advice. In 2020, the mistake of the past was taken into account: Ukraine applied in advance for the military advice, while also working on political support. The latter was a much more serious challenge than originally expected in Kyiv.

For some time, Germany and France were in a marked opposition to this step³. Later, Hungary joined the ranks of opponents. But the real surprise for Ukraine came with a rather passive position on the issue of its key ally, the United States. As early as last year, there was no consensus in Washington on the need to involve Ukraine in the program – in some cabinets simply did not understand the prioritization of this task by Ukraine and its

¹ *Strategic challenges in the Baltic Sea Region: Russia, Deterrence, and Reassurance: Dahl, Ann-Sofie, Rasmussen, Anders Fogh, Georgetown University Press, May 2018*

² *Interview with a former employee of NATO Headquarters in Brussels, June 2020*

³ *Interview with a representative of the Government of Ukraine, June 15, 2020*



practical value. According to some reports, the Ukrainian delegation led by Zelenskyy intended to raise the issue of supporting Ukraine's participation in the EOP at talks with Donald Trump in New York in September 2019, but the focus of the conversation – economic and energy issues – did not allow discussing this aspect.

An unequivocal political signal, albeit a non-public one, about the US support for Ukraine's bid to join the EOP came only in January 2020, during a brief visit to Ukraine by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo⁴. As for European allies, French President Macron, who has been in a state of a self-proclaimed reset of relations with Russia over the past year, asked the Ukrainian party not to make public the issue and not to position joining the EOP in public communication as a step towards NATO membership. It is also illustrative that Germany, once Ukraine's main opponent in the issue of an invitation to the Membership Action Plan (MAP) at the NATO Bucharest Summit, withdrew its reservations regarding granting the EOP status to Ukraine.

In order to prevent NATO from invoking the change of government as a reason to postpone the decision to invite Ukraine to the EOP, the Ukrainian party went as far as drafting and submitting to the Secretary-General a new "letter of the three,"⁵ signed by Minister for Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba, Vice Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration Vadym Prystaiko and Minister of Defense Andrii Taran, which clearly stated the continuity of Ukraine's

orientation and its determination to receive an invitation to participate in the EOP. This was a right and timely move, especially against the backdrop of criticism in relation to the Euro-Atlantic orientation of the then new defense minister.

Ukraine positioned the issue of engaging in the Enhanced Opportunities Partnership as a key priority in its relations with NATO for 2020. It was expected that Ukraine would most likely be invited to the Partnership in the fall of 2020, at a meeting of Alliance defense ministers. As the military advice had been prepared earlier, and given that some allies had made every effort to downplay the importance of this step by NATO, the Alliance decided to embrace a proactive approach – to the extent that not even all decision-makers involved in the process in Kyiv were informed in advance that the decision would be made on June 12. Apart from that, before taking the decision, Hungary had sent the clarifying questions to NATO International Staff.

One way or another, a key priority for Ukraine in its relations with NATO has been met ahead of schedule, which is, perchance, a unique case indeed, given that all our foreign policy priorities were usually achieved with significant delays at the level of political deadlines.

⁴ Interview with a representative of the Office of the President, June 23, 2020

⁵ Interview with a Ukrainian diplomat, June 15, 2020

EOP AND ITS ADDED VALUE. LESSONS LEARNT

After receiving the EOP, the Ukrainian government provided a telling list of potential opportunities enabled by the program. Seven such opportunities were named⁶:

- 1 Participation in the planning of NATO operations
- 2 Admission to all NATO exercises, including those under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty
- 3 Access to best practices and priority certification of assets
- 4 Opportunity to hold positions at NATO headquarters and command structures
- 5 Deeper and faster intelligence sharing with NATO member states
- 6 Strengthening cooperation to maintain security in the Black Sea
- 7 Joint counteraction to cyber threats, international terrorism and organized crime.

