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**GEORGIA'S PROSPECTS FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP  
AND U.S. GRAND STRATEGY**

by

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March 2018

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**GEORGIA'S PROSPECTS FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP AND U.S. GRAND STRATEGY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Since signing the North Atlantic Treaty on April 4, 1949, the United States has remained a main driving force behind NATO and has played a major role in shaping today's Euro-Atlantic security environment. Even though the decision-making process in NATO is based on the consensus of all member countries, the views of the United States on a variety of issues have been of great importance throughout NATO's history, notably with respect to the Alliance's enlargement. Accordingly, Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration path is closely interlinked with the decisions of the United States on NATO's future enlargement. Considering the exceptional role of the United States in NATO and the significance of the continuation of U.S. support to Georgia on its Euro-Atlantic integration path, it is important to identify and analyze internal and external factors that might influence U.S. foreign policy and thus determine its grand strategy. This thesis provides recommendations intended to support Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspiration—above all, to continue making significant contributions to NATO-led operations.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Association Agreement
ANP	Annual National Program
C4I	command, control, communication, computers and intelligence
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CFE	Conventional Forces Europe treaty
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
EU	European Union
EUMM	European Union Monitoring Mission
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
FYROM	the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDRP	Georgia Defense Readiness Program
GRP	Georgia Readiness Program
GSOIA	General Security of Information Agreement
GTEP	Georgia Train and Equip Program
ID	Intensified Dialogue
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JTEC	joint training and evaluation center
MAP	Membership Action Plan
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NACC	North Atlantic Cooperation Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGC	NATO Georgia Commission
NRF	NATO Response Force
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PARP	Planning and Review Program
PfP	Partnership for Peace
RSM	Resolute Support Mission
SNGP	Substantial NATO-Georgia Package
START II	Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms

SFOR	Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina
SOF	Special Operation Force
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction



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## I. INTRODUCTION

Since signing the North Atlantic Treaty on April 4th 1949, the United States has remained a main driving force behind NATO and has played a major role in shaping the Euro-Atlantic security environment in which we live today.

Taking into account the fact that the United States is the largest contributor to NATO (both militarily and financially),<sup>1</sup> the policies defined by the President and the Congress of the United States strongly affect ongoing processes in NATO, including policies on enlargement.

Even though the decision making process in NATO is based on the consensus of all member countries, the views of the United States on a variety of issues have been of great importance throughout NATO's history.

Therefore, for countries that aspire to become members of the Alliance the relationship with the United States represents a matter of a high importance. Accordingly, Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration path is closely interlinked with the decisions of the United States on NATO's future enlargement.

This thesis recognizes the importance of the United States in the international arena and its exceptional role in NATO's enlargement process. Furthermore, this thesis acknowledges the significance of the continuation of U.S. support to Georgia on its Euro-Atlantic integration path. According to Georgia's National Security Concept (the country's basic strategic document that explains fundamental national values and national interests), "One of Georgia's major foreign and security policy priorities is membership in NATO."<sup>2</sup>

Considering the exceptional role of the United States in NATO and the significance of the continuation of U.S. support to Georgia on its Euro-Atlantic integration path, it is important to analyze the role of the United States in NATO's post-Cold War rounds of

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<sup>1</sup>The Secretary General's Annual Report NATO Public Diplomacy Division 1110 Brussels – Belgium 2012, [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/stock\\_publications/20130131\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2012\\_en.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/stock_publications/20130131_Annual_Report_2012_en.pdf), 11.

<sup>2</sup>National Security Concept of Georgia, p.15. <https://www.mod.gov.ge/assets/up-modul/uploads/pdf/NSC-ENG.pdf>, 15.

enlargement in order to identify and analyze internal and external factors which might influence U.S. foreign policy.

This thesis is organized into seven chapters. Chapter II presents an historical overview of the first post–Cold War round of NATO enlargement and describes major driving factors behind NATO’s open door policy after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The sources used in this section include official documents released by NATO as well as press releases of NATO officials and articles by experts.

In his book *NATO’s Balancing Act*, David S. Yost examines “multiple motives” that Allies had for NATO’s enlargement after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Yost argues that the post–Cold War security environment prompted Allies to balance their preferred political values with their perceived security interests<sup>3</sup> in multiple rounds of post–Cold War NATO enlargement. Furthermore, Yost examines some of the geopolitical factors which played a significant role in each phase of the enlargement process.

Chapter III analyzes the second round of NATO’s post–Cold War enlargement, which added seven new members to the Alliance. The second and largest round in NATO’s post–Cold War enlargement so far took place in 2004 during the presidency of George W. Bush. At the Prague Summit, on 21–22 November 2002, NATO Heads of State and Government invited seven countries—Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia—to begin accession talks to join the Alliance. On March 29, 2004, the NATO Allies officially accepted seven new member countries into the Alliance.<sup>4</sup> In the United States this process was largely influenced by two factors: the continuing popularity of NATO’s “open door policy”<sup>5</sup> among political elites and foreign policy experts and the terrorist attacks by the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda on the United States on September 11, 2001.

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<sup>3</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO’s Balancing Act* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2014), 282.

<sup>4</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Seven New Members Join NATO*, 29 Mar, 2004, <https://www.nato.int/docu/update/2004/03-march/e0329a.htm>

<sup>5</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *NATO Enlargement & Open Door*, July, 2016, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2016\\_07/20160627\\_1607-factsheet-enlargement-eng.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_07/20160627_1607-factsheet-enlargement-eng.pdf)

Chapter IV of this thesis analyses the events leading to NATO's Bucharest Summit decision and focuses on the debate among the Allies over granting a Membership Action Plan (MAP)<sup>6</sup> to Georgia. (MAP is a special program designed for aspiring countries to help them prepare for eventual membership.) On April 2–4, 2008, NATO Heads of State and Government gathered in Bucharest, the capital of Romania, for another NATO summit. Two major enlargement issues were put on the agenda of the Summit: further enlargement of the Alliance by accepting three new members (Albania, Croatia and Macedonia), and the question of offering MAP status to Georgia and Ukraine. While President Bush supported granting MAP status to Georgia and Ukraine, his position was not endorsed by all the other members of the Alliance. In order to grant MAP status to Georgia and Ukraine, all members had to reach a consensus to do so, but “the Alliance was divided right down the middle on the issue.”<sup>7</sup> Some members, including Canada, the United Kingdom, and countries from Central and Eastern Europe supported the position of the United States on granting MAP status to Georgia. Other Allies, mainly Belgium, Greece, Italy, Luxemburg, Spain and Turkey, backed Germany's opposition to offering MAP status to Georgia and Ukraine. As for France and the rest of the members, they “were sitting on the fence, waiting to see which way the debate would go.”<sup>8</sup> At the end of the day three votes counted the most—those of France, Germany, and the United States.

This thesis focuses on the first three rounds of NATO's post-Cold War enlargement. Montenegro's accession to the Alliance on June 5, 2017 is a positive and important message for the countries that aspire to NATO membership, as it confirmed the continuation of the Alliance's open door policy.

Chapter V examines Georgia's path towards NATO and provides an overview of major events which took place since NATO's 2002 Prague Summit, where Georgia officially announced its Euro-Atlantic aspiration.

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<sup>6</sup> NATO, “Membership Action Plan (MAP),” NATO, last modified December 12, 2017, [https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics\\_37356.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics_37356.htm).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>8</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook The World, Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*, (Published by Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010), 131.

Chapter VI of this thesis is dedicated to an analysis of the grand strategic options for the United States, as articulated by Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross: neo-isolationism, selective engagement, cooperative security and primacy,<sup>9</sup> and how these options may be relevant to NATO's enlargement process.

According to Posen and Ross, neo-isolationists consider the geographical location of the United States and its economic and military might as guarantors of the nation's security and prosperity, thus rejecting internationalism as unnecessary and counterproductive. In other words, neo-isolationists view alliances with other countries as risks to U.S. national interests. Since neo-isolationism promulgates an "anti-alliance" policy, the issue of NATO's further enlargement is off the table. Despite its "radical" approach to international relations, neo-isolationism has deep roots in U.S. political life and still tends to be popular. George Washington's Farewell Address was the first expression of the isolationist posture. The outgoing president prescribed avoiding policies that would tie American interests too closely with those of other nations.<sup>10</sup> Later, this advice was articulated in Thomas Jefferson's warning against "entangling alliances,"<sup>11</sup> and became the dogma of American foreign policy until the First World War. During his 2016 presidential campaign Donald Trump used the slogan "America First," which, despite its isolationist nature, enjoyed a wide popularity.

Distinct from a neo-isolationism strategy and its policy of minimal engagement in international affairs, a selective engagement strategy emphasizes relatively active but at the same time, "selective" engagement in foreign relations. Selective engagement supports involvement and intervention in strategically important regions which directly affect the nation's security and prosperity. A selective engagement strategy views NATO as an important political-military organization and acknowledges the importance of keeping

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<sup>9</sup> Barry R. Posen, Andrew Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *America's Strategic Choices*, Revised Edition, <http://www.comw.org/pda/14dec/fulltext/97posen.pdf>, 4.

<sup>10</sup> "Washington's Farewell Address," U.S. History, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://www.ushistory.org/documents/farewelladdress.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> MSB, "Our Republic - Quote: Thomas Jefferson," *Our Republic - The U.S. Constitution, The Founding Fathers and The Proper Role of Government*, accessed January 27, 2018, <http://www.ourrepubliconline.com/Quote/502>.

NATO's security umbrella at its maximum effectiveness level. At the same time, however, a selective engagement strategy "favors the preservation of NATO, though not its expansion."<sup>12</sup>

Unlike the three other grand strategic options, cooperative security is informed by liberalism instead of realism and fosters close cooperation through international institutions. The advocates of cooperative security presume that democracy and liberal order functions as a glue which holds countries together against common threats. According to Posen and Ross, proponents of cooperative security "presume that democracies will find it easier to work together in cooperative security regimes than would states with less progressive domestic politics."<sup>13</sup>

As for primacy, it is considered the most ambitious grand strategic option. To quote Posen and Ross, champions of primacy maintain that "only a preponderance of U.S. power ensures peace."<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, the main objective of primacy is to preserve U.S. supremacy in all fields, including political, economic and military realms.

In order to determine what possible impacts U.S grand strategy might have on Georgia's future membership in NATO, Chapter VI assesses the grand strategic options of the United States derived from the analytical context developed in this thesis and weighs the current implications for NATO's security.

Based on the research conducted in this thesis, the final chapter provides recommendations aimed to support Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspiration.

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<sup>12</sup> Barry R. Posen, Andrew Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *America's Strategic Choices*, Revised Edition, <http://www.comw.org/pda/14dec/fulltext/97posen.pdf>, 18.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

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## II. 1999 NATO ENLARGEMENT

### A. INTRODUCTION

According to the Alliance's famous 1995 *Study on NATO Enlargement*,

With the end of the Cold War, there is a unique opportunity to build an improved security architecture in the whole of the Euro-Atlantic area. The aim of an improved security architecture is to provide increased stability and security for all in the Euro-Atlantic area, without recreating dividing lines.<sup>15</sup>

In the mid-1990s NATO committed itself to a gradual enlargement process and in 1999 opened its door and accepted three new members: the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. As Ronald Asmus has argued, “the enlargement of NATO was not preordained or inevitable. It occurred because the United States, a lead ally in the Alliance, made it a top strategic priority.”<sup>16</sup> This raises an important question—why did the United States, a single superpower and a hegemon in the post-Soviet unipolar world, orchestrate NATO's further enlargement process?

This chapter describes the security environment in Europe in the 1990s, focusing on the security challenges originating from the collapse of the Soviet Union and the political debates over NATO's enlargement, led by the United States.

### B. THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN POST-COMMUNIST EUROPE

December 26, 1991, marks a pivotal moment in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as this date signifies the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ending of the Cold War. The fall of the “iron curtain” raised hopes in Europe and across the Atlantic that, with Soviet threat gone, common democratic values would unite European countries and create “a Europe whole and free.”<sup>17</sup> A famous political scientist, Francis Fukuyama, went even further by arguing

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<sup>15</sup>North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Study on NATO Enlargement*, 1995, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_24733.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_24733.htm)

<sup>16</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door, How the Alliance Remade itself for a New Era*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> President George Bush, Remarks to the Citizens in Mainz, Rheingoldhalle. Mainz, Federal Republic of Germany, May 31, 1989. <https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/ga6-890531.htm>.

that the end of the Cold War marked not only “the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.”<sup>18</sup> The disappearance of the major conventional threat from the Soviet Union stimulated optimistic expectations in the European security environment, and, as NATO’s primary mission had been to deter and respond to the Soviet threat, its absence led to some questioning of NATO’s further role in the Euro-Atlantic region.

It did not take too much time for new security threats to appear (or re-appear) and challenge the balance of power in Europe. Even though the Soviets were gone, the threat to European security remained and Francis Fukuyama’s idea of “universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government”<sup>19</sup> gradually faded away. The rising need for a timely and adequate response to the risks and challenges originating from the ruins of the Soviet empire (Figure 1) reemphasized NATO’s role as a major security guarantor in Europe, and stimulated a transformation process within the Alliance.

Fifteen new states—former union republics of the USSR—regained their independence in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. State building and politico-economic transformation of post-Soviet countries were accompanied by border disputes, extreme nationalism, violence and political instability.

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<sup>18</sup>Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *The National Interest*, No.16,1989, 8.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

Figure 1. Security environment in Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union<sup>20</sup>



### C. SECURITY DILEMMA IN EUROPE

The collapse of the Soviet Union sent shockwaves all over Europe and ignited a number of conflicts and civil wars on national and ethnic grounds and raised fundamental questions about the nature of “Europe, including the extent to which the post-communist eastern half of the continent forms a distinct region (or subregion), the relationship between Western and Eastern Europe, and where the eastern border of Europe lies or should lie.”<sup>21</sup>

In 1991, the same year as the Soviet collapse, confrontations on ethnic, religious and cultural grounds between multi-ethnic republics of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia led to the Yugoslav wars.<sup>22</sup> The instability in the region created a security vacuum in Southeastern and Eastern Europe and raised concerns among the liberal democracies of Europe on the possibility of post-Communist Russia re-establishing its

<sup>20</sup> Matthew White, “Map Fall of the Soviet Union,” July, 1998, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/ussrfall.htm>

<sup>21</sup> Derek Averre, Andrew Cottey, *New Security Challenges in Post-Communist Europe, Securing Europe's East*, Manchester University Press, New York, 2002, 51.

<sup>22</sup> Office of the Historian U.S. State Department, “Milestones: 1989–1992, The Breakup of Yugoslavia, 1990–1992,” accessed February 8, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/breakup-yugoslavia>

sphere of influence in Europe. According to Philip Gordon, a U.S. foreign policy expert and former Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs: “The Balkan wars of the 1990s largely answered that question, showing that American military power, U.S.-Europe solidarity, and inter-operable NATO forces were still critically important to ensuring stability and security on the continent.”<sup>23</sup>

Violence following the breakup of Yugoslavia, the war in Bosnia, instability in post-Communist Russia, tensions in the Caucasus, and challenges in the denuclearization of Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan all played a significant role in forming Europe’s post-Communist security environment. Instability and growing tensions raised concerns across the Atlantic that if newly democratic countries of Central and Eastern Europe were denied membership in the Alliance, they might look for alternative ways of ensuring their security, leading to an arms buildup on the continent and raising the possibility of drawing the United States and Russia into future conflicts. The urgency of NATO’s first post–Cold War enlargement was well described by Javier Solana, then the NATO Secretary General, in 1997: “If we refused to accept the challenge of enlargement, confidence in Central and Eastern Europe would be undermined. The countries in this region would look for security by other means, possibly resorting to arms build-ups and fearing intentions of their neighbours.”<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, the rising need for an adequate and timely response to the security threats and challenges originating in post-Soviet Europe provoked a political debate on NATO’s future role, triggered the transformation process of the Alliance, and paved the way to its further enlargement.

#### **D. THE ROAD TO THE 1999 NATO ENLARGEMENT**

The first post–Cold War enlargement of NATO happened in 1999, during Bill Clinton’s presidency, as a result of a nearly decade-long political debate among the

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<sup>23</sup> James B. Steinberg and Philip H. Gordon, *NATO Enlargement: Moving Forward; Expanding the Alliance and Completing Europe’s Integration*, Brookings, Thursday, November 15, 2001. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/nato-enlargement-moving-forward-expanding-the-alliance-and-completing-europes-integration/>

<sup>24</sup> Javier Solana quoted in David Yost, *NATO’s Balancing Act* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2014), 284.

member countries, led by the United States. According to a report published by the RAND Corporation in 2001:

Although an enlargement decision is said to be based on consensus among all existing members, the preferences of the major NATO members carry more weight than those of the smaller members. Thus, in the run-up to the invitations issued at NATO's 1997 Madrid summit, the U.S. preference for issuing invitations only to Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary carried the day.<sup>25</sup>

With the campaign slogan "Putting People First,"<sup>26</sup> Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign was largely focused on dealing with the domestic problems within the United States rather than developing a strategy on the future of the European security environment. According to Ronald Asmus, a former U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, "Although the President [Clinton] had spoken of the need to update America's key alliances during the campaign, few if any of Clinton's top aides were focused on the issue or had a clear vision or strategy for NATO's future."<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, soon after assuming the office of President, Europe and NATO became top priorities of his Administration. Despite the concerns about NATO's expansion expressed by the leading foreign policy experts of that time, including George F. Kennan (who called NATO's expansion a "tragic mistake"),<sup>28</sup> Paul Nitze and Robert McNamara,<sup>29</sup> Clinton believed that enlarging NATO to Central and Eastern Europe would promote the spread of democracy and ensure the stability of the post-Cold War geopolitical environment created by the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Three major factors influenced and challenged the Clinton Administration in its endeavor to re-engage in the European theater and lead in the redesign of Europe's security architecture:

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas S. Szayna, *NATO Enlargement 2000–2015 Determinations and Implications for Defense Planning and Shaping*, project Air Force, RAND, Santa Monica, CA, 2001, 8.

<sup>26</sup> "Bill Clinton for President 1992 Campaign Brochure," *Presidential Campaigns and Candidates*, accessed February 5, 2018, <http://www.4president.org/brochures/billclinton1992brochure.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door, How the alliance Remade Itself for a New Era*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, 19.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *Foreign Affairs; Now a Word From X*, *The New York Times*, May 2, 1998.

<sup>29</sup> Zoltan Barany, "The Future of NATO Expansion: Four Case Studies," 2003, 16–18.