Here it is appropriate to set the record straight: Ukraine does not automatically gain this opportunities. If we continue to use the analogy between the EOP and the “gold card,” then it is worth noting that, first, the owner of this card must take care of a rather complex process of its activation through NATO on his own, and second, of its content in general.

To do this, the Ukrainian party must have a clear understanding of our priorities and proactive advocacy thereof among NATO partners. At the time of writing, technical consultations on how Ukraine intends to use the EOP were only in the planning stage. It is unknown when they will take place, given, in particular, the limitations associated with Covid-19. A promising sign is that at the end of June Stuart Peach, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee and NATO Air Commander, received a letter from General Khomchak, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, containing proposals with regard to priority fields of operationalization of the EOP, which are of interest for Ukraine.

If we continue to use the analogy between the EOP and the “gold card,” then it is worth noting that, first, the owner of this card must take care of a rather complex process of its activation through NATO on his own, and second, of its content in general.

In addition, the experience of some other countries in the EOP shows that in addition to the desire of participants to render the “gold card” active, it is of crucial importance to have a high level of trust between the Alliance and the partner country, which in the case of Ukraine was (and at certain levels continues to be) quite problematic. Despite all the benefits declared by NATO and the government of Ukraine, the specific contribution of the EOP to strengthening a certain partner’s cooperation with NATO is often difficult to measure and assess, as confirmed by the ambiguous experience of such countries as Sweden, Finland and Georgia in the program.

In the case of Sweden, for example, representatives of the country’s government

⁶ From the Facebook page of the Office of the Vice Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration



acknowledge⁷ that Sweden reached the level of full interoperability with NATO at least fifteen years ago, so it would not be entirely correct to speak of the merits of the EOP in this regard. In addition, the EOP is only one element of security for Sweden. In parallel, there is an instrument of bilateral defense agreements. Such agreements have been signed with a number of NATO member countries.

Finland claims⁸ that since 2014 – the time of the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of the war in Donbas – the mainstay of relations between Sweden and Finland has been in joint exercises with a focus on increasing the level of interoperability between Finland and NATO. The logic is as follows: enhanced interoperability could strengthen joint operational action during a possible crisis or military conflict in Northern Europe. This is, in fact, the new post-2014 focus of Finland's policy towards NATO. At the same time, Helsinki asserts that the EOP is only one dimension of a fairly strong partnership between the country and the Alliance. The relations between Finland (as well as Sweden) and NATO have already reached such a level at the time of its participation in the EOP that it is difficult to pin down what exactly the effect of the participation in the program is.

What can be at least partially included in the record of the EOP is the extensive use by Finns of the opportunity to participate in the planning process of NATO operations and military exercises under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty (such as Trident Juncture 2018).

The dialogue between Sweden, Finland and NATO on security in the Baltic Sea has also intensified markedly. Would this have happened without the EOP, given Russia's aggressive actions in the region, which began before the annexation of Crimea in 2014? It is likely. However, as a member of the EOP, Ukraine could initiate a similar dialogue on security in the Black Sea. Put otherwise, it is the focus on Black Sea security that could become Ukraine's calling card as a participant in the Enhanced Opportunities Partnership. To this end, it is essential that Ukraine take an active part in the process of planning operations and initiate drills in the Black Sea under Article 5.

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At present, the situation is such that Ukraine is not always involved even in those exercises in which it could participate as a special NATO partner. Interlocutors in the Ukrainian government attribute this either to the lack of an appropriate budget in Ukraine (participants make independent contributions for the participation in NATO exercises) or to the imperfect system of monitoring and responding to participation in such exercises⁹. Both of these problems can be easily addressed. In the first case, it is always possible to turn to another NATO member state possessing sufficient financial resources to pay for Ukraine's participation in such exercises (for example, Norway). The second is to prioritize this

⁷ Interview with a Swedish diplomat, June 18, 2020

⁸ Interview with Matti Pesu, Senior Research Fellow, Finnish Institute of International Affairs, June 30, 2020

⁹ Interview with a representative of the Government of Ukraine, July 2, 2020

issue at the level of the leadership of the defense ministry.

As for another potential advantage of the EOP – representation in NATO structures – for countries such as Finland, this has been the case for at least the last twenty years. In the case of Ukraine – this may be a revelation for some – we have also long had the opportunity to have our representatives in NATO's governing bodies – in particular, at the headquarters. The effectiveness of their representation is another matter. In general, the emphasis here should be using the participation in the EOP for advocating the presence of at least one representative of Ukraine in the NATO International Staff, rather than just the International Military Staff.

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It is also bears mentioning another aspect: any analogies between Ukraine, on the one hand, and Sweden or Finland, on the other hand, should be drawn very carefully, because at this stage these countries and Ukraine have a completely different ultimate goal in relations with NATO: Sweden seeks to make the most of the EOP, as it does not stipulate membership in the Alliance, while Ukraine is interested in fully leveraging the EOP exactly to bring the prospect of NATO membership closer.

Another case is Georgia, which until the invitation of Ukraine was the only participant in the initiative with ambitions to join the Alliance. Here, too, not everything is clear-cut. In 2014, at the Wales Summit, Georgia received not only

the EOP but also the Substantial NATO Georgia Package (SNGP), aimed at strengthening Georgia's defense capabilities and developing closer security cooperation and interoperability with NATO members. The package included support at the strategic, tactical and operational levels in a variety of key areas of engagement, running the gamut from strategic defense planning and special reaction forces to intelligence and communication. In general, the vast majority of areas listed in the EOP featured in the aforementioned package. Therefore, it is quite difficult to determine exactly where the influence of the EOP was reflected and where the Substantial NATO Georgia Package played its role. Georgian partners acknowledge¹⁰ that the main practical dimension of the program is the additional opportunities to strengthen the level of interoperability with the Alliance through the participation in exercises.

Unlike Sweden and Finland, Georgia, despite its impressive contribution to NATO operations (871 soldiers in Afghanistan), still does not have the opportunity to take advantage of one of the vital opportunities of the EOP – intelligence information sharing. It is important to note that this is one of the key advantages that Ukraine was interested in in regard of joining the EOP, even though Ukrainian experts¹¹ state in informal conversations that what we need the most is the information from one particular NATO member, the United States. As for European allies, in some cases (in particular, regarding the situation in Donbas), European partners request information from Ukraine.

¹⁰ Interview with a former high-ranking official of the Government of Georgia, June 23, 2020

¹¹ Interview with a representative of the Government of Ukraine, June 14, 2020



It should not be forgotten that the EOP is part of the Interoperability Initiative launched by NATO at the aforementioned Wales Summit in 2014. Inviting Ukraine to the EOP is, inter alia, a recognition that Ukraine has ALREADY reached a certain level of interoperability by adapting its normative instruments, conveniently referred to in Ukraine as NATO standards. As of last year, Ukraine has implemented 16 percent of NATO standards¹² (196 normative instruments adopted), which is more than some other partners and even some member states (Montenegro). This year their number has grown to 231. Although implementation of the standards is not a requirement of the Alliance but rather a voluntary commitment of the partner country, it is unlikely that the slow pace of their adaptation will benefit Ukraine during the revision of the EOP in three years. Suffice it to compare the number of standards adopted in the first half of 2019 and the first half of 2020 to give rise to a somewhat alarming trend in this matter, which is not entirely in line with the new government's stated approach to focus on the practical or pragmatic dimension of both EU and NATO integration instead of high-flown political rhetoric.

As for the intensification of Ukraine's political dialogue with NATO as a member of the EOP, it is worth assessing the relevance of expanding information sharing frameworks such as two working breakfasts at the level of defense ministers initiated by our partners as a creative alternative to the NATO-Ukraine Commission still blocked by Hungary. At the same time, the priority should be to restore the full-fledged operation of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, which, unlike other frameworks, ensures a multi-level dialogue.