- Russia’s post–Cold War transition;
- the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of newly independent countries in Europe; and
- U.S. domestic political debates on NATO’s enlargement.

Each of these three factors is discussed in this chapter.

## **E. RUSSIA’S POST–COLD WAR TRANSITION**

Negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union during the last years of the Cold War created a solid ground for further cooperation with Russia after the collapse of the Soviet empire. The signing of the 1993 US-Russian bilateral treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START II),<sup>30</sup> along with NATO-Russian talks on conventional arms ceilings in Europe, and further political and military dialogue between Russia and the Atlantic Alliance, resulted in withdrawal of Russian military forces from Hungary, the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland and the Baltic States.<sup>31</sup> Even though the United States was a strong proponent of NATO’s enlargement, the pros and cons of extending membership to the ex-Warsaw Pact countries were still largely debated in NATO’s European capitals. But the Kremlin’s decision in 1994 to start the war in Chechnya and its aggressive efforts to re-establish spheres of influence in the former Soviet states encouraged leaders from NATO’s Western and Central European countries to lean towards the decision to enlarge, and in 1995 “it became clear that the West had decided to divert its quest for security away from dialogue with Russia to the incorporation of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary into NATO.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Daryl Kimball, Brief Chronology on START II, Arms Control Association, Updated April 2014, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/start2chron>

<sup>31</sup> Viktor Kremenyuk, Russia’s Defense Diplomacy in Europe: Containing Threat Without Confrontation. *New Security Challenges in Post-Communist Europe*, edited by Andrew Cottey and Derek Averre, Manchester University Press, Manchester, UK, 2002, 106.

<sup>32</sup> Viktor Kremenyuk, Russia’s Defense Diplomacy in Europe: Containing Threat Without Confrontation. *New Security Challenges in Post-Communist Europe*, edited by Andrew Cottey and Derek Averre, Manchester University Press, Manchester, UK, 2002, 107.

Since Moscow viewed NATO's possible enlargement as a threat to its national security, the leaders of the NATO member countries decided to try to mitigate Russia's negative attitude towards further expansion of the Alliance. As a result, on 27 May 1997, at the NATO summit in Paris, the NATO Allies and Russia signed a Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation, and Security between NATO and Russian Federation. The document signed by the ex-Cold War rivals stated that "NATO and Russia do not consider each other as adversaries. They share the goal of overcoming the vestiges of earlier confrontation and competition and of strengthening mutual trust and cooperation."<sup>33</sup> In order to facilitate a trust-building process between NATO and Russia, this agreement established a NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council that was expected to develop a common approach to the political and security challenges in Europe.

In addition to the gradual warming of NATO-Russian and US-Russian relationships, the domestic turmoil in Moscow along with the country's severe economic challenges undermined the Kremlin's ability to pursue an aggressive foreign policy. This created a window of opportunity for three former Warsaw Pact countries of the Visegrád Group<sup>34</sup> (the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland) to pursue their goal of NATO integration. (Slovakia, which is also a member of the Visegrád group, was not invited to become a member until 2002, at the Prague Summit.)

## **F. EURO-ATLANTIC ASPIRATIONS OF EX-WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES**

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of Communism presented an opportunity for the Central and Eastern European leaders to escape their "unpleasant" historical past with Russia and direct their foreign policy towards the West. In December 1991, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) presented this opportunity by extending the "hand of friendship" to the Central and Eastern European countries (including all the former Soviet republics) and promoting dialogue and cooperation with

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<sup>33</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and Russian Federation*, May 27, 1997, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_25468.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm).

<sup>34</sup>The Visegrad Group, <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/>.

“NATO’s former Warsaw Pact adversaries.”<sup>35</sup> With full integration into the Alliance as a primary goal, the leaders of the Visegrád Group focused their efforts on lobbying on two fronts. First, they sought to convince the U.S. and NATO representatives that the enlargement of the Alliance would play a significant role in strengthening Europe’s security and would, as well, send a positive message to the newly born European democracies aspiring to NATO membership, encouraging them to continue democratic reforms. Second, they sought to convince Moscow that their NATO membership did not present a threat to Russia’s national security.<sup>36</sup>

At the meeting in the White House between President Clinton and leaders of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary (Lech Walesa, Vaclav Havel, and Arpad Goncz), the leaders of the Visegrád Group shared their common views on NATO’s enlargement. During the meeting with President Clinton, Vaclav Havel openly stated that:

Our main problem is that we feel as if we are living in a vacuum. ... That is why we want to join NATO... In addition, in our values and spirit, we are part of Western Europe... The issue is not that we are faced with imminent threats. Rather, we are in the process of undergoing an image transformation—a reshaping of identity.<sup>37</sup>

According to Asmus, “By securing democracy in Central Europe, Havel concluded, the West would set a powerful precedent that would allow reform to spread eastward.”<sup>38</sup>

Even though NATO’s enlargement was gradually gaining popularity and support from the political establishments of the West, some high ranking officials in political and military structures in Europe as well as in the United States questioned the rationale of extending the umbrella of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty to Central and Eastern European countries.

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<sup>35</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC)*, 30 Jan, 2017, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_69344.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69344.htm)

<sup>36</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO’s Door, How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 24.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Havel quoted in Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO’s Door, How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 24.



## G. U.S. DOMESTIC POLITICAL DEBATES ON NATO'S ENLARGEMENT.

Aside from President Clinton's ideological beliefs, NATO's enlargement seemed to have political benefits for the Administration. The content of the speeches by leading Democrats appeared to be designed to gain support from resident ethnic minorities from Central and Eastern Europe representing a substantial number of votes in future political battles. In an interview with the *Washington Post*, a leading member of the Democratic party, Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr., referred to NATO's expansion as "righting a historical injustice forced upon the Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians by Joseph Stalin."<sup>39</sup>

One of the high ranking officials concerned about NATO's enlargement was U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott. Concerned about a possible "backlash in Russian foreign policy," Talbott opposed the "fast track" approach to NATO enlargement proposed by experts at the RAND Corporation.<sup>40</sup> Even though Talbott viewed NATO's expansion as a disturbing factor in U.S.-Russian relations, he was not fundamentally opposed to it.<sup>41</sup> The major opposition to the enlargement came from the Pentagon. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili, believed that expanding the Alliance and providing security guarantees to the potentially unstable countries of Central Europe was risky at that time. Instead of extending the security umbrella to the Central and Eastern European countries, General Shalikashvili endorsed what some observers saw as an alternative, the Partnership for Peace (PfP) initiative (a program of practical bilateral cooperation between individual Euro-Atlantic partner countries and NATO).<sup>42</sup> Secretary of Defense Les Aspin also endorsed PfP, and the DoD preferred PfP to moving forward promptly on enlargement.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Joseph R. Biden quoted in Helen Dewar, "SENATE APPROVES EXPANSION OF NATO" May 1, 1998, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1998/05/01/senate-approves-expansion-of-nato/38dded71-978c-475a-8852-58f5e285e572/?utm\\_term=.4184fbd45946](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1998/05/01/senate-approves-expansion-of-nato/38dded71-978c-475a-8852-58f5e285e572/?utm_term=.4184fbd45946).

<sup>40</sup> Ronald D. Asmus; Richard L. Kugler; F. Stephen Larrabee, *Building a New NATO*, Foreign Affairs, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/southeastern-europe/1993-09-01/building-new-nato>.

<sup>41</sup> Havel quoted in Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door, How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 44–45.

<sup>42</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Partnership for Peace Program*, Jun, 2017, [https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics\\_50349.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics_50349.htm)

<sup>43</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door, How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 45.

The proponents of enlargement included German Defense Minister Volker Ruehe, United States Senator Richard Lugar, and the RAND Corporation experts. Ruehe viewed NATO's enlargement as in Germany's national interest and regarded the expansion as a significant step towards protecting Germany "from potential instability in Central and Eastern Europe."<sup>44</sup>

Ruehe's views on NATO enlargement were largely shared by Senator Richard Lugar, one of the most influential and respected foreign policy experts on Capitol Hill. Lugar also believed that NATO's enlargement was essential in responding to the security challenges in Europe and thought that the end of the Cold War created a window of the opportunity enabling the West to openly and practically support rising democracies in Central and Eastern Europe. The Senator was convinced that "NATO had to be overhauled if it was to remain relevant and have public support at home."<sup>45</sup>

The joint efforts of Ruehe and Lugar, along with a rising number of proponents for enlargement, facilitated the change in discussing NATO's expansion. As a result, "the issue was no longer defined in terms of whether the West should or should not help the Central and Eastern Europeans by bringing them into the Alliance, but rather in terms of how to preserve security in Europe as a whole and revitalize NATO."<sup>46</sup> The expansion of the Alliance was no longer perceived as a move against Russia, but instead, it was regarded as part of the West's strategy to unite Europe, stabilize the region, and transform the Alliance.

Despite the harsh criticism of the Clinton Administration by the Republican Party, the idea of the importance of NATO's expansion was commonly shared in the Senate. NATO's first post-Cold War expansion was overwhelmingly approved by the Senate "in the strikingly bipartisan vote 80 to 19, where only 10 Democrats and nine Republicans opposed expansion, including some of the Senate's most liberal and conservative

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>46</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door, How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 33.

members.”<sup>47</sup> Supporting the expansion of the community of free democracies and leading a global alliance for democracy resulted in the first round of NATO’s post–Cold War enlargement and on the domestic front enabled Democrats to win votes for future congressional and presidential elections.

## H. CONSENSUS

Even though the political establishment in the West seemed to agree on the necessity for NATO to enlarge, concerns about the Russian attitude towards the expansion still remained a major challenge in achieving consensus among the member countries. One of the key events that played a significant role in NATO’s first post–Cold War enlargement was the signing of a communiqué by Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Polish President Lech Walesa. According to this communiqué, “In the long term, such a decision [Poland’s membership in NATO] taken by a sovereign Poland in the interests of overall European integration does not go against the interests of other states, including the interests of Russia.”<sup>48</sup> Russia’s positive change in attitude towards NATO enlargement presented an opportunity for other Visegrád group countries to act. In 1993, during a meeting with the Russian President, the Czech President, Vaclav Havel, assured Boris Yeltsin that Prague’s NATO aspirations were not directed against Russia and that NATO’s enlargement was intended to increase stability in the region. Yeltsin’s response was to say “It’s your free choice,” He added that Moscow no longer wanted to behave like the Soviet Union did in trying to tell other countries what they had to do.<sup>49</sup>

Poland’s efforts and the success of Visegrád Group in convincing the Russian President not to oppose their Euro-Atlantic aspirations, along with the strong support from the United States and Germany, resulted in putting NATO enlargement on the agenda for the upcoming summits. At the NATO summit in Brussels in January 1994, NATO heads

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<sup>47</sup> Helen Dewar, “SENATE APPROVES EXPANSION OF NATO” May 1, 1998, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1998/05/01/senate-approves-expansion-of-nato/38dded71-978c-475a-8852-58f5e285e572/?utm\\_term=.4184fbd45946](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1998/05/01/senate-approves-expansion-of-nato/38dded71-978c-475a-8852-58f5e285e572/?utm_term=.4184fbd45946).

<sup>48</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO’s Door, How the alliance Remade Itself for a New Era*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 43.

<sup>49</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO’s Door, How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 40.

of states reaffirmed that the Alliance remained open to the membership of other European countries and launched a Partnership for Peace initiative and invited partner countries to join new political and military efforts to work alongside the Alliance.<sup>50</sup> Despite rising concerns about NATO's enlargement still coming from the Russian political establishment, the expansion of the Alliance was supported by the member countries, and in 1997, at the Madrid Summit, the heads of state and government officially invited Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic to join the alliance.<sup>51</sup> On 12 March 1999, these countries officially became members of the North Atlantic Alliance.

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<sup>50</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Declaration of the Heads of State and Government*, 11 Jan, 1994, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_24470.htm?mode=pressrelease](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_24470.htm?mode=pressrelease).

<sup>51</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Madrid Declaration on Euro-Atlantic Security and Cooperation Issued by the Heads of State and Government*, July, 1997, <https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1997/p97-081e.htm>

### III. 2004 NATO ENLARGEMENT

The second and largest stage in NATO's post-Cold War enlargement took place in 2004 during the presidency of George W. Bush as seven new members—Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia—were accepted into the Alliance.<sup>52</sup> In the United States this process was largely influenced by two factors: (a) the continuing popularity of NATO's "open door policy"<sup>53</sup> among political elites and foreign policy experts and (b) the terrorist attacks by the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda on the United States on September 11, 2001.

#### A. KEEPING THE DOOR OPEN

In 2001 the RAND Corporation prepared *A Bipartisan Report to the President-elect on Foreign Policy and National Security*. This document, prepared by "about 60 American leaders in the areas of foreign and defense policy," states what they considered "the most important national security challenges for the new administration, suggests priorities, and, where we could reach consensus, recommends specific courses of action."<sup>54</sup> In order to maintain balance in the multipolar system of international relations and at the same time preserve its leadership role in the world, the report proposed "selective global leadership" as a grand strategy for the United States. The report's authors emphasized the importance of U.S. leadership in the Alliance and the significance of continuing support for NATO enlargement.<sup>55</sup>

As with the previous Administration, that of President Bill Clinton, President George W. Bush supported NATO's future enlargement and viewed NATO as an important instrument for protecting Euro-Atlantic security. During his first tour in Europe, in June

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<sup>52</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Seven New Members Join NATO*, 29 Mar, 2004, <https://www.nato.int/docu/update/2004/03-march/e0329a.htm>.

<sup>53</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *NATO Enlargement & Open Door*, July, 2016, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2016\\_07/20160627\\_1607-factsheet-enlargement-eng.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_07/20160627_1607-factsheet-enlargement-eng.pdf).

<sup>54</sup> Frank Carlucci, Robert E Hunter, Zalmay Khalizad, *Taking Change: A Bipartisan Report to the President-Elect on Foreign Policy and National Security*, Santa Monica, Rand Corporation, 2012, 11.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 4–5.

2001, Bush expressed his strong support for NATO's further expansion: "I believe in NATO membership for all of Europe's democracies that seek it and are ready to share the responsibility that NATO brings... Next year NATO's leaders will meet in Prague. The United States will be prepared to make concrete, historic decisions with its Allies to advance NATO enlargement."<sup>56</sup> In his attitude towards NATO's expansion, the President was largely supported by prominent political leaders on Capitol Hill, such as Senator John McCain and Senator Richard Lugar, as well as by influential foreign policy experts such as former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

The success story of the Visegrád Group countries (Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, excluding Slovakia, which would become a NATO member in 2004) in their efforts to become NATO Allies, and the incentives that NATO membership provided for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in terms of solving their territorial and minority problems, attracted a large number of Central and Eastern European states to the idea of NATO membership.<sup>57</sup> New NATO aspirant countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia), inspired by the enlargement of 1999, followed the example of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary and in May 2000 formed the Vilnius Group.<sup>58</sup> Like the Visegrád Group, the efforts of the Vilnius Ten were focused on intensifying practical cooperation with NATO and active lobbying for their membership candidacy in Washington and in the capitals of other NATO member countries. In the statement released in May 2000, the members of the Vilnius Group declared full integration into the EU and NATO their primary foreign policy priority:

We are firmly convinced that the integration of our democracies into NATO and the EU will facilitate the creation of a free, prosperous and undivided Europe. Today, we reiterate our common commitment to work together

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<sup>56</sup> "George W. Bush: Address at Warsaw University," June 15, 2001 *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 8, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=45973>.

<sup>57</sup> F. Stephen Larrabee, *NATO's Eastern Agenda in a New Strategic Era*, Santa Monica, Rand Corporation, 2003, 12.

<sup>58</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, *Vilnius Group*, 2014, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/security-policy/co-operation-with-nato-member-states-and-candidate-countries/vilnius-group>.

cooperatively to achieve this goal. Our goal will not be reached until each of us, as well as other European democracies sharing the values of the Euro-Atlantic community and able to bear its common responsibilities, has been fully integrated into these institutions. We call upon the member states of NATO to fulfill the promise of the Washington Summit to build a Europe whole and free. We call upon the member states at the next NATO Summit in 2002 to invite our democracies to join NATO.<sup>59</sup>

Even though the Bush Administration viewed NATO's enlargement as a positive and necessary step towards consolidating "a Europe whole and free,"<sup>60</sup> the idea of expanding the Alliance towards Russian borders had its critics in Washington and in Europe.

## **B. THE DEBATE AND OPPOSING FACTORS**

Opponents of NATO's further enlargement were largely concerned about the possible risks and challenges that a large number of new members could bring into the Alliance. Along with their geographical location, the relatively poor military and economic capabilities of the aspirant countries raised concerns among the members and strengthened the argument of those who opposed the expansion.

The skepticism about extending NATO membership to additional Central and Eastern European countries was also fueled by the relatively poor military performance of newly accepted members from Central and Eastern Europe. The Kosovo conflict, which started a few days after the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland joined the Alliance, caught them politically and militarily unprepared.<sup>61</sup> Rather than enjoying the benefits of membership, the new NATO member countries found themselves tied to obligations requiring them to contribute to NATO's efforts to manage the conflict. Even though Polish and Czech officials strongly supported the air campaign, it was openly opposed by local

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<sup>59</sup> Vilnius Statement, conference "NATO'S Role in the Changing Security Environment in Europe" Vilnius, Lithuania 18–19 May, 2000, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/security-policy/co-operation-with-nato-member-states-and-candidate-countries/conference-nato-s-role-in-the-changing-security-environment-in-europe-vilnius-statement>.

<sup>60</sup> George Bush, *A Europe Whole and Free*, Remarks to the Citizens in Mainz, Rheingoldhalle. Mainz, Federal Republic of Germany, May 31, 1989, <https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/ga6-890531.ht.m>

<sup>61</sup> F. Stephen Larrabee, *NATO's Eastern Agenda in a New Strategic Era*, Santa Monica, Rand Corporation, 2003, 27.

high ranking politicians. In April 1999, Czech Prime Minister Milos Zeman, despite President Havel's discontent on the matter, unequivocally ruled out the possibility of the Czech Republic's participation in ground operations in Kosovo.<sup>62</sup> Hungary, on the other hand, allowed the Alliance to use its base in Taszar and as a result affirmed its importance as a reliable Ally, in contrast to Austria's refusal to grant NATO airplanes the use of its airspace.<sup>63</sup> Still, the question whether the NATO aspirant countries were ready to contribute to the Alliance or would become a military and financial burden to the other member countries remained a concern among the NATO allies.<sup>64</sup> But the major opposing factor the United States faced on the issue of NATO's further enlargement came from the Russian Federation.