EOP AND MAP: COMPETITORS OR ALLIES

One of the most common questions frequently voiced in public discourse is whether the EOP can be a step towards membership or rather an obstacle "closing" Ukraine in the framework of partnership. "By inviting Ukraine to the EOP, NATO has simply closed the matter of the MAP to Ukraine for three years" – these and similar concerns can often be heard from Ukrainian government officials¹³. Based on the available information, it can be assumed that such motivation could have been used by representatives of individual NATO member states to approve the decision to grant Ukraine the EOP.

The EOP cannot be considered and is neither a tool for achieving membership nor a prerequisite for obtaining the MAP. However, it should not be taken as an obstacle too.

The EOP should be viewed primarily as a country-specific tool to increase the level military interoperability. However, since we have long been taught in NATO that it is not the army that joins NATO but the whole country, we need not only military but also political interoperability. To this end, we already need the MAP providing for a much wider range of reforms.

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¹² *Ukraine and NATO standards: how to hit a "moving target"?* Policy paper. New Europe Center, July 10, 2019 <http://neweurope.org.ua/en/analytiks/ukrai-na-i-standarty-nato-yak-vluchyty-u-ruhomu-tsil/>

¹³ *Interview with a Ukrainian diplomat, June 15, 2020*

The available analysis gives grounds for stating that Ukraine may well rank first globally (perhaps sharing the spot with Georgia) as the country with the largest number of tools and mechanisms to prepare for NATO membership. As for Georgia, this is acknowledged in the Alliance itself. In particular, some NATO summit declarations state that “Georgia’s relationship with the Alliance contains all the practical tools to prepare for potential membership.”

Ukraine may well rank first globally (perhaps sharing the spot with Georgia) as the country with the largest number of tools and mechanisms to prepare for NATO membership.

It is in Ukraine’s interest to establish (despite the Saakashvili factor) as close cooperation as possible with Georgia as a member of the EOP. In particular, we could stand united not only by maintaining NATO’s active focus on security in the Black Sea, but also by coordinating efforts in the process of obtaining the MAP. An example of such joint tactical work is the coordination of efforts between Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova in the run-up to the Eastern Partnership Summit at the level of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Such coordination, synergy and the ability to speak with one voice are also important in moving towards the Membership Action Plan.

It is in Ukraine’s interest to establish (despite the Saakashvili factor) as close cooperation as possible with Georgia as a member of the EOP.

Ukraine’s task today should be to participate in the EOP in order to strengthen our arguments for joining the MAP, not weaken them. Put differently,

by the time of the next revision of the Partnership – which is in 2023 – Ukraine must demonstrate on specific and convincing examples that inviting it to the EOP was justified.

Ukraine’s task today should be to participate in the EOP in order to strengthen our arguments for joining the MAP, not weaken them.

It is 2023, when the first cycle of participation in the EOP will be completed, that could be the optimal time for obtaining the Membership Action Plan. This does not imply that we need to set public deadlines and focus on this issue in public communication with NATO. Yet political leadership on this issue is needed so that all stakeholders involved in the process in Ukraine understand what our plan of action in the relations with NATO is and that this action plan is supported personally at the presidential level. By the way, 2023 marks the end of the five-year term of Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s tenure. He has the opportunity to go down in history as the man during whose presidency Ukraine became a candidate for NATO membership. This seems all the more eloquent given that the previous president set the goal of obtaining the EOP by the end of his term, but even this goal was not achieved for a number of reasons.

2023 marks the end of the five-year term of Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s tenure. He has the opportunity to go down in history as the man during whose presidency Ukraine became a candidate for NATO membership.