After NATO's enlargement in 1999, Russia tried to regain its military and political status and bring back its so-called "superpower" image. Since Moscow was trying to re-establish spheres of influence in the post-Soviet countries, the Kremlin was strongly against any of the Baltic countries joining the Alliance. During his speech at the Foreign Ministry in Moscow in 2001, President Putin openly expressed his deep concerns about NATO's further expansion: "we still consider the policy of NATO expansion to be a mistake and we openly reject it in our dialogue with the Alliance."<sup>65</sup> Since the further enlargement of NATO meant bringing the Atlantic organization to the doorsteps of the Russian Federation, the possibility of former Soviet republics joining the Alliance, especially the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania ), was especially unpleasant for Moscow and strongly opposed by the Kremlin.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> F. Stephen Larrabee, *NATO's Eastern Agenda in a New Strategic Era*, Santa Monica, Rand Corporation, 2003, 28.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>64</sup> Simon, *NATO's Membership Action Plan*, 13.

<sup>65</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Remarks at a Meeting of Top Members of the Russian Diplomatic Service*, Moscow, 2001, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21169>.

<sup>66</sup> Kathleen H. Hicks, Lisa Sawyer Samp, *Recalibrating U.S. Strategy Toward Russia*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, New York, 2017, 33.



### C. CHANGING OF THE GAME—IMPACTS OF 9/11

The “game changer” in NATO’s second post–Cold War enlargement was the terrorist attack on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center in New York, on September 11, 2001. These tragic events marked a turning point in U.S.-Russia relations. The threat posed by global terrorism largely influenced Russia’s attitude towards NATO enlargement. Russia offered its contribution in the war against terrorism by opening its airspace to the international coalition’s campaign in Afghanistan and by sharing relevant intelligence with the Allies. These tragic events marked the sole case in NATO’s history to date when the Allies invoked Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

Dramatic changes in the security environment presented an opportunity for the NATO aspirant countries from Central and Eastern Europe to re-affirm their commitments to the United States. In February 2003, they published a joint open letter in which ten member states of the group (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) expressed their confidence in the evidence concerning Iraq’s WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction) capabilities presented by U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell at the meeting of the United Nations Security Council on February 5, 2003<sup>67</sup> and their support for America’s military intervention in Iraq. The Vilnius group concluded that “the clear and present danger posed by Saddam Hussein’s regime requires a united response from the community of democracies.”<sup>68</sup> Though this political move was openly criticized by French and German politicians, it played an important and positive role in gaining stronger support for their NATO membership from the United States.

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<sup>67</sup> Secretary Colin L. Powell, *Remarks to the United Nations Security Council*, New York City, 2003, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070109235502/https://www.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2003/17300.htm>.

<sup>68</sup> Mihaela Gherghisan, *Vilnius 10 sign letter on Iraq, Brussels*, 6 Feb, 2003, <https://euobserver.com/enlargement/9269>

## **D. CONSENSUS**

These tragic events united the political establishment of the United States in the effort to win the war on terror and led many nations to support America in this endeavor. On the domestic front, the attacks transformed American public opinion and fundamentally reshaped Bush's image. Shortly after the attacks, the popularity rating of President Bush reached 86%. The public expressed broad willingness to use military force to combat terrorism.<sup>69</sup> In the international arena all NATO member states, as well as aspirant countries, were united and ready to provide their support to the United States in fighting terrorism.

Uniting in countering the common threats created a solid ground for NATO's second post-Cold War expansion. In other words, a unified domestic approach on NATO's further enlargement in the Senate and the House of Representatives in combination with enhanced cooperation between NATO and Russia on counter-terror efforts resulted in the largest expansion of NATO in the Alliance's history.

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<sup>69</sup> Pew Research Center U.S. Politics & Policy, *Bush and Public Opinion Reviewing the Bush Years and the Public's Final Verdict Overview: Bush and Public Opinion*, December 18, 2008, <http://www.people-press.org/2008/12/18/bush-and-public-opinion>.

## IV. 2009 NATO ENLARGEMENT

### A. INTRODUCTION

On April 2–4, 2008, NATO Heads of State and Government gathered in Bucharest, the capital of Romania, for another NATO summit. Two major enlargement issues were put on the agenda of the Summit: further enlargement of the Alliance by accepting three new members (Albania, Croatia and Macedonia), and the question of offering Membership Action Plan<sup>70</sup> (MAP) status to Georgia and Ukraine. As noted previously, MAP is a special program designed for aspiring countries to help them prepare for eventual membership. Even though the NATO allies agreed that Macedonia was eligible and qualified to become a NATO member, the invitation for its membership was blocked by Greece, due to the dispute over Macedonia's name.<sup>71</sup> As a result of the discussions, NATO Heads of State and Government agreed to extend invitations to Albania and Croatia, and in 2009 the flags of these countries were raised at the NATO HQ in Brussels, signifying their official membership in the Alliance.

Despite the strong support from U.S. officials regarding the offering of MAP status to Georgia and Ukraine, the decision was blocked by other member states, mainly led by Germany.

While stating that Georgia would eventually become a member of the Alliance, the Allies at Bucharest postponed the decision on granting MAP status to Georgia. On numerous occasions in the subsequent years Russian leaders have confirmed their intention to prevent the expansion of NATO to Georgia and Ukraine, referring to the 2008 war in Georgia as a successful example of their efforts to this end.

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<sup>70</sup> NATO, "Membership Action Plan (MAP)," NATO, last modified December 12, 2017, [https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics\\_37356.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics_37356.htm).

<sup>71</sup> Morelli, Vincent. Elk, Carl. Belkin, Paul. Woehrel, Steven. Nichol, Jim, *NATO Enlargement: Albania, Croatia, and Possible Future Candidates*, (Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2009), 2.

## B. 3-1: ALBANIA, CROATIA AND REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Euro-Atlantic integration has been the major political goal of Albania, Croatia and Macedonia; see Figure 2. Although they were founding members of the Vilnius Group, these countries observed from the side while in 2004 seven other countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) were invited to join NATO.

Figure 2. Map of Albania<sup>72</sup>



### 1. Albania

After the collapse of the Soviet Empire, Albania was one of the first countries to seek Euro-Atlantic integration. Despite firm support from the George W. Bush Administration, Albania's candidacy was not as well received about other NATO allies. NATO member states were mainly concerned about the status of the possible candidate as "the poorest European state, plagued by political instability throughout the 1990s, with a reputation for widespread corruption."<sup>73</sup> The slow pace of the political reforms in the country and the high levels of corruption also hindered Albania's pursuit of membership

<sup>72</sup> Map of Albania, <http://www.operationworld.org/files/ow/maps/lgmap/alba-MMAP-md.png>.

<sup>73</sup> Ryan C. Hendrickson, Jonathan Campbell, and Nicholas Mullikin, "Albania and NATO's "Open Door" Policy: Alliance Enlargement and Military Transformation," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 19, no. 2 (2006): 244, doi:10.1080/13518040600697779.

in the Alliance. According to Ryan Hendrickson, Jonathan Campbell, and Nicholas Mullikin, “NATO’s decision on Albania’s candidacy was in the end a political judgment of NATO member states on whether Albania’s membership would contribute to their security.”<sup>74</sup> Due to its limited military capabilities and resources, Albania did not have compelling strategic importance for the Alliance. Nevertheless, Albania’s geographical location (figure 2) and the ongoing instability in the region, mainly provoked by Russia and by opposition to Kosovo’s independence from Serbia, presented the country as “a potential factor for stabilization in southeastern Europe.”<sup>75</sup>

Even though the Albanian government, led by the Prime Minister Sali Berisha, was often criticized for its “hard” way of governance, public support for NATO membership was exceptionally high.<sup>76</sup> Public opinion polls determined that 96% of Albanians were in favor of NATO membership, along with the majority of the political parties in the country.<sup>77</sup>

Albania’s relatively small and weakened economy had a negative impact on the defense reforms of the country, and expectations of Albanian contributions to NATO’s military capabilities were low.<sup>78</sup> But, with the help of its prospective Allies, mainly the United States, Albanians started a gradual development of “niche” capabilities for NATO-led missions, focusing on creating a Rapid Reaction Brigade, special operation forces, and medical support units.<sup>79</sup>

Participation in NATO-led missions such as the Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR), as well as contributing to the ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) mission in Afghanistan along with Macedonia and Croatia,<sup>80</sup> provided

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<sup>74</sup> Morelli, Vincent. Elk, Carl. Belkin, Paul. Woehrel, Steven. Nichol, Jim, *NATO Enlargement: Albania, Croatia, and Possible Future Candidates*, (Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2009).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>80</sup> NATO, “NATO’s Relations with Albania,” NATO, last modified November 6, 2017, [https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics\\_48891.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics_48891.htm).

Albania with a positive background for the membership deliberations at the Bucharest Summit in 2008.

## 2. Croatia

Croatia's progress was more rapid and its political and economic reforms more successful than those in Albania. In conjunction with talks with NATO, the Croatian government conducted negotiations with the European Union concerning the country's membership candidacy. In November 2007 the European Commission published a progress report on Croatia's path toward EU membership and stated that the candidate country had met the political criteria for full membership in the European Union.<sup>81</sup> Refer to Figure 3 for a map of Croatia.

Figure 3. Map of Croatia<sup>82</sup>



According to a Congressional Research Service report, “NATO countries evaluated Croatia’s request to join the alliance using a number of criteria, such as the state of its

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<sup>81</sup> European Commission, Croatia 2007 Progress Report, Accessed January 26, 2018. [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhoodenlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key\\_documents/2007/nov/croatia\\_progress\\_reports\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhoodenlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2007/nov/croatia_progress_reports_en.pdf).

<sup>82</sup> Map of Croatia, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/hr.html>.

political and economic reforms, public support for membership, progress on defense reforms and ability to contribute to allied missions, and whether Croatia plays a positive role in its region.”<sup>83</sup> As with the Albanian case, the NATO allies made their political decision based on whether Croatia, as a member of the Alliance, would contribute to NATO’s security.

The biggest challenge for the Croatian government on its path towards Alliance membership was a lack of public support. Opinion polls in 2008 showed that, despite government efforts to raise awareness about the benefits of NATO membership, less than 60% of the population was in favor of joining NATO.<sup>84</sup> Those opposed to NATO membership believed that joining the Alliance would drag Croatia into international conflicts and put NATO bases on the country’s soil against its will. The “game changer” seems to have been the numerous attacks by Serbian mobs protesting Kosovo’s declaration of independence in February 2008.<sup>85</sup> After the attacks public support for Alliance membership increased to more than 60%.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, in April 2009, becoming a member of the Alliance was not celebrated as unanimously in Zagreb as it was in Tirana.

### **3. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

Macedonia, also known as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), established its formal relationship with NATO in 1995 by joining the Alliance’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. In 1999 the country was invited to join NATO’s

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<sup>83</sup> Morelli, Vincent. Elk, Carl. Belkin, Paul. Woehrel, Steven. Nichol, Jim, *NATO Enlargement: Albania, Croatia, and Possible Future Candidates*, (Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2009), 7.

<sup>84</sup> Morelli, Vincent. Elk, Carl. Belkin, Paul. Woehrel, Steven. Nichol, Jim, *NATO Enlargement: Albania, Croatia, and Possible Future Candidates*, (Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2009), 8.

<sup>85</sup> Peter Beaumont, “Serb Rioters Invade U.S. Embassy,” *The Guardian*, last modified November 26, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/feb/22/serbia.kosovo>.

<sup>86</sup> Morelli, Vincent. Elk, Carl. Belkin, Paul. Woehrel, Steven. Nichol, Jim, *NATO Enlargement: Albania, Croatia, and Possible Future Candidates*, (Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2009), 7.

Membership Action Plan (MAP), and as a result Skopje conducted a large number of political, economic and military reforms.<sup>87</sup> Refer to Figure 4 for a map of Macedonia.

Figure 4. Map of former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>88</sup>



Years of ongoing reforms in the security sector enabled Macedonia’s armed forces to become more interoperable with those of the NATO member countries. Macedonian forces have participated in various NATO-led missions.

The country played an important role in NATO-led stabilization operations in Kosovo (KFOR), as well as in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan and in the follow-on “Resolute Support” mission by training the local Afghan forces.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>87</sup> NATO. Relations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, NATO, Last modified January 19, 2018, [https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics\\_48830.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics_48830.htm?selectedLocale=en).

<sup>88</sup> “Map of the Republic of Macedonia,” History of Macedonia and the Macedonian Nation, accessed March 9, 2018, <http://www.historyofmacedonia.org/IndependentMacedonia/MacedoniaMap.html>.

<sup>89</sup> NATO. Relations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, NATO, Last modified January 19, 2018, [https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics\\_48830.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics_48830.htm?selectedLocale=en)



The major internal challenge to Macedonia's path towards NATO membership was the pace of the domestic political reforms towards further democratization. Difficulties among the political parties in achieving consensus had a negative impact on the reforms to end the corruption, increase the rule of law, and foster democratic governance.<sup>90</sup> The political instability was mainly caused by the disputes between the ethnic Albanian political parties and the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE). The rising tensions and political friction between the parties resulted in the dissolution of the parliament in 2008. As a result of the elections held after a political crisis, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and the VMRO-DPMNE party secured an absolute majority in the parliament and together with the Democratic Union for Integration party (an ethnic Albanian party) formed a coalition.<sup>91</sup> As a result political tensions between the parties were reduced. The democratically held elections in Macedonia, along with the ongoing reforms in the country, were positively evaluated by foreign observers. The country made progress according to the priorities identified by the Alliance, which included "efforts to meet democratic standards, support for reducing corruption and organized crime, judicial reform, improving public administration, and promoting good –neighborly relations."<sup>92</sup>

The major obstacle to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's membership in the Alliance was and still appears to be the disagreement with Greece over the name of "Macedonia." This disagreement dates back to 1991, when Macedonians seceded from Yugoslavia and declared that the Republic of Macedonia was the name of their country.<sup>93</sup> As the reforms pursued in Macedonia were bringing the country closer to NATO membership, the long dispute over the country's name became more apparent. As a result of this dispute, Greece blocked the decision to extend a membership invitation to the

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<sup>90</sup> Morelli, Vincent. Elk, Carl. Belkin, Paul. Woehrel, Steven. Nichol, Jim, *NATO Enlargement: Albania, Croatia, and Possible Future Candidates*, (Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2009), 10.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> "FYROM Name Issue - Hellenic Republic - Ministry of Foreign Affairs," Ελληνική Δημοκρατία - Υπουργείο Εξωτερικών, accessed January 26, 2018, <http://www.mfa.gr/en/fyrom-name-issue/>.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and still considers the name dispute a “red line” for Macedonia’s membership in the Alliance. In 2008, at NATO’s summit in Bucharest, the member countries agreed that “an invitation to join the Alliance will be extended to the country as soon as a mutually acceptable solution to the issue over its name has been reached with Greece.”<sup>94</sup>

**C. 2008 BUCHAREST SUMMIT – THE GREAT DEBATE – THE QUESTION OF OFFERING MEMBERSHIP ACTION PLAN (MAP) STATUS TO GEORGIA**

*“The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.”<sup>95</sup>*

NATO’s summit in Bucharest was held on April 2–4, 2008. Along with the decision to invite two new members: Albania and Croatia, to join the Alliance, NATO Heads of State and Government “engaged in a heated and at times dramatic debate over whether to grant Georgia and Ukraine access to NATO’s Membership Action Plan, a program designed to help aspiring countries prepare better for eventual membership.”<sup>96</sup> Even though the MAP represents a process which prepares aspirant countries for membership, it does not imply a guarantee of future membership. While the United States strongly supported granting Membership Action Plan (MAP) status to Georgia and Ukraine, Germany in particular strongly opposed the initiative. German Chancellor Angela Merkel argued that these countries were not ready for Membership Action Plan status, and she was seriously concerned about the possibility of a negative reaction from Moscow, if these two aspirant countries were allowed to join the MAP. Even though over the years the NATO Allies had tried to convince the Kremlin that NATO’s expansion sought to enhance stability in Europe through military cooperation and was not intended to provoke Russia,

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94 NATO, “Relations with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia!,” NATO, last modified January 22, 2018, [https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics\\_48830.htm?selectedLocale=en#](https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics_48830.htm?selectedLocale=en#).

95 Thucydides quoted in Douglas Lemke, “THE STRONG DO WHAT THEY WILL; THE WEAK SUFFER WHAT THEY MUST (EXCEPT WHEN THEY DON’T),” *The Review of Politics*, no. 02 (2007):doi:10.1017/s0034670507000708.

96 Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook the World, Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*, (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010), 111.

Moscow was still prone to Cold War thinking and viewed NATO's enlargement as a threat to its national security and strongly opposed it.<sup>97</sup> As Condoleezza Rice, a former U.S Secretary of State, recalls in her memoir, "When the question of deepening the relationship of NATO to Ukraine and Georgia by giving them a Membership Action Plan arose, Moscow's strained tolerance broke."<sup>98</sup>

Even though MAP status does not guarantee eventual membership and is designed to provide an aspirant country with "advice, assistance, and practical support,"<sup>99</sup> it represented a step with high political significance for Georgia for several reasons. Firstly, while getting MAP was not the same as membership, it was a well-known fact that no MAP country (except for FYROM to date, a special case) had ever failed to gain eventual membership in the Alliance.<sup>100</sup> Secondly, getting the Membership Action Plan had a great political significance for Tbilisi, because it signified strong political backing for the continuation of reforms while the country was moving rapidly towards the West regardless of Russia's efforts to intervene and stop it. Finally, getting closer to NATO was seen as an effective and necessary strategy for convincing the populations of the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia that "life as an autonomous region of Georgia heading West with a chance of joining the Euro-Atlantic community was better than being aligned to an autocratic Russia whose track record in the treatment of small minorities was hardly exemplary."<sup>101</sup>

While President Bush supported granting MAP status to Georgia and Ukraine, his position was not shared by all the other members of the Alliance. In order to grant MAP status to Georgia and Ukraine, all the members had to reach a consensus, but "the Alliance

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97 Anil Dawar, "Putin Warns Nato over Expansion," *The Guardian*, last modified April 12, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/apr/04/nato.russia>.

98 Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown, 2011), 670.

99 Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook The World, Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*, (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010), 111.

100 Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown, 2011), 670.