In this regard, the right signal was the letter of President Zelenskyy handed over to the Secretary-General by Vice Prime Minister Olga



Stefanishyna during her visit to Brussels. It expressed gratitude for Ukraine's recognition as an enhanced opportunities partner and hope for "further support for Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations in accordance with the decisions of the 2008 Bucharest Summit and subsequent NATO summits."¹⁴ Despite the fact that the MAP is indirectly mentioned in the decision of the Bucharest Summit, it would be worthwhile to single out in this appeal the focus on obtaining the Membership Action Plan as the next step in Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration.

In addition, it might be worth considering sending copies of the letters that Ukraine addresses to the Secretary-General – such an epistolary format has been used by Kyiv at least twice over the last six months – to representatives of member states in Brussels. The dialogue with the NATO Secretary-General and his deputies is important, but it is also important to intensify cooperation with member states, from ambassadors to relevant ministers. To do this, Ukraine's ambassador to NATO must be appointed. The situation where during every Ukrainian president's tenure there is no representative of Ukraine in the Alliance for several years raises doubts about Kyiv's determination for rapprochement with NATO and makes Ukraine a target for criticism from opponents of such rapprochement¹⁵.

Another important signal from Ukraine could be mentioning the MAP as the next goal in the context of Euro-Atlantic integration in the new National Security Strategy of Ukraine, which at the time of writing still was in its final drafting stage.

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The argument to be employed by our NATO partners that Ukraine has been granted the EOP status and must first use it is plausible. However, this does not mean that it is not necessary to work in parallel to prepare for joining the MAP. The first step in this process should be to consult with NATO member states on Ukraine's joining the MAP in three years based on the 2008 application. The task of the current Euro-Atlantic strategists in power is to ensure that all relevant actors in both Ukraine and NATO understand that the next stop after the EOP is the MAP. Therefore, in the next three years it is necessary to detoxify the dialogue on Ukraine's joining the MAP to the highest extent possible, which was partly done with the EOP in the case of some European allies.

The task of the current Euro-Atlantic strategists in power is to ensure that all relevant actors in both Ukraine and NATO understand that the next stop after the EOP is the MAP. Therefore, in the next three years it is necessary to detoxify the dialogue on Ukraine's joining the MAP to the highest extent possible.

The best proof that Ukraine is determined to receive the MAP as an "integral part" of the NATO integration process would be the effective implementation of the Annual National Program (ANP). It is the ANP that is the key to

¹⁴ Copy of the letter from the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, June 2020

¹⁵ Interview with a NATO representative, 15 June 2020

obtaining the MAP. We, as analysts who have long advocated on meetings with government officials the involvement of the principle of RBM (Results Based Management) in the process of developing the ANP, are pleased that the new ANP is prepared on the basis of this approach. At the same time, the number of scheduled activities and agencies involved in their implementation does not give grounds to believe that the ANP-2020 can in principle be implemented effectively. It seems that Ukraine itself complicates the task of fulfilling the ANP.

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In general, given the growing number of programs, initiatives and assistance frameworks for Ukraine, it is time to carry out a thorough audit of relations. At present, it appears that each agency continues to work with NATO under its own program and on its own initiative, with some acting under the Partnership Goals, the ANP or the trust funds. That is why we need to identify three or, at most, five clear priorities for our partnership with NATO, and not for one year, but at least for three or, better still, five years. Ukraine will look much more convincing as a systemic partner with a strategic vision if certain measures within the framework of the ANP are planned for several years at once. The more so that this very approach – focusing on four or five priorities of mutual interest for both NATO and Ukraine – is the subject of intense deliberations in the Alliance, where the “one partner – one plan” initiative is gradually garnering political support. Ukraine has become a pilot project of introducing this methodology within the framework of

reviewing the Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP). The new CAP is expected to have a new structure, where all the support and assistance tools provided by the Alliance will be systematized in accordance with five common priorities with a time-span of up to four years.