101 Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook the World, Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*, (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010), 112.

was divided right down the middle on the issue.”<sup>102</sup> As noted previously, some members, including Canada, the United Kingdom and countries from Central and Eastern Europe supported the position of the United States on granting MAP status to Georgia and Ukraine. Other members, mainly Belgium, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain and Turkey, shared Germany’s opposition. As for France and the rest of the members, they were (as noted previously) “sitting on the fence, waiting to see which way the debate would go.”<sup>103</sup> This chapter discusses the three votes that counted the most—those of the United States, Germany and France.

*a. Position of the United States*

Throughout his Presidency, George W. Bush was a strong proponent of NATO’s enlargement. Moreover, the President supported the idea of spreading democracy all over the world and believed that it would provide enduring security for the American people. In his words, “So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.”<sup>104</sup> Accordingly, since Georgia was rapidly democratizing while opposing the Russian influence in the region, the President believed that the United States had to support its ally, which the President had famously referred to as “a beacon of liberty for [the] region and the world.”<sup>105</sup>

Along with the President’s ideological preferences, the proponents viewed NATO’s further expansion into the Black Sea region as a necessary strategic move towards ensuring stability in Eurasia. Moreover, since Europe was importing more than 50% of its energy,<sup>106</sup> the Euro-Asian energy corridor had a strategic importance for European energy security.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>104</sup> “Full Text: Bush’s Inauguration Speech,” *The Guardian*, last modified July 14, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/jan/20/uselections2004>.

<sup>105</sup> “CNN.com - Bush: Georgia ‘beacon of Liberty’ - May 10, 2005,” *CNN*, January 26, 2018, <http://edition.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/europe/05/10/bush.tuesday/>.

<sup>106</sup> “Energy Production and Imports - Statistics Explained,” European Commission, accessed January 26, 2018, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics.explained/index.php/Energy\\_production\\_and\\_imports](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics.explained/index.php/Energy_production_and_imports).

Securing the oil and gas pipelines running through the region and reaching the European markets was recognized as an opportunity to “shore up the southern flank of the Euro-Atlantic community against the wider Middle East to the south.”<sup>107</sup> This provided the proponents of NATO’s enlargement into the Black Sea region with an additional argument.

At the other end of the table the opponents of the initiative were mainly concerned about Russian reactions to the decision and viewed extending MAP to Georgia and Ukraine as too risky for that time. They also were concerned about the uneven democratic track record of the aspirant countries, pointing to the division of public opinion in Ukraine over NATO membership and the events in Georgia in November 2007, when the President declared a state of emergency in light of opposition protests.<sup>108</sup>

In order to agree on the official U.S. position for the upcoming NATO summit in Bucharest on the issue of granting MAP status to Georgia and Ukraine the National Security Council held a meeting at which the President was briefed about the pros and cons of the possible decision. As Condoleezza Rice recalls in her memoir, “The President listened to the arguments and then came down on the side of the Ukraine and Georgia. ‘If these democratic states want MAP, I can’t say no.’”<sup>109</sup> Bush addressed the question about granting the MAP to Georgia and Ukraine, and the official U.S. position was to request MAP from the Alliance. As the President was determined to fight for what he thought was right, the United States risked being voted down by the Allies, which has never happened in the Alliance’s history.<sup>110</sup>

The opposition to this U.S. initiative on NATO’s further enlargement came from Germany, Washington’s close ally and once a strong supporter of the Alliance’s enlargement. Germany, the country which a decade earlier had played a decisive role in

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107 Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook The World, Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*, (Published by Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010), 116.

108 *Ibid.*, 117.

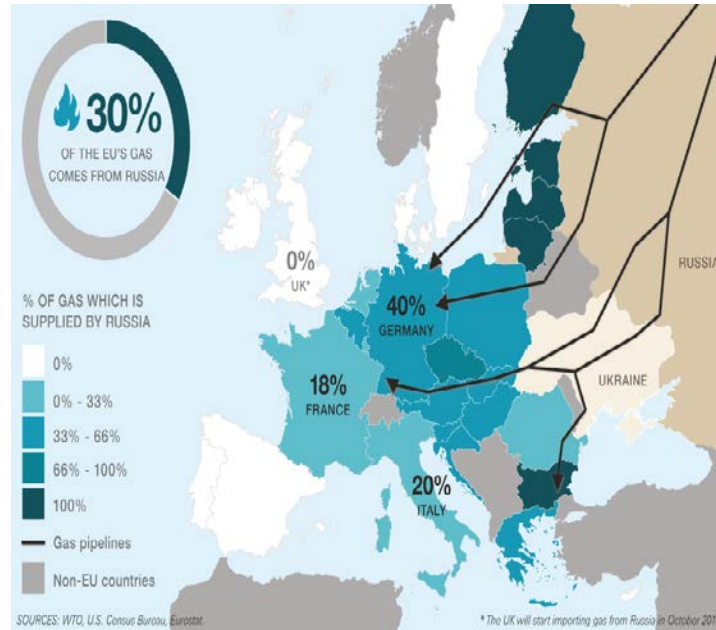
109 President Bush quoted in Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor, A memoir of My Years in Washington*, (Crown Publishers, New York, 2011), 672.

110 Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook the World, Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*, (Published by Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010), 125.

NATO's initial post-Cold War enlargement, was strongly opposing the same idea it had defended during Helmut Kohl's Chancellorship.<sup>111</sup>

**b. The German Position**

Figure 5. Russian gas exports to EU countries<sup>112</sup>



Even though the United States and Germany had worked together closely during the first round of NATO's post-Cold War enlargement, at the Bucharest summit Washington and Berlin were leading the two groups opposing each other on the issue of granting MAP status to Georgia and Ukraine. While the United States was trying to convince the skeptical members of the Alliance about the political and strategic merits of a positive decision, Germany pointed to the poor economic and political performance of the aspirant countries and the possible repercussions from the Russian Federation.

111 "KOHL ASSURES RUSSIA'S SECURITY IN LARGER NATO," *Washington Post*, last modified January 5, 1997, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1997/01/05/kohl-assures-russias-security-in-larger-nato/8f8e74c1-6eb7-46ab-b39a-0d55d8dd8f92/?utm\\_term=.02117b6deb0e](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1997/01/05/kohl-assures-russias-security-in-larger-nato/8f8e74c1-6eb7-46ab-b39a-0d55d8dd8f92/?utm_term=.02117b6deb0e).

112 Irene Chapple and Ivana Kottasova, *CNN*, "West Threatens Russia with More Sanctions, but Trade Relations Complex," *CNN*, last modified March 7, 2014, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/07/business/russia-sanctions-why-the-u-s-and-europe-are-not-quite-in-step/index.html>.

The argument of poor performance was unpersuasive because Germany and other allies had already created a precedent by inviting Albania in 1999 to join the Membership Action Plan while knowing that the country “was at best a decade way from eventual NATO membership.”<sup>113</sup> This argument was even more challenged by Georgia’s track record of having a better performance in developing democratic institutions than Albania had when it joined the MAP.

Table 1. Comparison of Freedom House rating of Albania and Georgia (Methodology: 1=Best; 7=Worst)<sup>114</sup>

<b>Albania in 1999</b> <sup>115</sup>	<b>Georgia in 2008</b> <sup>116</sup>
Freedom Status—Partially Free	Freedom Status—Partially Free
Political Rights—4	Political Rights—4
Civil Liberties—5	Civil Liberties—4
Freedom Rating—4.5	Freedom Rating—4

Chancellor Merkel’s main argument against the MAP initiative was largely based on the Russian factor. Putin warned European leaders that extending NATO membership to Ukraine and Georgia represented “red lines” for the Kremlin and that Russia would not tolerate it if these lines were crossed.<sup>117</sup> This was a well-known theme from the Russian side concerning NATO enlargement, and it was not a surprise for the Alliance that Russia would negatively react to the MAP initiative for Ukraine and Georgia. Russia had opposed

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<sup>113</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook The World, Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*, (Published by Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010), 114.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> “Albania,” Freedom House, last modified September 30, 2014, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/1999/albania>.

<sup>116</sup> “Georgia,” Freedom House, last modified August 7, 2013, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2008/georgia>.

<sup>117</sup> “Ever Eastward? A Divided Nato Pauses at Russia’s ‘red Lines?,” *Financial Times*, last modified April 1, 2008, <https://www.ft.com/content/8bc3ccd0-0007-11dd-825a-000077b07658>.

NATO enlargement from the beginning, but this time the relations between Russia and Germany were different. In contrast with the past rounds of enlargement, Merkel took Russian warnings “differently” and was not willing to risk close economic cooperation (36% of German crude oil supplies are produced in Russia, and 40% of German natural gas supplies come from Russian reserves)<sup>118</sup> with Russia over the issue of granting MAP status to Georgia and Ukraine.

In addition to the efforts to maintain close economic ties with Russia and secure energy supplies from Russia, Angela Merkel’s decision was influenced by other factors. The disagreement between the United States and Germany over the 2003 Iraq War had stimulated anti-American sentiments in Berlin and across the country. While Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (in office in 1998–2005) was openly criticizing the Bush Administration, he was also pushing Germany’s geopolitical orientation towards the East. The momentum was well received by the Kremlin, and Russia embraced the new partner by increasing Germany’s dependence on Russian natural resources. As a result, in 2003 Schroeder and Putin agreed on building a Nord Stream pipeline designed to supply Germany with Russian gas; see Figure 6.

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<sup>118</sup> Irene Chapple and Ivana Kottasova, *CNN*, “West Threatens Russia with More Sanctions, but Trade Relations Complex,” *CNN*, last modified March 7, 2014, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/07/business/russia-sanctions-why-the-u-s-and-europe-are-not-quite-in-step/index.html>.



Figure 6. Nord Stream's proposed natural gas pipeline<sup>119</sup>



Shortly after the federal elections of 2005, when Schröder was succeeded by Angela Merkel, the former Chancellor moved to Russia and in December of that year became the head of the Nord Stream shareholder committee, which was a part of the Gazprom empire—a state-owned company with monopoly rights over exports of Russian gas.<sup>120</sup> While Schröder was out of office, his legacy of distancing the country from the United States and getting closer to Russia remained. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, widely seen as Schröder's protégé, served as foreign minister in 2005–2009 and also represented the Social Democratic Party, the party that Merkel was in coalition with.<sup>121</sup> Accordingly, as Merkel was known “for being among the clearest and toughest leaders in Europe when it came to dealing with Russians,”<sup>122</sup> she was facing both domestic and foreign pressures over the decision about granting MAP status to the aspirants. One can speculate that if she personally believed that Georgia and Ukraine were ready to join the MAP the Bucharest decision might have been different and in favor of the aspirant countries, but she was firm in her decision and gathered supporters of Germany's position.

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<sup>119</sup>Nord-Stream, “Facts About Natural Gas Pipeline Across the Baltic Sea,” April, 2007, [https://www.nord-stream.com/uploads/nord\\_stream\\_facts\\_issue\\_0\\_english\\_download.pdf](https://www.nord-stream.com/uploads/nord_stream_facts_issue_0_english_download.pdf), 2.

<sup>120</sup> *Deutsche Welle*, “Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder Nominated to Russia's Rosneft Board, accessed January 26, 2018, <http://www.dw.com/en/former-german-chancellor-gerhard-schr%C3%B6der-nominated-to-russias-rosneft-board/a-40070458>.

<sup>121</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook The World, Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*, (Published by Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010), 120.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

*c. The French Position*

Along with Germany, France was also skeptical about granting MAP to Georgia and Ukraine. France was well known for its anti-enlargement sentiments and its smaller vision of Europe.<sup>123</sup> During the previous rounds of NATO enlargement Paris was generally concerned about rising American influence in Europe and a possible overstretching of NATO's role as a security guarantor on the continent. According to Ron Asmus, President Chirac viewed a "close relationship with Moscow as a way of balancing the United States and Germany."<sup>124</sup> However, one year before the Bucharest Summit, in May 2007, Jacques Chirac was succeeded by Nicolas Sarkozy, a young and energetic leader who sought to change the foreign policy of his predecessor.<sup>125</sup> The major change was to divert the country's foreign policy course from Russia towards the West. According to the newly elected President, "the biggest difference between Chirac and him was that his predecessor was anti-Bush and he was anti-Putin."<sup>126</sup>

Sarkozy expressed his sympathies and support for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations even though France officially was not a strong supporter of the MAP initiative. Paris and Berlin also had different opinions about "Tbilisi's democratic shortcomings." The French President was not as concerned about Russian reactions as was his German colleague. The major reason why France did not support the MAP initiative was that Paris was not willing to risk its future relationship with the German Chancellor over the MAP issue, which was pushed by an outgoing U.S. President with only eight months left in office.

Accordingly, as Ron Asmus points out in his book, "The conclusion that Washington—and Tbilisi—drew from this was clear. Sarkozy would be opportunistic. If

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<sup>123</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook The World, Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*, (Published by Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010), 120.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>125</sup> Bruno Bernard, "Why Nicolas Sarkozy Was an Extraordinary President | Bruno Bernard," *The Guardian*, last modified May 16, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/may/07/nicolas-sarkozy-extraordinary-president>.

<sup>126</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook The World, Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*, (Published by Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010), 123.

Merkel could be moved, Sarkozy would not oppose a compromise. And if Germany and France came on board, the remaining opposition in the Alliance would crumble.”<sup>127</sup> In other words, the tone for the Summit was set, and the Allies were ready to fight a diplomatic battle during their gathering in Bucharest.

#### **D. THE DECISION**

As anticipated by Washington, the Allies were divided on the issue of extending the Membership Action Plan to Georgia and Ukraine. Regardless of the efforts of the President of the United States, the German Chancellor was not giving up her position and was also gaining support from other European Allies. Chancellor Merkel was firmly against a decision which would grant MAP status to Georgia and Ukraine. Instead she proposed a different phrasing for the decision. “Intensive engagement” was the alternative wording she proposed instead of “Membership Action Plan,” pointing out that this “alternative” would prepare the aspirant countries for joining the MAP. The decision was reviewed by the Allies. Washington sensed the possible defeat of its initiative to extend MAP to the aspirant countries and viewed the German proposal as the “better than nothing” alternative.<sup>128</sup>

The major opposition to the alternative came from Poland, Lithuania and Romania. Polish President Lech Kaczynski, his Romanian colleague Traian Basescu, and Lithuanian president Valdas Adamkus were willing to fight for the better alternative for Georgia and Ukraine. They viewed the Alliance’s compromise with Russia as a breach in the sovereignty and integrity of the organization, because no outsider should be allowed to veto an Alliance decision. Requesting the better alternative led to harsh discussions with their German counterparts over the issue. Sensing that the Central and Eastern European countries were not giving up their positions, Chancellor Merkel took an initiative. Erasing every MAP word in the draft communiqué, Angela Merkel requested a sheet of paper and wrote: “We agree today that Georgia and Ukraine shall one day become members of

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<sup>127</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook The World, Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*, (Published by Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010), 124.

<sup>128</sup> Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Near Abroad: Putin, the West and the Contest Over Ukraine and the Caucasus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 120.

NATO.”<sup>129</sup> The proposed text seemed much more suitable for the Allies as well as to Georgia and Ukraine. After circulating the text between the allies the word “one day” was taken out and the agreed text was incorporated into the final draft of the communiqué.<sup>130</sup>

On 3 April 2008 the NATO Heads of State and Government published the official declaration of the Bucharest Summit, according to which,

NATO welcomes Ukraine’s and Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO. Both nations have made valuable contributions to Alliance operations. We welcome the democratic reforms in Ukraine and Georgia and look forward to free and fair parliamentary elections in Georgia in May. MAP is the next step for Ukraine and Georgia on their direct way to membership. Today we make clear that we support these countries’ applications for MAP. Therefore, we will now begin a period of intensive engagement with both at a high political level to address the questions still outstanding pertaining to their MAP applications.<sup>131</sup>

Shortly after reaching a consensus on the text, during the last session of the meeting Britain’s Prime Minister Gordon Brown reached out to President Bush and told him: “I am not sure what we did here. I know we did not extend MAP. But I am not sure we did not just make them members of NATO.”<sup>132</sup>

Allies viewed the final decision as a successful compromise between the big players of the Alliance with a strong but balanced message to Russia that NATO was willing to support democracies aspiring to join the Alliance. The events that would unfold in the following months, notably the Russian aggression against Georgia in August 2008, would place into question the rationale of the Bucharest decision and demonstrate the Russian interpretation of that same message that the Allies had hoped would be well received by Moscow.

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<sup>129</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook The World, Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*, (Published by Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010), 134.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>131</sup> NATO, “Bucharest Summit Declaration - Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008,” par. 23, last modified 3, 2015, [https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/official\\_texts\\_8443.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/official_texts_8443.htm).

<sup>132</sup> Gordon Brown quoted in Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Near Abroad: Putin, the West and the Contest Over Ukraine and the Caucasus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 124.

## V. GEORGIA'S PATH TOWARD NATO

### A. INTRODUCTION

Georgia-NATO relations began in early 1990s and gradually developed in close cooperation. Throughout this period Georgia has progressed towards democracy, liberalized its economy, and conducted a series of reforms in the security sectors of the country in order to defend its independence and sovereignty, as well as to achieve NATO interoperability. These reforms along with continuous contributions to the Alliance's international missions enabled Georgia to become a significant contributor to international peace and security efforts led by the United States, the EU, and NATO. For example, Georgia joined coalition forces in Iraq led by the United States, and a total of 8,495 Georgian soldiers served from 2003 till 2008.<sup>133</sup> Moreover, 281 Georgian soldiers have participated in EUFOR RCA-European Union's peacekeeping mission in Central African Republic mandated by the United Nations.<sup>134</sup>

As Luke Coffey notes in his report on prospects for NATO membership for Georgia: "few countries in Europe express as much enthusiasm for NATO as Georgia—even though it is not yet a member of the Alliance."<sup>135</sup> Georgian troops participated in NATO-led missions in Kosovo (KFOR) from 1999 to 2008, as well as in NATO's Operation Active Endeavor in the Mediterranean Sea. Since 2016, Georgia has continued to support NATO's maritime situational awareness in the context of maritime operation Sea Guardian. Georgia contributed more than 11,000 of its troops to NATO's mission in Afghanistan known as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), making it "one of the largest non-NATO troop contributors to the mission."<sup>136</sup> Georgia continues to be one

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<sup>133</sup>"International Missions," Ministry of Defense of Georgia, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://mod.gov.ge/en/mission>.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Luke Coffey, "NATO Membership for Georgia: In U.S. and European Interest," The Heritage Foundation, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/nato-membership-georgia-us-and-european-interest>, 8.

<sup>136</sup>NATO, "Relations with Georgia," NATO, last modified January 16, 2018, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_38988.htm#](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_38988.htm#).

of the top overall non-NATO contributors to NATO-led mission in Afghanistan as 872 of its soldiers are part of NATO's Resolute Support mission to train and assist Afghan forces.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, since 2015, following the successful completion of the evaluation and certification process, an infantry company of the Georgian Armed Forces became a part of NATO's Response Force.<sup>138</sup> (The NRF is a highly ready and technologically advanced, multinational force made up of land, air, maritime and Special Operations Forces (SOF) components that the Alliance can deploy quickly, wherever needed.)<sup>139</sup> Today Georgia is one of the three aspirant countries (along with Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) that officially aspire to join the Alliance.

In December 2016, at a press conference held at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg reaffirmed that "Georgia has all the practical tools to become a member of NATO."<sup>140</sup> Regardless of the challenges in achieving political consensus among all the NATO countries on the issue of Georgia's membership in Alliance, the acknowledgment of Georgia having "all the practical tools" for membership has been a positive response to a long and challenging journey for Georgia towards NATO which started after the country regained its independence on December 25, 1991.

## **B. BRIEF HISTORY OF NATO-GEORGIA RELATIONS**

NATO-Georgia relations started in 1992 when Georgia joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), which in 1997 was transformed into the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. In 1994 Georgia joined the Alliance's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program (a program designed to promote security cooperation among NATO countries and non-NATO countries), which enabled Georgia to participate in various programs,

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<sup>137</sup> NATO, "Resolute Support Mission (RSM): Key Facts and Figures," May 2017, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2017\\_05/20170523\\_2017-05-RSM-Placemat.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_05/20170523_2017-05-RSM-Placemat.pdf).

<sup>138</sup> "NATO-Georgia Cooperation," Ministry of Defense of Georgia, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://mod.gov.ge/en/page/38/nato-georgia-cooperation>.

<sup>139</sup> NATO, "NATO Response Force," NATO, last modified December 12, 2017, [https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics\\_49755.htm#](https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics_49755.htm#).

<sup>140</sup> NATO, "Joint Press Point with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Kvirikashvili," NATO, last modified December 5, 2016, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_138555.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_138555.htm).

including the Planning and Review Process (PARP). “This Alliance assistance has helped Georgia build deployable units according to NATO standards and interoperable with Allied forces.”<sup>141</sup>

In November 2002, at the NATO summit in Prague, Georgia officially declared its aspiration to obtain NATO membership and expressed its intention to participate in the Alliance’s new program—the Individual Partnership Action Plan.<sup>142</sup>

After the “rose revolution” in 2003, the efforts of the newly elected government to push democratic reforms resulted in a deepening of NATO-Georgian relations. In September 2006 at the ministerial level meeting, the foreign ministers of the NATO member countries decided to launch an Intensified Dialogue (ID) with Georgia. The ID is designed to serve as a mechanism of bilateral cooperation between the Alliance and Georgia, aiming largely at providing the basis for Georgia’s entry into the stage of a Membership Action Plan (MAP).<sup>143</sup> This marked an important transition from the format of partnership to that of a candidate for membership.<sup>144</sup>

Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic aspiration was largely supported by the majority of its population. The plebiscite held in January 2008 revealed that 77% of Georgia’s population voted in favor of NATO membership.<sup>145</sup>

As Georgia, with the assistance of its Allies (mainly the United States), continued to pursue a series of reforms, the rapid transformation of its Armed Forces paved the way towards deeper cooperation with the Alliance. In 2008, at the Bucharest summit, even though Allies failed to achieve consensus on granting Membership Action Plan status to

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<sup>141</sup> David S Yost, *NATO’s Balancing Act* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2014), 232.

<sup>142</sup>NATO, “Relations with Georgia,” last modified January 16, 2018, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_38988.htm#](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_38988.htm#).

<sup>143</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, “Information on NATO-Georgia Relations,” accessed February 15, 2018, [www.mfa.gov.ge](http://www.mfa.gov.ge).

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Central Election Commission of Georgia, January 5, 2008 Plebiscites Summary Protocol, (2008), <http://cesko.ge/eng/list/show/1166-jauary-5-2008-plebiscites-summary-protocol-2817>.

Georgia, NATO heads of State and Government promised eventual membership as they agreed that Georgia and Ukraine “will become members of NATO.”<sup>146</sup>

Since Russia perceives NATO enlargement as a threat to its national security, Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic aspiration alarmed Moscow because it implied NATO’s possible expansion in the Caucasus region. In December 2015, Vladimir Putin approved Russia’s new national security strategy, according to which: “the further expansion of the alliance, and the location of its military infrastructure closer to Russian borders are creating a threat to national security.”<sup>147</sup> The Kremlin openly opposed Tbilisi’s decision to join the Alliance and, as NATO-Georgian relations were intensifying, Moscow deliberately launched a political, economic and informational campaign to deny Georgia eventual membership. Even though at the 2008 Bucharest summit the Allies agreed that Georgia “will become” a NATO member country, the decision did not provide a specific timeframe or a roadmap. This provided a window of opportunity for the Russians to take more drastic measures to disrupt Georgia’s prospects for NATO membership.

The debate among the Allies over granting a Membership Action Plan to Georgia and Ukraine also illustrated a division within the Alliance. The position of the United States favorable to granting MAP status to Georgia and Ukraine was outweighed by the position of Germany and other countries opposed to enlargement decisions that would welcome Georgia and Ukraine into the Alliance. This was the first time in NATO’s history concerning enlargement when the position of the United States was outweighed by that of other Allies.

The division within the Alliance, along with Russia’s desire “to punish” the West for recognizing Kosovo’s independence, led the Kremlin to act.<sup>148</sup> As Moscow continued

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<sup>146</sup> NATO, “Bucharest Summit Declaration - Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008,” par.23, last modified 3, 2015, [https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/official\\_texts\\_8443.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/official_texts_8443.htm).

<sup>147</sup> *Russian National Security Strategy*, December 2015 – Full-text Translation, [Signed] Russian Federation President V. Putin, December, 2015, <http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf>, 4.

<sup>148</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook the World, Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*, (Published by Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010), 146.



its vast militarization of Abkhazia and South Ossetia the tensions between Georgia and Russia started to rise and culminated in August 2008, precisely at the time when the world's attention was directed towards the summer Olympic games in Beijing.

According to the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, war in August 2008 “was only the culminating point of a long period of increasing tensions, provocations and incidents.”<sup>149</sup>

### **C. RUSSIAN FACTOR**

The Georgia-Russia war in August 2008 was a climax of continuously aggressive policy pursued by the Russian Federation against Georgia in response to Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations, as well as to retaliate for the decision of many Western countries to recognize the independence of Kosovo, in disregard of Russia's position. The following provocations and incidents illustrate the gradual process of the escalation of crisis in the years preceding the armed hostilities. See also Figure 7.

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<sup>149</sup> Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, Volume I, September, 2009, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/30\\_09\\_09\\_iiffmgc\\_report.pdf](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/30_09_09_iiffmgc_report.pdf), 11.

Figure 7. Major events during five days of the Georgia-Russia war in August 2008.<sup>150</sup>



**Russia launched the process of illegal passportization.** In May 2002, the Russian Parliament (Duma) adopted a new Law on Citizenship introducing a regulation by which the persons residing in the former USSR countries and possessing former USSR citizenship were regarded as stateless persons if they had not obtained citizenship in any newly established country. This new regulation, providing simplified procedures, was used as a basis for illegally granting Russian passports to the residents of the Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali /South Ossetia region and thus launching a process of mass passportization. Protection of the Russian citizens, who had thus been conferred citizenship illegally, was used as a pretext for launching Russia's military intervention.<sup>151</sup>

<sup>150</sup> "Fighting Continues in Georgia," Washington Post: Breaking News, World, US, DC News & Analysis - The Washington Post, last modified August 11, 2008, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/graphic/2008/08/11/GR2008081100071.html?sid=ST2008081102278&s\\_pos=bottom](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/graphic/2008/08/11/GR2008081100071.html?sid=ST2008081102278&s_pos=bottom).

<sup>151</sup> Natoli, Kristopher. "WEAPONIZING NATIONALITY: AN ANALYSIS OF RUSSIA'S PASSPORT POLICY IN GEORGIA." PhD diss., Boston University School of Law, 2010. [https://www.bu.edu/law/journals-archive/international/documents/natoli\\_weaponizingnationality.pdf](https://www.bu.edu/law/journals-archive/international/documents/natoli_weaponizingnationality.pdf).

**Russia banned the import of Georgian products.** The Russian import ban on Georgian wine came into force in late March 2006. Russian sanitary services claimed that heavy metals and pesticides were found in Georgian wines, and they thus failed to comply with Russian sanitary requirements. In May 2006, Russia expanded sanctions and imposed embargo on Georgian mineral waters as well.<sup>152</sup>

**Russia deported Georgian citizens (2006).** In the fall of 2006 Russia deported more than 1,000 Georgian migrants. In 2014, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that arresting, detaining and expelling large numbers of Georgian nationals from Russia was unlawful and violated the European Convention on Human Rights.<sup>153</sup>

**Russia suspended the implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty).** In July 14, 2007 Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a decree on the suspension of Moscow's obligations under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Thus, the Russian Federation evaded its obligation to withdraw military forces from Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia.<sup>154</sup>

**Russia publicly revealed its intention to take decisive actions in support of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as its response to Georgia's potential NATO integration.** Russian high level government officials have repeatedly declared that NATO's plans to expand further in the post-Soviet space entail geopolitical consequences.<sup>155</sup> NATO members at a 2008 summit in Bucharest, Romania, while stating that Georgia would eventually become a member of the alliance, deferred the decision on granting MAP status to Georgia. On April 3, 2008, Russian President Vladimir Putin sent a letter to the de facto

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<sup>152</sup> C. J. Chivers, "A Russian 'Wine Blockade' Against Georgia and Moldova," *The New York Times - Breaking News, World News & Multimedia*, last modified April 6, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/06/world/europe/06russia.html>.

<sup>153</sup> European Court of Human Rights, *CASE OF GEORGIA v. RUSSIA (I)*, (Strasbourg: Grand Chamber, 2014), <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/app/conversion/pdf/?library=ECHR&id=001-145546&filename=001-145546.pdf>. 58–59

<sup>154</sup> "Russia Suspends CFE Treaty Implementation," *Arms Control Association | The Authoritative Source on Arms Control Since 1971*, accessed February 18, 2018, [https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008\\_01-02/cfe](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008_01-02/cfe).

<sup>155</sup> Dmitry Rogozin quoted in *The Associated Press*, "Russia's NATO Envoy Says Offering Georgia Membership Track Would Bolster Separatists - *International Herald Tribune*," last modified March 11, 2008, <https://web.archive.org/web/20080917213218/www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2008/03/11/europe/EU-GEN-Russia-NATO.php>.

leaders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia stating that Georgia's integration into NATO would have negative implications and thereafter Russia's support for Abkhazia and South Ossetia would bear a substantive and not a declarative character. On numerous occasions in the subsequent years Russian leaders confirmed their intention to prevent the expansion of NATO by referring to the 2008 war as a successful example of their efforts to this end.

In 2011, in his address to the military officers of Russia's Southern Military District in Vladikavkaz, Dimitry Medvedev, then the president of Russia, stressed that the August 2008 war had thwarted NATO's plans for enlargement.<sup>156</sup>

If we had faltered in 2008, geopolitical arrangement would be different now and number of countries in respect of which attempts were made to artificially drag them into the North Atlantic Alliance, would have probably been there [in NATO] now... We have simply calmed some of our neighbors down.... And for some of our partners, including for the North Atlantic Alliance, it was a signal that before taking a decision about expansion of the Alliance, one should at first think about the geopolitical stability.<sup>157</sup>

As a result of the five-day war in August 2008, Russia occupied nearly 20% of Georgian territory and recognized independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. On 16 August 2008, Russia signed an EU-brokered ceasefire agreement mediated by France's President Nicola Sarkozy, according to which Russian forces were to withdraw to their pre-conflict positions, an agreement which Russia has violated to this day.<sup>158</sup>

Several days after the war, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) of NATO decided to "freeze its partnership with Russia, and declared normal relations with Russia to be impossible."<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Brian Whitmore, "Medvedev Gets Caught Telling The Truth," *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, last modified November 22, 2011, [https://www.rferl.org/a/medvedev\\_gets\\_caught\\_telling\\_the\\_truth/24399004.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/medvedev_gets_caught_telling_the_truth/24399004.html).

<sup>157</sup> Medvedev: August War Stopped Georgia's NATO Membership," *Civil.Ge | Daily News Online*, last modified 1724, <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24168>.

<sup>158</sup> Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown, 2011), 691

<sup>159</sup> "Georgia-Russia Conflict Timeline (includes South Ossetia and Abkhazia)," *RUSI*, last modified August 11, 2008, <https://rusi.org/commentary/georgia-russia-conflict-timeline-includes-south-ossetia-and-abkhazia>.

The Russian occupation demonstrated the Kremlin's attempts to re-establish its sphere of influence, by all means necessary, in the post-Soviet space. In a "five-day war" with Georgia, Russian forces, those of a nuclear power and one of the world's largest military establishments, succeeded in overwhelming the Georgian defenses, but at the same time Russia's "military limitations were fully on display."<sup>160</sup> Regardless of this operational success, the Kremlin's strategic goal was not achieved. Moscow's attempts to shift Georgia's Western-oriented foreign policy towards Russia failed. Cooperation between NATO and Georgia continued and intensified, and the bilateral cooperation between Georgia and the United States deepened.

Shortly after the war, in September 2008 the NATO-Georgia Commission (NGC) was established. The NGC represents a forum for political consultations between NATO and Georgia and serves as an important mechanism for practical cooperation.<sup>161</sup> In order to enhance practical cooperation, in December 2008 NATO foreign ministers agreed to develop an Annual National Plan program (ANP). The ANP is designed to assist Georgia on its membership path by developing practical tools to achieve NATO standards. In other words, it is a practical cooperation mechanism between NATO and Georgia aimed at assisting country to meet NATO standards.<sup>162</sup>

In 2014, at the NATO summit in Wales, the NATO Allies decided to approve a new initiative, the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP), which extended NATO-Georgian cooperation by establishing 13 programs intended to prepare Georgia for NATO membership.<sup>163</sup> Georgia is the only non-NATO country to have ever received such a package from the Alliance.<sup>164</sup> One of the accomplishments of this package was the creation

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<sup>160</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, "*Russia Military Power - Building a Military to Support Great Power Aspirations*," last modified 2017, <http://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/Russia%20Military%20Power%20Report%202017.pdf>, 12.

<sup>161</sup>NATO, "Relations with Georgia," last modified January 16, 2018, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_38988.htm#](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_38988.htm#).

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Luke Coffey, "NATO Membership for Georgia: In U.S. and European Interest," The Heritage Foundation, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/nato-membership-georgia-us-and-european-interest>. 7

of the NATO-Georgia Joint Training and Evaluation Center (JTEC) in Georgia. The Center provides training and evaluation to Georgian and international forces aimed at enhancing Georgia's defense capabilities, increasing its interoperability with NATO, and contributing to strengthening regional and international security.<sup>165</sup> Along with intensified political consultations, NATO-Georgia practical cooperation has facilitated an increasing number of joint exercises in which Georgian service men and women train with troops from NATO Allies and partner countries.

As one of the main national security priorities of Russia is to keep post-Soviet countries out of the Western community, Georgia's choice and efforts to stay firmly committed to Western values have irritated the Kremlin. In order to hinder the deepening of NATO-Georgian relations, Moscow has continued and intensified its destabilizing efforts. Almost 10 years after the Russian aggression against Georgia, Moscow still continues to violate two major points of the Six Point Ceasefire Agreement mediated by Nicolas Sarkozy, then the French President: 1. Russian military forces should withdraw to their positions prior to the outbreak of hostilities;<sup>166</sup> and 2. Russia must allow free access for humanitarian assistance.<sup>167</sup>

Instead of pulling back its military forces to their pre-conflict positions, Russia has maintained a large presence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Thousands of Russian troops, along with tanks, anti-aircraft batteries, tactical ballistic missiles and other advanced military hardware, are stationed in Russian military bases located in the occupied territories.<sup>168</sup> Russian efforts to further militarize the occupied territories are "beyond the reach and sight of the European Union Monitoring Mission." The sole international mission which observes and monitors the situation near the occupied regions, as all other efforts to

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<sup>165</sup>"NATO-Georgia Cooperation," MOD.GOV.GE, accessed February 19, 2018, <https://mod.gov.ge/en/page/38/nato-georgia-cooperation>.

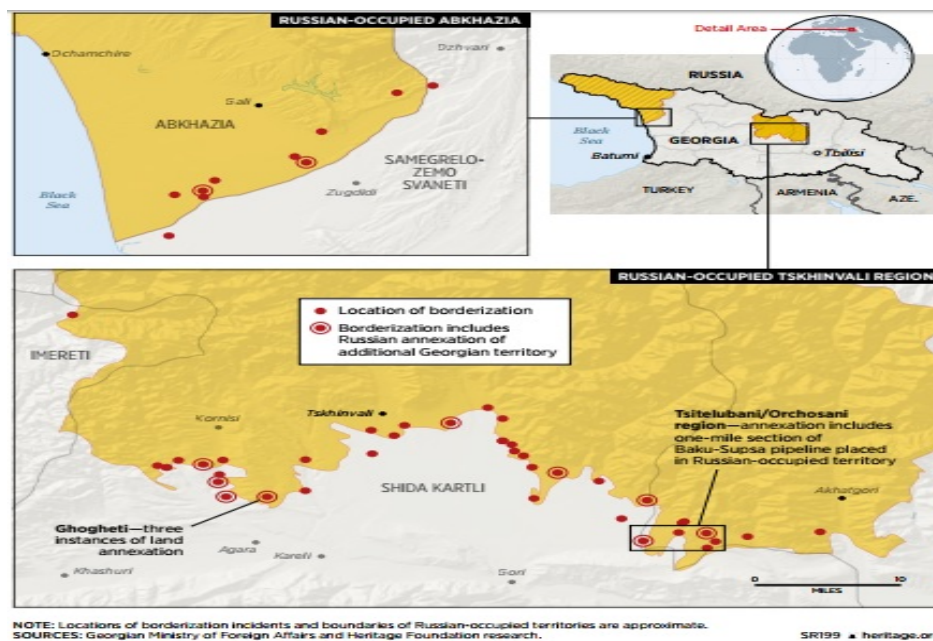
<sup>166</sup> Government of Georgia, *Six Point Peace Plan, Communique of the President of France*, (2008), <http://smr.gov.ge/Uploads/9bbbc7.pdf>.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Luke Coffey, "NATO Membership for Georgia: In U.S. and European Interest," The Heritage Foundation, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/nato-membership-georgia-us-and-european-interest>, 11.

allow international monitors were blocked by the Russian Federation, including the extension of OSCE’s 16-year-old mission.<sup>169</sup> The limited presence of international observers and monitors allowed Russia to pursue its aggressive politics of borderization in Georgia; see Figure 8. According to a report written by Luke Coffey of the Heritage Foundation, “since 2011, there have been at least 56 instances of borderization—including surveillance cameras, illegal fences, and other barriers—across 48 locations in Georgia by Russian forces. Some of the instances include “creeping annexation” in which Russia has taken additional territory from Georgia.”<sup>170</sup>

Figure 8. Russian instances of borderization in Georgia<sup>171</sup>



<sup>169</sup> “Russia Blocks Georgia OSCE Mission Extension,” Civil.Ge, last modified December 22, 2008, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=20171>.