In addition, in order to make the implementation of the ANP more effective, it would be worthwhile to make the implementation of the ANP public, following the example of the Pulse of the Agreement, which provides for monitoring the implementation of the Association Agreement, and launch a similar Pulse of the ANP.

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Moreover, although mainly legislative in nature, NATO's hard-and-fast priorities in its relations with Ukraine are constantly present. As is known, the Alliance currently declares the Ukraine's adoption of five laws as a priority in the bilateral relations¹⁶. However, NATO's constant emphasis on legislating in its relations with Ukraine may give an erroneous impression in Ukrainian society that NATO is only interested in our passing the legislation, rather than its proper implementation, which are not interchangeable in Ukrainian reality.

¹⁶ *The prospect of EU membership? We will use the Norwegian track: the first Interview of Deputy Prime Minister Stefanishyna, "European Pravda", June 15, 2020 <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/interview/2020/06/15/7111086/>*



NATO REFLECTS, AND... SO DOES UKRAINE?

Besides the implementation of the ANP, Ukraine, as a member of the EOP, should be more closely involved in the process of reflection on the preparation of a new NATO Strategic Concept, which was launched in December 2019 by Secretary-General Stoltenberg on behalf of leaders of the Alliance. In the case of Ukraine, the synergy of both government structures and think tanks will be necessary and significant in this process.

Ukraine should exert efforts to include in NATO's new Strategic Concept, which will replace the one adopted at the Lisbon Summit in 2010, the possibility of further enlargement (open door policy), as well as the provision that Ukraine and Georgia should remain an integral element of security in the Black Sea region.

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The first signals coming from the process of reflection are somewhat mixed, as is the composition of the High Level Expert Group to adequately support the reflection process¹⁷. As

is known, the co-chair of the group of experts is Wess Mitchell, a former US Deputy Secretary of State who is well aware of the importance of Ukraine in the region and in the context of relations with NATO (he personally invested a great deal of effort to ensure that Hungary unblocks the NATO-Ukraine Commission). At the same time, the group includes such participants as Hubert Vedrine, a former French foreign minister, who is considered the ideologist of President Macron's pivot towards Russia¹⁸. In addition, only one of the group's experts represents the 14 countries that have joined NATO since 1999 (Anna Fotyga of Poland).

The analytical proposals already being developed by NATO think tanks are also somewhat alarming. In particular, the recommendations¹⁹ recently published as a contribution to the process of reflection by the analytical circles of Poland and the Baltic states, do not mention Ukraine (and Georgia) at all. Based on a series of interviews in the four countries mentioned above, the authors argue that despite the need for NATO to further maintain the open door policy, even in these countries the idea that the Alliance is already too big and that a growth in membership would mean additional bureaucracy and more impediment to NATO's efficient functioning finds support. Moreover, the candidate countries are simply not ready and are unlikely to be so for a long period yet. It is worth emphasizing once again that this is a contribution to the reflection process on the part of our traditionally NATO-friendly partners, Poland and the Baltic states.

¹⁷ Secretary General appoints group as part of NATO reflection process, 31 March, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_174756.htm

¹⁸ *Why is Macron no longer the one he used to be. For the record of president Zelenskyy.* New Europe Center, September 13, 2019 <http://neweurope.org.ua/en/media-post/chomu-makron-vzhe-toj-na-prymitku-prezydentu-zelenskomy/>

¹⁹ "What next for NATO? Views from North-East Flank on Alliance Adaptation", Michal Baranowski, Linas Kojala, Toms Rostoks, Kalev Stoicescu, International Centre for defence an security, June 2020