<sup>170</sup> Luke Coffey, “NATO Membership for Georgia: In U.S. and European Interest,” The Heritage Foundation, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/nato-membership-georgia-us-and-european-interest>, 10.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

## D. U.S.-GEORGIAN RELATIONS

As Russia continued its deliberate efforts to deter its neighbors from getting closer to the West, the aggressive actions that the Kremlin undertook, namely, the occupation of the Georgian territories and later, annexation of Crimea, revealed Russia's Cold War thinking and its aspirations to re-establish the Soviet sphere of influence by challenging the existing international order. According to a Bill (H.R.1751), passed by the House of Representatives on 28 March, 2017,

The Government of the Russian Federation continues to violate its commitments under the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Final Act, concluded at Helsinki August 1, 1975 (commonly referred to as the "Helsinki Final Act"), which laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, of which the Russian Federation is a member, by its illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, its illegal occupation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia in 2008, and its ongoing destabilizing activities in eastern Ukraine.<sup>172</sup>

As Moscow has continued to put more pressure on Georgia, U.S-Georgian relations have intensified and developed into a bilateral strategic partnership.

In 2009 the U.S.-Georgia Strategic Partnership Commission was established.<sup>173</sup> In the framework of this commission four high level working groups were established to intensify bilateral cooperation in "democracy, defense and security, economic, trade and energy issues, and people-to-people and cultural exchanges."<sup>174</sup> The annual meetings of the working groups and the joint efforts to transform the Georgian Armed Forces resulted in launching the Enhanced Defense Cooperation initiative, which is designed to assist the Georgian government in transforming its military into more capable and NATO interoperable defense forces.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> The United States Congress, *Text - H.R.1751 - 115th Congress (2017-2018): Counteracting Russian Hostilities Act of 2017*, (2017), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1751/text>, 21.

<sup>173</sup> U.S. Department of State, "U.S.-Georgia Strategic Partnership Commission,," accessed February 20, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/p/eur/ci/gg/usgeorgiacommission/>.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Luke Coffey, "NATO Membership for Georgia: In U.S. and European Interest," The Heritage Foundation, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/nato-membership-georgia-us-and-european-interest>, 7.



In 2016, in the framework of the U.S.-Georgian Strategic Partnership Memorandum, the Georgia Defense Readiness Program (GDRP) was launched. This program was unique in that it focused on assisting the Georgian Armed Forces in “improving Georgia’s territorial defense capabilities instead of counterinsurgency capabilities needed in Afghanistan.”<sup>176</sup>

Political consultations and practical cooperation have intensified even more under the Trump Administration. Shortly after a visit of Vice President Mike Pence to Georgia in August 2017, the United States announced a possible sale of Javelin anti-tank missiles, including 410 missiles and 72 launchers to Georgia.<sup>177</sup> Enhanced cooperation under the Trump Administration has also facilitated the improvement of intelligence sharing between the two countries, as in 2017, the United States and Georgia signed a General Security of Information Agreement (GSOIA).

Along with strong support from the United States Executive, Georgia also benefits from bipartisan support from the United States Congress. In October 2017, two Members of Congress, Republican Ted Po and Democrat Jean Green, introduced a bipartisan resolution (H.Res. 576) reaffirming “U.S. support for the government of Georgia, its people, and its membership in NATO.”<sup>178</sup>

Another demonstration of strong support to Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity by the United States President was the signing of a legislative act supported by the House of Representatives and the Senate in May 2017. According to the document,

No Federal agency shall take any action or extend any assistance that recognizes or implies any recognition of ... the de jure or de facto

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<sup>176</sup> Luke Coffey, “NATO Membership for Georgia: In U.S. and European Interest,” The Heritage Foundation, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/nato-membership-georgia-us-and-european-interest>, 7.

<sup>177</sup> Defense Security Cooperation Agency, *News Release, Georgia – Javelin Missiles and Command Launch Units*, (2017), <http://www.dsca.mil/major-arms-sales/georgia-javelin-missiles-and-command-launch-units>.

<sup>178</sup> The United States Congress, *H.Res.576 - 115th Congress (2017-2018): Reaffirming the Strategic Partnership Between the United States of America and the Country of Georgia*, (2017), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-resolution/576>.

independence of South Ossetia or Abkhazia, or the airspace or territorial waters of South Ossetia or Abkhazia, from Georgia.<sup>179</sup>

By reaffirming its commitment to the countries suffering from Russian aggression, the United States Executive, along with the United States Congress, unanimously agreed to provide further assistance to the Eastern Partnership countries to counter Russian aggression.<sup>180</sup>

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Even though the decision making process in NATO is based on consensus among all member countries, the views of the United States on a variety of issues, including the enlargement of the Alliance, have been of great importance throughout NATO's history. Therefore, for countries that aspire to become members of the Alliance the relationship with the United States represents a matter of a high importance. Accordingly, Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration path is closely interlinked with the decisions of the United States on NATO's future enlargement.

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<sup>179</sup> The United States Congress, *Text - H.R.1751 - 115th Congress (2017-2018): Counteracting Russian Hostilities Act of 2017*, (2017), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1751/text>.  
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<sup>180</sup> FrontNews, "US Congress Adopted a Resolution in Support of Georgia," *FrontNews*, last modified October 27, 2017, <https://frontnews.eu/news/en/16403>.

## VI. U.S. GRAND STRATEGIC OPTIONS

The analyses of NATO's post-Cold War enlargement and Georgia's path towards NATO have illustrated the exceptional role of the United States in the Alliance and the significance of the continuation of U.S. support to Georgia on its Euro-Atlantic integration path. Considering the exceptional role of the United States in NATO and the significance of the continuation of U.S. support to Georgia on its Euro-Atlantic integration path, this chapter examines four grand strategic options for the United States (neo-isolationism, selective engagement, cooperative security and primacy) proposed by Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross.

In order to identify the particular grand strategy that the United States is likely to develop under the current Administration this chapter will firstly, analyze the four grand strategies for the United States proposed by Barry Posen and Andrew Ross,<sup>181</sup> and secondly, rule out the grand strategic options which are less likely to be pursued by the Trump Administration.

### A. DEFINING GRAND STRATEGY

A grand strategy represents a combination of ways and means in order to achieve specific ends. In other words, it is a combination of diplomatic, military, political and economic plans and policies in order to advance a state's national interests. Hal Brands, a distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, refers to grand strategy as "the highest form of statecraft...the intellectual architecture that lends structure to foreign policy; it is the logic that helps states navigate a complex and dangerous world."<sup>182</sup>

According to Brands,

Grand strategy requires a clear understanding of the nature of the international environment, a country's highest goals and interests within

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<sup>181</sup> Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security*, Vol. 21, no.3 (Winter 1996/97).

<sup>182</sup> H. Brands, *What Good Is Grand Strategy? Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush* (2015), 1.

that environment, the primary threats to those goals and interests, and the ways that finite resources can be used to deal with competing challenges and opportunities.<sup>183</sup>

This definition designates five basic pillars on which grand strategy stands: 1) foreign policy, 2) congruence of ends and means, 3) combination of all aspects of power, 4) flexibility and adaptability, and 5) ability to operate effectively in wartime.

1) *Foreign policy*. This requires a combination of diplomacy, foreign aid, humanitarian relief and use of military force in order to support a nation's strategic interests. "Grand strategy is the conceptual logic that ensures that such instruments are employed in ways that maximize the benefits for a nation's core interests."<sup>184</sup>

2) *Congruence of ends and means*. "Grand Strategy involves figuring out how to align today's initiatives with tomorrow's desired end-state—how to get from where one is to where one ultimately wants to be."<sup>185</sup> Defining national interests, identifying threats and challenges to those interests, and allocating proper means to achieve desired ends represents one of the main pillars of the grand strategy.

3) *Combination of all aspects of power*. Grand strategy combines all aspects of national power. It is a combination of military and economic strength with other national resources to accomplish important objectives and achieve mid- and long-term national goals. Having in mind the resource constrained environment, one of the main aspects of grand strategy is the prioritization of ends in order to allocate proper means. "Means must be integrated to serve great ends, but ends must be selectively defined so as to preserve nation's means."<sup>186</sup>

4) *Flexibility and adaptability*. The international system is not static form of environment. It is characterized by dynamic and sometimes rapid changes. In order to survive and succeed in the chaotic world of international relations the "grand strategy

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H. Brands, *What Good Is Grand Strategy? Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush* (2015), 3.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

requires not just a capacity for systematic thinking, but also flexibility and an ability to adapt.”<sup>187</sup>

5) *Ability to operate effectively in wartime.* Unpredictability and instability in international relations require the nation to plan for the worst and hope for the best. Therefore, protecting national interests in wartime represents an ultimate test of the soundness of a grand strategy. The need for national unity and power concentration is crucial in times of war, when the threats to national interests are most severe and resources most needed. “Indeed, it is frequently the effectiveness of Nation’s Grand Strategy in peacetime that determines how well prepared it will be to meet the challenge of war.”<sup>188</sup>

## **B. GRAND STRATEGIC OPTIONS OF NEO-ISOLATIONISM, SELECTIVE ENGAGEMENT, COOPERATIVE SECURITY AND PRIMACY**

Barry Posen and Andrew Ross have identified four grand strategic options that the United States could choose. In their view, the grand strategic options of neo-isolationism, selective engagement, cooperative security, or primacy could largely determine the “U.S. role in the world.”<sup>189</sup>

In order to identify the particular grand strategy that the United States is likely to pursue under the Trump Administration, this section of the thesis will begin by analyzing the four grand strategies proposed by Barry Posen and Andrew Ross (see Table 2)<sup>190</sup> and then rule out the grand strategic options which are less likely to be embraced by the Trump Administration.

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<sup>187</sup> H. Brands, *What Good Is Grand Strategy? Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush* (2015), 5.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security*, Vol. 21, no.3 (Winter 1996/97), 3.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

Table 2. Grand strategic options of neo-isolationism, selective engagement, cooperative security and primacy according to Barry Posen and Andrew Ross

	<b>Neo-Isolationism</b>	<b>Selective Engagement</b>	<b>Cooperative Security</b>	<b>Primacy</b>
<b>Analytical Anchor</b>	Minimal, defensive realism	Traditional balance of power realism	Liberalism	Maximal realism/unilateralism
<b>Major Problem of Int'l Security</b>	Avoiding entanglement in the affairs of others	Peace among the major powers	The indivisibility of peace	The rise of a peer competitor
<b>Preferred World Order</b>	Distant balance of power	Balance of power	Interdependence	Hegemonic
<b>Nuclear Dynamics</b>	Supports status quo	Supports status quo	Supports aggression	Supports aggression
<b>Conception of National Interests</b>	Narrow	Restricted	Transnational	Broad
<b>Regional Priorities</b>	North America	Industrial Eurasia	Global	Industrial Eurasia & the home of any potential peer competitor
<b>Nuclear Proliferation</b>	Not our problem	Discriminate prevention	Indiscriminate prevention	Indiscriminate prevention
<b>NATO</b>	Withdraw	Maintain	Transform & expand	Expand
<b>Regional Conflict</b>	Abstain	Contain; discriminate intervention	Intervene	Contain; discriminate intervention
<b>Ethnic Conflict</b>	Abstain	Contain	Nearly indiscriminate intervention	Contain
<b>Humanitarian Intervention</b>	Abstain	Discriminate intervention	Nearly indiscriminate intervention	Discriminate intervention
<b>Use of Force</b>	Self-defense	Discriminate	Frequent	At will
<b>Force Posture</b>	Minimal self-defense force	Two-MRC (major regional contingencies) force	Reconnaissance strike complex for multilateral action	A two-power-standard force

*a. Neo-isolationism*

George Washington's Farewell Address was the first expression of the isolationist posture. The outgoing president argued against pursuing policies that would tie American interests too closely with other nations.<sup>191</sup> Later, this advice was articulated in Thomas Jefferson's warning against "entangling alliances,"<sup>192</sup> and it became the dogma of American foreign policy until the First World War. Even though the Founding Fathers warned about the dangers of close relations and alliances with other nations, the globalization era of 21<sup>st</sup> century makes it nearly impossible for the United States to isolate itself from the rest of the world.

According to Posen and Ross, neo-isolationists consider the geographical location of the United States and its economic and military might the guarantors of the nation's security and prosperity, and they thus reject the idea of internationalism as unnecessary and counterproductive.<sup>193</sup> In other words, neo-isolationists view alliances with other countries as risks for America's national interests. Since neo-isolationism promulgates an "anti-alliance" policy, the issue of NATO's further enlargement is off the table. The neo-isolationists would call for U.S. withdrawal from NATO.

The United States economy and trade system are closely intertwined with other nations of the world,<sup>194</sup> making it difficult for the United States to pursue a policy of isolationism without its own economy suffering severe consequences.

The United States imports more than it exports. In 2016, total U.S. trade with foreign countries was \$4.9 trillion. That was \$2.21 trillion in exports and \$2.71 trillion in

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<sup>191</sup> "President George Washington's Farewell Address—1796," U.S. History, accessed March 10, 2018, <http://www.ushistory.org/documents/farewelladdress.htm>.

<sup>192</sup> David Fromkin, "Entangling Alliances," *Foreign Affairs*, last modified September 15, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1970-07-01/entangling-alliances>.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> "U.S. Total Crude Oil and Products Imports," U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), accessed February 26, 2018, [https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/pet\\_move\\_impqus\\_a2\\_nus\\_ep00\\_im0\\_mbbldpd\\_a.htm](https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/pet_move_impqus_a2_nus_ep00_im0_mbbldpd_a.htm).

imports of both goods and services.<sup>195</sup> According to 2017 statistics published by the U.S. Department of Commerce, exports increased to \$2,329.3 billion in 2017 from \$2,208.1 billion in 2016. Goods exports were \$1,551.4 billion in 2017, up from \$1,455.7 billion in 2016.<sup>196</sup> Services exports were \$777.9 billion in 2017, up from \$752.4 billion in 2016. As for imports, the numbers increased to \$2,895.3 billion in 2017 from \$2,712.9 billion in 2016. Goods imports were \$2,361.5 billion in 2017, up from \$2,208.2 billion in 2016. Services imports were \$533.9 billion in 2017, up from \$504.7 billion in 2016.<sup>197</sup>

These numbers indicate that the United States is the world's second largest exporter, and the world's largest importer country.<sup>198</sup> As billions of dollars' worth of services and goods are passing through the trade routes daily, maintaining the security of these routes is of vital importance for the United States. Since 90 percent of global commerce travels by sea,<sup>199</sup> control of strategic waterways is critical for the U.S economy. As control of the waterways guarantees the safety of the United States global trade and industry, ensuring security of these trade networks from competing nations is essential for U.S. national interests. Therefore, maintaining a strong Navy and vast power projection capabilities are crucial for this purpose.

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<sup>195</sup>International Trade Administration, U.S. Trade Overview 2016, April, 2017 [http://trade.gov/mas/ian/build/groups/public/@tg\\_ian/documents/webcontent/tg\\_ian\\_005537.pdf](http://trade.gov/mas/ian/build/groups/public/@tg_ian/documents/webcontent/tg_ian_005537.pdf)

<sup>196</sup> Joseph E. Kafchinski, "Foreign Trade: Summary Highlights," Census.gov, accessed February 26, 2018, <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics/highlights/congressional.html>.

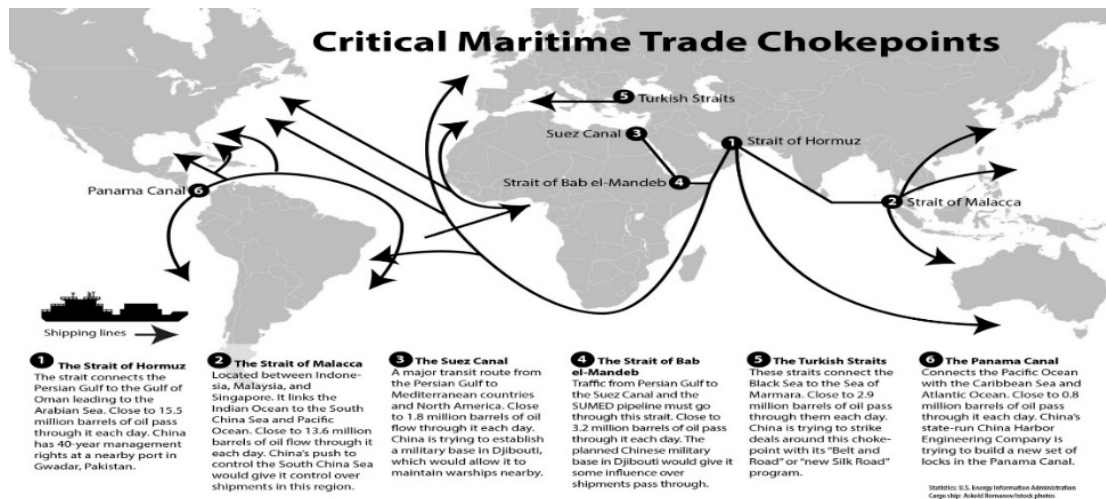
<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, the World Fact Book: United States, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>.

<sup>199</sup> International Maritime Organization, Regions: Africa; Americas; Asia; Europe; Middle East; Oceania <https://business.un.org/en/entities/13>.



Figure 8. Critical chokepoints<sup>200</sup>



Accordingly, an isolationist policy would result in U.S. withdrawal from the international arena and would be equal to economic suicide. First, it would result in the devastation of national industry and commerce. Second, withdrawing U.S. naval forces would encourage other nations, such as China, Russia and India, to build large navies in order to preserve the “freedom of the seas,”<sup>201</sup> thus changing the balance of power at sea and challenging the notion of U.S. strategic immunity. Therefore, the foundational argument of neo-isolationism is overwhelmed by trade and maritime realities—both requiring the United States to have powerful naval and power projection capabilities.

Despite President Trump’s strong isolationist messages during the presidential campaign, the “America first” policy was well articulated in a new National Security Strategy, according to which one of the top priorities for the United States is to “promote American prosperity.” Moreover, economic security is viewed as an integral part of national security. According to this strategy, “A growing and innovative economy allows the United States to maintain the world’s most powerful military and protect our

<sup>200</sup>Dr. Jean-Paul Rodrigue, Dr. Theo Notteboom, *The Geography of Transport Systems*, New York, 2017 <https://people.hofstra.edu/geotrans/eng/ch1en/appl1en/ch1a2en.html>.

<sup>201</sup> Sean Paul Ashley, “What is the Best Grand Strategy for the United States in 2012?,” *E-International Relations*, last modified August 9, 2012, <http://www.e-ir.info/2012/08/09/what-is-the-best-grand-strategy-for-the-united-states-in-2012/>.

homeland.”<sup>202</sup> Therefore, the grand strategic option of neo-isolationism is unlikely to be pursued by the Trump Administration. It would undermine critical foundations of United States power at an unreasonable cost to the United States, and result in significant gains for its rivals.

***b. Selective Engagement***

Similar to the grand strategic option of neo-isolationism, selective engagement “emerges from the realist tradition of international politics.”<sup>203</sup> Distinct from the isolationist posture and its policy of minimal engagement in international affairs, the selective engagement strategy emphasizes a relatively active but at the same time “selective” engagement in foreign relations. The grand strategic option of selective engagement supports involvement and intervention in strategically important regions which directly affect the nation’s security and prosperity. The selective engagement strategy views NATO as an important political-military organization and acknowledges the significance for the United States of keeping NATO’s security umbrella at its maximum effectiveness level. At the same time, however, it “favors the preservation of NATO, though not its expansion.”<sup>204</sup> According to Posen and Ross,

Selective engagement shares the neo-isolationist expectation that states balance, and that nuclear weapons favor the defender of the status quo. However, selective engagers also recognize that balancing may be tardy, statesmen may miscalculate, and nuclear deterrence could fail.<sup>205</sup>

Restraining direct engagement in parts of the world with little or no strategic importance to the country’s national interests represents the core idea of the selective engagement strategy. According to Posen and Ross, “for the advocates of selective

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<sup>202</sup> President Donald J. Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, DC: The White House, 2017), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>, 17.

<sup>203</sup> Barry R. Posen, Andrew Ross, “*Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy*,” *America’s Strategic Choices*, Revised Edition, 15.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

engagement, then, the parts of the world that matter most are the two ends of Eurasia—Europe and East Asia—and the Middle East/Southwest Asia.”<sup>206</sup>

Even though the advocates of selective engagement view the “selective” nature of the strategy as an advantage, they cannot agree on clear guidance on what to ignore and when to intervene, as well as which “minor” nations will have an impact on great power politics. “Selective engagement does not provide clear guidance on which ostensibly ‘minor’ issues have implications for great power relations, and thus merit U.S. involvement.”<sup>207</sup>

Even though the roots of selective engagement are closely linked to the theory of realism, its selective approach fails to deliver solutions to the “known unknowns and unknown unknowns”<sup>208</sup> which tend to frequently appear in the anarchical world of international relations. According to Kathleen Hicks, a senior vice president and director of the International Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, “The Ukraine crisis typifies the paradox of American opinion on foreign affairs today: we don’t want to get entangled in something costly and certainly not something involving the use of American forces, but we don’t really approve of looking feckless and inept.”<sup>209</sup> Similar uncertainty might arise in taking a selective approach to the ongoing territorial disputes in East Asia and South China Sea or to humanitarian interventions in Syria and elsewhere.

Abstaining from direct involvement in the places not prioritized by the grand strategy of selective engagement might tilt its selective approach towards neo-isolationism, thus increasing the likelihood that regional players would rise and influence the balance of

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>207</sup> Barry R. Posen, Andrew Ross, “*Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy*,” America’s Strategic Choices, Revised Edition, 20.

<sup>208</sup> Rumsfeld quoted in U.S. Department of Defense, *DoD News Briefing - Secretary Rumsfeld and Gen. Myers Presenter: Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld February 12, 2002*, <http://archive.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=2636>.

<sup>209</sup> Kathleen H. Hicks, “*When Is Selective Engagement Too Selective?*,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, last modified March 20, 2014, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/when-selective-engagement-too-selective>.

power in various parts of the world. The change in the balance of power might then stimulate U.S. engagement and turn its grand strategy towards primacy.

Accordingly, the grand strategy of selective engagement represents a “slippery slope.” While the National Security Strategy adopted by the Trump Administration highlights “the revisionist powers of China and Russia, [and] the rogue states of Iran and North Korea,”<sup>210</sup> it also emphasizes the importance for the United States to be able to “compete and prevent unfavorable shifts in the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East.”<sup>211</sup> Since challenges to U.S. national interests are originating from basically every part of the world, the gray area left by the principle of selectiveness makes it nearly impossible for a U.S. Administration to practice an effective, steady and long-term selective engagement strategy.

### *c. Cooperative Security*

Unlike the other three grand strategic options, cooperative security is informed by liberalism instead of realism and promotes close cooperation within and among international institutions. The advocates of cooperative security regard democracy and related liberal values as the “glue” which holds countries together against common threats. “They presume that democracies will find it easier to work together in cooperative security regimes than would states with less progressive domestic polities.”<sup>212</sup>

In theory the grand strategy of cooperative security views cooperation among countries as a collaboration and close relationship based on shared values, common threats, and the principle of fair burden sharing. In practice, however, the principle of fair burden sharing has been abandoned. Instead of equal cooperation, the U.S ability to effectively respond to “common” threats is keeping the countries together. A good example is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which was founded on the principle of shared values

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<sup>210</sup> President Donald J. Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, DC: The White House, 2017), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>, 25.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security*, Vol. 21, no.3 (Winter 1996/97), 22.

and collective defense of those values. NATO has proven itself as an effective guarantor of stability and security in the North Atlantic area, but the commitment to insuring its effectiveness is not equally shared by the member countries.

NATO collects defense expenditures from Allies on a regular basis for certain commonly founded budgets. Moreover, each member country's Ministry of Defense reports current and estimated future defense expenditures according to the regulations agreed within NATO.

The strategic goals set out in NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept are accepted by all member nations. At the 2014 Wales Summit, the Alliance agreed that each member country should spend 2% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on defense.<sup>213</sup> Although there is an unquestioned unity between member nations on NATO's core tasks, at the same time there are significant differences in defense spending among countries. Only five of NATO's 29 members—Estonia, Greece, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States—meet the 2% of GDP spending target, and the differences between defense expenses among nations are significant.

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<sup>213</sup> *Strategic Concept for the Defense and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, Adopted by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Lisbon, 19–20 November, 2010, [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_publications/20120214\\_strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120214_strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf), 17.

Figure 9. NATO's defense expenditures as a share of GDP<sup>214</sup>

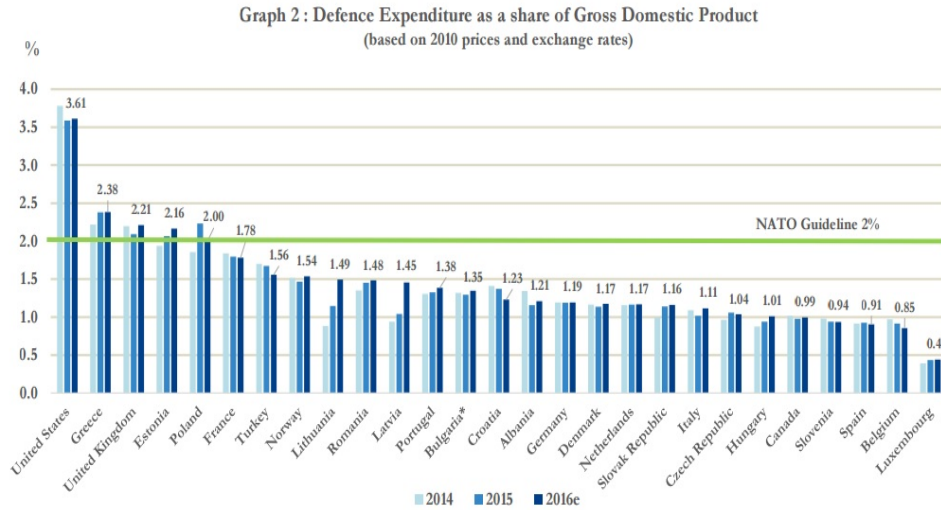
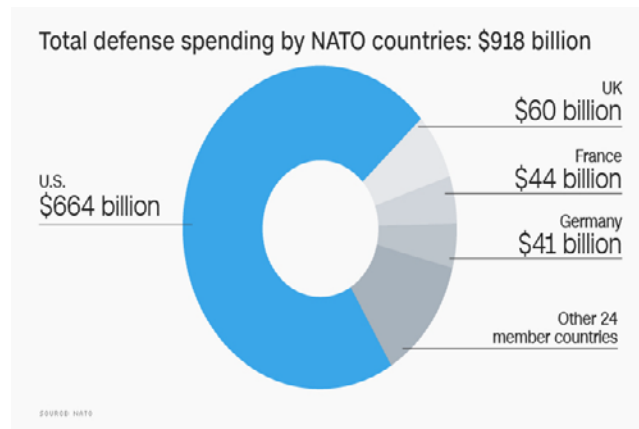


Figure 10. Total defense expenditures of NATO member countries<sup>215</sup>



Accordingly, if the United States decided to spend 2% of its GDP on defense instead of 3.6% and if other Allies spent below 2%, that would approximately decrease the

<sup>214</sup> *The Secretary General's Annual Report 2012*, NATO Public Diplomacy Division, Brussels, Belgium, 2012), [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/stock\\_publications/20130131\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2012\\_en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/stock_publications/20130131_Annual_Report_2012_en.pdf), 11.

<sup>215</sup> Ivana Kottasova, "NATO Countries Are Spending More on Defense but Trump Can't Claim Credit," CNNMoney, last modified March 1, 2017, <http://money.cnn.com/2017/03/01/news/nato-spending-donald-trump/>.

amount of budgetary funds from 918 billion to 734 billion (U.S. dollars). This would have a significant impact on NATO's deterrence and defense capabilities in reference to threats and challenges like Russia, terrorism, cyber, and global warming.<sup>216</sup>

During his presidential campaign and even in his first days in the Oval Office, President Donald Trump repeatedly criticized NATO. The harsh criticism was mainly built on an argument that the majority of NATO's member countries were not contributing a fair share of their GDP to collective defense and security.<sup>217</sup> The "unfair" burden sharing concern was articulated in the 2017 National Security Strategy of the United States as the document emphasized that "unfair burden-sharing with our [the United States] allies and inadequate investment in our own defense had invited danger from those who wish us harm."<sup>218</sup> Even though the document highlights U.S. expectations that the Allies will "shoulder a fair share of burden of responsibility,"<sup>219</sup> the fact that today only five member countries are meeting the budgetary requirements still demonstrates the limits of the grand strategic option of cooperative security.

NATO member countries agreed in 2014 to meet the threshold of spending 2% of their GDP on defense by the year 2024,<sup>220</sup> and this fact might encourage the Trump Administration to lean towards cooperative security. Nevertheless, a widespread assumption about cooperative security may be challenged because its basic principle of equality among nations is contradicted by the overwhelming military superiority of the United States and its leadership role in the world. The United States exceeds fourteen major

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<sup>216</sup> Daniel, Coats, R. Director of National Intelligence, *statement for the Record Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, (Washington, DC, 2018), accessed February 26, 2018, <https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Testimonies/SSCI%20Unclassified%20SFR%20-%20Final.pdf>.

<sup>217</sup> Rainer Buergin, Toluse Olorunnipa, Trump Slams NATO, Floats Russia Nuke Deal in European Interview, Bloomberg Politics, January 15, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-01-15/trump-calls-nato-obsolete-and-dismisses-eu-in-german-interview>.

<sup>218</sup> President Donald J. Trump, National Security Strategy of the United States of America, (Washington, DC: The White House, 2017), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>, 1.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>220</sup> NATO, *Wales Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales*, (2017), paragraph 14.

power nations in military spending by at least \$15 billion, including China, France, Russia, and the United Kingdom, as well as the other top defense spenders in the world.<sup>221</sup>

*d. Primacy*

The grand strategic option of primacy is a prominent product of the realist school of thought, which holds that the international system is driven by fear among the great powers. In his book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, John Mearsheimer (the founder of the theory of offensive realism), argues that the international system is driven by fear for three major reasons:

1) the absence of a central authority that sits above states and can protect them from each other, 2) the fact that states always have some offensive military capability, and 3) the fact that states can never be certain about other states' intentions. Given this fear—which can never be wholly eliminated—states recognize that the more powerful they are relative to their rivals, the better their chances of survival. Indeed, the best guarantee of survival is to be a hegemon, because no other state can seriously threaten such a mighty power.<sup>222</sup>

Therefore, the proponents of primacy view a unipolar system as the most preferable, “one in which a counterbalance is impossible.”<sup>223</sup> Accordingly the grand strategy of primacy is considered to be the most ambitious option as its main objective is to acquire and preserve U.S. supremacy in all fields, including political, economic and military realms.

According to Barry Posen and Andrew Ross, “the most serious threat to U.S. primacy would be an across-the-board political, economic, and military challenger.”<sup>224</sup> Overstretching is viewed as a major risk associated with primacy. Proponents of other grand strategic options argue that exercising primacy and keeping the dominant place by

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<sup>221</sup> Brad Plumer, America's staggering defense budget, in charts, *The Washington Post*, January 7, 2013 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/01/07/everything-chuck-hagel-needs-to-know-about-the-defense-budget-in-charts/?utm\\_term=.c16b1747b93e](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/01/07/everything-chuck-hagel-needs-to-know-about-the-defense-budget-in-charts/?utm_term=.c16b1747b93e).

<sup>222</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2003), 3.

<sup>223</sup> William C. Wohlforth, “The stability of a unipolar world,” in *Perspectives on World Politics*, ed. Richard Little and Michael Smith (Routledge, 2005), 106.

<sup>224</sup> Barry R. Posen, Andrew Ross, “*Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy*,” *America's Strategic Choices*, Revised Edition, 34.



engaging on several fronts with rising China, resurgent Russia, and other big players in the international arena might prompt rival countries to seek regional or international hegemony to balance against United States.

The 2017 National Security Strategy of the United States acknowledges “the contest for power” as a central driving force among the peer competitor countries such as China, Russia, Iran and North Korea. The document describes these countries as “rivals ... across political, economic, and military arenas ... in order to shift regional balances of power in their favor.”<sup>225</sup> In order to prevent the revisionist countries from challenging the preferred balance of power, the primacy advocates argue, it is matter of great importance for the United States to keep its dominant place in the world.

Securing its hegemony in the world might lead to an overstretching of U.S. commitments, and this is viewed as a major risk associated with the pursuit of primacy. However, the notion of overstretching is mitigated by the fact that the United States already spends on defense more than its allies and rivals combined. Moreover, every major international organization which the United States is part of is largely financed by the United States.

Another risk associated with the grand strategy of primacy is that exercising primacy might encourage rival countries to balance against United States. According to Posen and Ross, “The United States enjoys strategic and ideological predominance.”<sup>226</sup> Firstly, it is highly unlikely that the liberal democracies of Europe would balance against the United States and align themselves with communist China or dictatorial Russia. Secondly, since the United States has advanced nuclear capabilities and close economic relations with China, it is also improbable that China and Russia will together balance

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<sup>225</sup> President Donald J. Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, DC: The White House, 2017), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>, 25.

<sup>226</sup> Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security*, Vol. 21, no.3 (Winter 1996/97), 33.

against the United States, at least in the near future. Russia-China trade in 2016 was \$69 billion,<sup>227</sup> while US-China trade in 2016 was \$648.5 billion.<sup>228</sup>

According to some statistics, China's economy will surpass that of the United States in 2030.<sup>229</sup> This estimate implies that the United States will remain an unrivalled power and at least first among equals for 12 years to come.

The security environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is diverse, complex and fast moving. The challenges and threats that the United States is facing originate from various regions; from state and non-state actors; from military forces and from terrorist, cyber and hybrid attacks. Effective and timely responses to those challenges would ensure the United States safety and a dominant place in the world, which (according to its National Security Strategy) is a major national interest. Some observers contend that holding a predominant place in the liberal order, dollar hegemony, and unrivalled military capability enable the United States to navigate in the international system with any grand strategy it chooses. As William Wohlforth suggests, "a United States acting as a global policeman increases the durability of the liberal order and is preferable to the other alternatives."<sup>230</sup>

## **C. GRAND STRATEGY OF TRUMP ADMINISTRATION**

### **1. Introduction**

This section represents an analysis of the grand strategic option likely to be pursued by the Trump Administration. The judgment presented is derived from the analytical framework outlined in the previous sections of this thesis, as well as public statements and official documents published by the Administration.

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<sup>227</sup>"Russia: Trade Statistics," GlobalEDGE, accessed March 10, 2018, <https://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/russia/tradestats>.

<sup>228</sup> The Office of the United States Trade Representative, "U.S.-China Trade Facts," accessed March 10, 2018, <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/china-mongolia-taiwan/peoples-republic-china>.

<sup>229</sup> Malcolm Scott and Cedric Sam, "Here's How Fast China's Economy Is Catching Up to the U.S.," Bloomberg.com, last modified November 6, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2016-us-vs-china-economy/>.

<sup>230</sup> "America Abroad: The United States? Global Role in the 21st Century," Cato Institute, last modified March 21, 2017, <https://www.cato.org/multimedia/events/america-abroad-united-states-global-role-21st-century>.

## 2. A Hybrid Form of Grand Strategy and the Trump Administration

The notion of U.S. primacy, including America's dominant place in the world, has largely been challenged by the new administration, and the "America First" policy has been regarded as more prone to isolationism than to cooperation and active engagement in the international arena.