With the support of our like-minded members in the Alliance, Ukraine could also initiate discussions to further update NATO's document on enlargement, the so-called Study on NATO Enlargement of 1995²⁰. Although it states that decisions on each country's accession are made on an individual basis, it is this study that regulates the impossibility of accession to NATO by countries with external territorial disputes and requires the resolution of these «disputes» by peaceful means in accordance with OSCE principles (paragraph 6 of the study). As long as NATO follows this logic, Russia will create and exacerbate conflicts on the borders with countries that could potentially become NATO member as a kind of safeguard for their further integration into the Alliance.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the invitation to the NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partnership, Ukraine is looking to become a number one country globally in terms of the number of tools and mechanisms available to prepare for NATO membership. For the next three years, before the end of the first cycle of EOP participation, there is a need to demonstrate on specific examples that Ukraine has a vision and capacity to make effective use of existing NATO instruments, including the EOP. At the same time, the key to further rapprochement with NATO, including accession to the Membership Action Plan (MAP), should be the Annual National Program, not the EOP. It is its improvement and effective implementation that should be prioritized by the Ukrainian party so that in 2023 NATO will have proper grounds for inviting Ukraine to the MAP.

With this in mind, the following steps are proposed for consideration:

- More political leadership should be shown in the matter of Ukraine's integration into NATO. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's letter to the NATO Secretary-General dated June 2020 is an important step in this direction. We also need public signals (without public deadlines) on the irreversibility of orientation towards NATO membership and an invitation to the MAP as the next step in our relations with the Alliance. An important signal will also be the setting forth the MAP as the next goal of Ukraine in the National Security Strategy.
- A focus on the Black Sea security could be Ukraine's calling card as a member of the Enhanced Opportunities Partnership (EOP). Ukraine must participate in and initiate NATO exercises in the region, in particular under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

²⁰ Study on NATO enlargement, 3 September 1995, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_24733.htm



What's Next after Enhanced Partnership?

In this regard, it is important to establish and intensify the partnership with Georgia, a member of the EOP since 2014, as well as with the Black Sea member states of NATO, especially with Romania.

- Ukraine should exercise its participation in the EOP to increase and strengthen its representation in NATO's governing bodies. Emphasis should be attached on having at least one representative of Ukraine in the NATO International Staff in the foreseeable future.
- The next point of Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration is the invitation to the MAP. The key to Ukraine's accession to the MAP is the effective implementation of the Annual National Program. The optimal time for this could be the completion of the first cycle of the EOP in 2023. It will also mark the end of the five-year term of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's tenure, which would be a substantial foreign policy asset for the incumbent head of state. The first step in this direction should be consultations with member states on Ukraine's joining the MAP in three years.
- For the effective implementation of the Annual National Program, it should be made public: according to the Pulse of the Agreement model monitoring the status of the implementation of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU, it would be worth launching a similar Pulse of the ANP.
- The dialogue with NATO should be intensified not only at the level of communication with the Secretary-General and his individual deputies but also at the level of representatives of member states accredited in Brussels. This requires, inter alia, the appointment of Ukraine's ambassador to NATO. The absence of such a representative makes

Ukraine an easy target for criticism from opponents of further rapprochement between Ukraine and NATO.

- Ukraine should be closely involved in the NATO reflection process, whose results will lay down the basis of the Alliance's renewed Strategic Concept. The synergy of government structures and independent think tanks is a necessary and important step and should be aimed at setting forth in the updated Strategic Concept the "open door" policy and recognizing Ukraine (and Georgia) as an integral part of security in the Black Sea region.



ABOUT NEW EUROPE CENTER

*The **New Europe Center** was founded in 2017 as an independent think-tank. Despite its new brand, it is based on a research team that has been working together since 2009, at the Institute for World Policy. The New Europe Center became recognized by offering high-quality analysis on foreign policy issues in Ukraine and regional security by combining active, effective work with advocacy.*

The New Europe Center's vision is very much in line with the views of the majority of Ukrainians about the future of their country: Ukraine should be integrated into the European Union and NATO. By integration, we understand not so much formal membership as the adoption of the best standards and practices for Ukraine to properly belong to the Euroatlantic value system.

More about New Europe Center: www.neweurope.org.ua