Since the end of World War II the United States has been a leading country in the international arena. America's defense spending exceeds that of its allies and rivals combined. For decades the United States has been a guarantor of global stability. But according to William C. Wohlforth, "The bi-partisan consensus in support of this role has recently shown signs of wear. President Donald Trump criticized it, and won. Public opinion polls for the first time in recent years show significant support for pulling back from this activist foreign policy and pursuing a more modest, less costly approach to the world."<sup>231</sup>

At first (especially from a European viewpoint), it might seem that the newly elected Republican president holds a strong grasp on his policy and will easily exercise his power with the support of the Congress, since his party holds the majority of the seats in the legislative branch of the government. But American political life and its democratic system do not correspond to the easy logic of "having a majority equals winning on all fronts," according to which the president whose party has the most votes in the legislative branch will have the full support of the party he belongs to on every policy or project he chooses to propose. On the contrary, events in the political life of the United States illustrate the uniqueness of its political system. In early 2017 "political tennis" between the executive and legislative branches of the government, which involved attempts to repeal and replace Obamacare and later, the bill putting new economic sanctions on Russia, resulted in the crushing defeat of the White House. "Donald Trump signed a Russia sanctions bill passed by crushing majorities in the House and Senate, and decided to slam a Congress controlled by his own party on Twitter, hitting it for both the Russia vote and

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<sup>231</sup> Stephen Brooks, William C. Wohlforth, "America Abroad: The United States' Global Role in the 21st Century," March 21, 2017, <https://www.cato.org/multimedia/events/america-abroad-united-states-global-role-21st-century>.

the failure of the health care bill: “Our relationship with Russia is at an all-time & very dangerous low, You can thank Congress, the same people that can’t even give us HCare!”<sup>232</sup>

These events clearly illustrate the complexity of the U.S political institutions, with diverse approaches to its domestic and foreign affairs. The scale of the impact they might have on the international arena deserves more attention.

Accordingly, a grand strategic option the Trump Administration is likely to practice is a “hybrid” one, largely driven by political processes at home rather than challenges from abroad. Therefore, it is likely that the grand strategy of the Trump Administration could incorporate components of all four of the grand strategic options proposed by Posen and Ross.

In the 2017 National Security Strategy of the United States, President Trump emphasized the importance of “putting America first” as “the duty for our government and the foundation for U.S. leadership in the world.”<sup>233</sup> As the revisionist powers of Russia, China, North Korea and Iran represent long-term challenges to the United States, the President emphasizes that

these competitions require the United States to rethink the policies of the past two decades--policies based on the assumption that engagement with rivals and their inclusion in international institutions and global commerce would turn them into benign actors and trustworthy partners. For the most part, this premise turned out to be false.<sup>234</sup>

The United States could pursue a hybrid version of a grand strategy which incorporates elements of all four grand strategic options in some circumstances. Primacy could be viewed as an end goal, at least in certain respects, including support for the spread of democracy. Cooperative security could be seen as a necessary means, and selective

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<sup>232</sup> Hal Brands, “How to Diminish a Superpower: Trump’s Foreign Policy After Six Months,” *War on the Rocks*, August 1, 2017, <https://warontherocks.com/2017/08/how-to-diminish-a-superpower-trumps-foreign-policy-after-six-months/>

<sup>233</sup> President Donald J. Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, DC: The White House, 2017), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>, 3.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

engagement as a way to achieve U.S. objectives and protect U.S. interests. As for neo-isolationism, since “America First” had vast popularity among Americans during the 2016 presidential campaign, it will probably remain a strong theme in domestic political discourse oriented towards gaining and retaining popular support.

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## VII. OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analyses in this thesis have revealed a number of important variables and factors which may have a significant role in influencing Georgia's path towards NATO membership. Accordingly, the last chapter of this thesis summarizes the major factors affecting Georgia's NATO membership aspirations and also sets out political and practical recommendations aimed to support the country's path towards eventual membership.

### A. EXCEPTIONAL ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES IN NATO'S ENLARGEMENT PROCESS

The several rounds of NATO's post-Cold War enlargement have resulted so far in accepting thirteen new members in the Alliance. As the analyses of NATO's post-Cold War enlargement have illustrated, the main driving force behind the Alliance's four rounds of post-Cold War expansion was the United States. The U.S. official position and support to the membership aspirant countries played a decisive role in creating a 29 nation strong Alliance.

Therefore, for countries that aspire to become members of the Alliance, close relations with the United States and its foreign policy represent a matter of high importance. Accordingly, Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration path is closely interlinked with the decisions of the United States on NATO's future enlargement.

#### **Recommendation—Development of the alternative scenarios according to grand strategic options**

Since the ultimate national security priority for Georgia is to join NATO, the grand strategy of the United States and its foreign policy priorities are decisive for the membership aspirant country. To this end, analyzing the grand strategic options of the United States provides an important method of developing options corresponding to the variables associated with the possible changes in the U.S. grand strategy. Even though today Georgia has strong support from the executive branch of the government of the United States and bipartisan support from the Senate and the House of Representatives, understanding such options will assist Georgia in adjusting to the probable shifts in the

international arena caused by changes in U.S. foreign policy. In other words, it will assist the Georgian government in adjusting to the new realities in case the political processes in the United States provoke shifts from one grand strategy (neo-isolationism, selective engagement, cooperative security, or primacy) to another.

## **B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE U.S.-GEORGIA RELATIONSHIP**

As illustrated in the previous chapters of this thesis the U.S. support for Georgia has played a major role in the development of the country's democratic and security institutions. Considering Georgia's challenging security environment, the strategic partnership with the United States continues to represent the most effective instrument for Georgia to enhance its own security, strengthen its defense capabilities, and make steady progress on its way to NATO membership.

Support for Georgia is consistent with U.S. interests for several reasons. Firstly, for decades Georgia has demonstrated that it is a trustworthy ally. Georgian troops fought side-by-side with the U.S. Marines in Iraq, where Georgia (at the time of the Russian invasion in August 2008) "had the second-largest number of troops in Iraq after the United States."<sup>235</sup> Moreover, Georgia continues to be the largest non-NATO troop contributor to NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan.<sup>236</sup>

Secondly, Georgia's geographic location (located in the South Caucasus, between the Black and the Caspian seas) represents an important transit route for supplying U.S. and other forces in Afghanistan. Not only does Georgia directly border Turkey, a NATO country, Georgia's port in Batumi offers logistic capabilities and infrastructure to transit NATO forces and cargo to Afghanistan.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Luke Coffey, "NATO Membership for Georgia: In U.S. and European Interest," The Heritage Foundation, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/nato-membership-georgia-us-and-european-interest>, 5.

<sup>236</sup> NATO, "Resolute Support Mission (RSM): Key Facts and Figures," May 2017, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2017\\_05/20170523\\_2017-05-RSM-Placemat.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_05/20170523_2017-05-RSM-Placemat.pdf), 2.

<sup>237</sup> Luke Coffey, "NATO Membership for Georgia: In U.S. and European Interest," The Heritage Foundation, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/nato-membership-georgia-us-and-european-interest>, 2.



Thirdly, Georgia is an important corridor for the pipelines transporting the oil and gas from Asia directly to Europe and bypassing Russia. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline along with the Baku-Supsa pipeline and the new (soon to be operational) Southern Gas Corridor are essential for the European energy security. The importance of Georgia's transit role directly corresponds to the U.S. nation interests because diversifying "European energy sources to ensure the energy security of European countries" is one of the priorities underlined in the 2017 National Security Strategy of the United States.<sup>238</sup>

Lastly, Georgia upholds the same principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law that are shared by the NATO allies. Georgia's journey to democracy has been successful. The continuing reforms are directed towards further development of the nation's democratic institutions, and they have made the country a leading democracy in the region.<sup>239</sup>

As was apparent in previous post-Cold War rounds of NATO enlargement, some Americans are likely to express reservations about the Alliance's further expansion, owing to their assessment that it might represent a risk of overextension. The President and the Congress of the United States, however, are strongly on record in their support for Georgia's membership aspiration.

### **Recommendation—Enhancing U.S.- Georgian Relations**

#### *Political*

The continuation of strong U.S. political support to Georgia is critical for the country's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. Visits by high level U.S. officials in Georgia and reaffirmation of U.S. support on its path towards NATO membership will send positive signals to the Georgian public and deliver an important message to Russia: that is, even

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<sup>238</sup> President Donald J. Trump, National Security Strategy of the United States of America, (Washington, DC: The White House, 2017), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>, 48.

<sup>239</sup> "Georgia," Freedom House, Championing Democracy, last modified May 12, 2017, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2017/georgia>.

though Georgia is not yet under the umbrella of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, it is not alone on its path towards NATO.

For Georgia it is important to continue close relations with the United States and deepen military and economic cooperation.

### Economic

Currently the United States does not have a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Georgia. In 2014 Georgia signed and ratified an Association Agreement (AA) with the European Union, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA).<sup>240</sup> On the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2018, a China-Georgia FTA came into force.<sup>241</sup> Georgia also has free trade regimes with CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries and with Turkey as well. In 2017 India and Georgia agreed to begin talks on a Free Trade Agreement, and it is anticipated that they will sign an agreement in the near future after the conclusion of joint feasibility studies.<sup>242</sup> According to the 2018 index of Economic Freedom, “Georgia is ranked 9th among 44 countries in the Europe region, and its overall score is above the regional and world averages.”<sup>243</sup>

Having a Free Trade Agreement with Georgia might not have substantial financial benefits for the United States due to the relatively small Georgian market, but it will stimulate Georgia’s economy and send an important geopolitical message to Russia on the U.S. interests in the region.

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<sup>240</sup> European Commission, “Countries and Regions - Georgia,” last modified October 19, 2017, <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/georgia/>.

<sup>241</sup> Approved by Ministry of Commerce, PRC, “China FTA Network,” accessed February 28, 2018, <http://fta.mofcom.gov.cn/list/chinageorgiaen/chinageorgiaennews/1/encateinfo.html>.

<sup>242</sup> Kirtika Suneja, “India, Georgia Begin Free Trade Agreement Talks,” The Economic Times, last modified April 11, 2017, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-georgia-begin-free-trade-agreement-talks/articleshow/58131302.cms>.

<sup>243</sup> The Heritage Foundation, “2018 Index of Economic Freedom. Georgia Economy: Population, GDP, Inflation, Business, Trade, FDI, Corruption,” accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/georgia>.

### Military

Throughout the years the United States has been a major supporter in Georgia's military transformation process. The Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP) as well as the Georgia Readiness Program (GRP) along with the U.S.-Georgia joint annual exercises have significantly contributed to developing capable and NATO interoperable Georgian Armed Forces.

The U.S. government's decision to sell Javelin anti-tank missiles and launch systems to Georgia has been an important breakthrough in the close bilateral relations of the two countries. In order to ensure Georgia's territorial security and deter Russia from further aggression it is critical that the military sales continue and include air-defense and coastal defense capabilities as well as advanced C4I (Command, Control, Communication, Computers and Intelligence). It is important that this kind of military sales be in line with robust and timely messaging towards Russia underlining the purely defensive nature of the military equipment. Such defensive hardware would not pose a threat to Russia unless the Kremlin decided to invade Georgia's internationally recognized territories.

### **C. RUSSIAN HYBRID WARFARE AND GEORGIA'S EURO-ATLANTIC ASPIRATION**

Russia's 2008 military aggression against Georgia was one of the first major post-Cold War moves by Moscow to challenge Western values and international order. The reaction to the Russian move from the West was relatively weak, and NATO's relations with Russia returned to "business as usual" soon without making Russia pay any price for what it had done.<sup>244</sup>

Russia's 7<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> military bases in the occupied territories of Georgia and the 102<sup>nd</sup> military base (located in Gyumri, Armenia) bear strategic importance for Moscow in order to secure Russian national interests in the South Caucasus and Middle East regions. Russia's 7<sup>th</sup> (Abkhazia; 4,500 troops) and 4<sup>th</sup> (so called South Ossetia; 4,500 troops) military bases together with border units (1,300 troops for each region) serve to guarantee Russia's interests in the Caucasus region.

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<sup>244</sup> David S Yost, *NATO's Balancing Act*, 222.

Additionally, Russia's Black Sea Fleet military vessels and reconnaissance planes are in constant movement in the vicinity of the Abkhaz section of the Black Sea territorial waters.

Nevertheless, Russia is unable to use Georgia's land and airspace to maintain communications with its 102<sup>nd</sup> military base in Armenia. Inability to provide logistical assistance represents a grave concern for Russian leaders. This might be used as a pretext to start a military operation designed to further destabilize Georgia and deter the Allies from offering NATO membership to Georgia.

If the Kremlin decided to use force to achieve this goal, that would effectively paralyze the pipeline network on the territory of Georgia and would deal a severe blow to the transportation and transit potential of the country. Even though this would represent an additional challenge for the stability of Georgia, the likelihood of a full military invasion from the Russian side to deter Georgia from seeking NATO membership is low for several reasons. Firstly, Russia already holds a significant military presence on Georgian territory, and reigniting a full scale war would not guarantee that the force presence would remain in favor of Russia. Secondly, a full scale military invasion would be devastating for the Russian economy as it is already strained by sanctions, military operations in Ukraine, and its involvement in Syria. Accordingly, opening a third flank of combat would have devastating impact on Russia's overall regional interests. Finally, due to Georgia's mountainous terrain any attempt to seize Tbilisi would probably result in permanent guerrilla warfare with Georgians that would overstrain Russia's already overstretched economy.

The most likely scenario that Russia might use to prevent Georgia from gaining NATO membership would be the use of its already tested hybrid warfare.

According to Russia's military doctrine published in 2010, the Russian political and military establishment views modern warfare as

the integrated utilization of military force and forces and resources of a nonmilitary character, and, the prior implementation of measures of information warfare in order to achieve political objectives without the utilization of military force and, subsequently, in the interest of shaping a

favorable response from the world community to the utilization of military force.<sup>245</sup>

This action could in theory enable Moscow to dismantle and destroy its adversaries without direct use of military force. In other words, Russia tries to achieve its military objectives without firing a single shot, and in order to accomplish its objectives Moscow uses a combination of political, economic and informational assets backed with military means.

Therefore, it is highly likely that Russia will intensify its use of hybrid warfare methods as Georgia gets closer to NATO.

**Recommendation—development of anti-hybrid warfare capabilities.**

A critical part of Russian hybrid warfare is information operations. Such operations include deliberately spreading false information which undermines the interests of the nation, political party, or person that the Kremlin deems to be its rival. Russian meddling in the elections of the United States and other countries is a good example of information operations. Since the core element of such operations is a false statement, the primary tactic to counter the information operation is to respond with truth and facts as swiftly as possible. To this end it would be beneficial for the Georgian government to have a joint center for countering hybrid threats. In order to enhance the whole government's approach the aim of this center should be the development of a common understanding and policy on the strategic level. On the operational level, based on the information and expertise gathered from the governmental structures, the center should develop plans and doctrines to enhance collective efforts in responding to the hybrid threats. On the tactical level the center should monitor and screen the information flow from Russian or Russia-sponsored providers, screen for potential disinformation, and (when disinformation is detected) publish on a special website the source of the provider spreading the false information.

This center could also play an important role in linking Georgian anti-hybrid-warfare efforts to the recently established European Centre of Excellence for Countering

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<sup>245</sup> Michael Kofman, Matthew Rojansky, "A Closer look at Russia's Hybrid War," Kennan Cable, No7, April, 2015, 8.

Hybrid Threats aimed to serve as a hub of “expertise supporting the Participants’ individual and collective efforts to enhance their civil-military capabilities, resilience, and preparedness to counter hybrid threats with a special focus on European security.”<sup>246</sup>

For the anti-hybrid-warfare efforts to be successful it is also important to raise public awareness on NATO. Public discussions as well as various events would provide the Georgian public with the information needed to defeat Russian anti-NATO information operations. To this end it would be beneficial to include Georgia’s foreign policy priorities as a separate discipline to be taught in the upper levels of the country’s schools.

Since the efforts of the Russian hybrid warfare are backed by the country’s military, the possible conduct of a full scale Russian military operation, even though it is unlikely, still presents a threat. While it is critical for Georgia to improve its defensive capabilities, it is obvious that Russia will outmatch Georgia in conventional capabilities. Therefore, it is important to continue the development of special forces capabilities in order to be able to execute effective guerrilla tactics which might delay Russian operations or prevent Russia from achieving its military goals in war.

#### **D. SIGNIFICANCE OF NATO-GEORGIAN RELATIONS**

Since Eduard Shevardnadze, then the President of Georgia, first declared Georgia’s NATO aspiration at the Alliance’s 2002 Prague Summit, despite many challenges and the war with Russia, Georgia has stayed firm in its belief that European and Euro-Atlantic integration is the right way for the country to achieve a stable and secure future.

On its path to NATO membership Georgia has undergone a large number of reforms. Euro-Atlantic aspiration has triggered the country’s democratic transformation and enhanced its security institutions, bringing stability to the country and the region. Furthermore, the stability, as a major precondition for economic growth, brought an increasing number of foreign investments. According to the index of Economic Freedom, evaluating the economic climate of 186 nations, Georgia moved from the position of 124<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, “About Us,” Hybrid CoE, accessed March 1, 2018, <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/about-us/>.

country in 1996 to the 13<sup>th</sup> in 2017.<sup>247</sup> Accordingly, maintaining Euro-Atlantic integration as a major national priority is as important as eventual membership in the Alliance.

### **Recommendation—Enhancing NATO-Georgia relations**

The continuation and complete utilization of existing NATO-Georgia cooperation mechanisms is the major tools in enhancing NATO-Georgia relations. Excellence in fulfillment of the commitments prescribed in the Annual National Plan as well as full implementation of the programs offered by the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package will send a positive signal to the member states and encourage the Alliance to pursue further and more close intensive cooperation.

Participation in NATO-led missions has illustrated Georgia's will and readiness to assist the Alliance in its security efforts. As Georgia is arguably already a net contributor to the security of the Alliance, additional contributions such as participation in NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence initiative in the Baltic region will be Georgia's further demonstration of a net contribution to trans-Atlantic security.

Georgia should further increase its territorial defense capabilities, making it ready for NATO membership. Further intensification of joint NATO-Georgia exercises will contribute to this cause along with effective use of the existing cooperation capabilities such as the Joint Training and Evaluation Center in Krtsanisi and the Defense Institution Building school in Tbilisi.

Russian occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the presence of large numbers of Russian troops in the region present a major obstacle for Georgia's eventual membership. Some NATO Allies fear that Georgia's membership in the Alliance would automatically lead to war with Russia over the occupied territories.<sup>248</sup> In a special report published by the Heritage Foundation, Luke Coffey offers a possible solution to this problem as he suggests that

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<sup>247</sup> Luke Coffey, "NATO Membership for Georgia: In U.S. and European Interest," The Heritage Foundation, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/nato-membership-georgia-us-and-european-interest>, 10.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

Georgia can be invited to join NATO by amending Article 6 of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty (which defines which territories fall under the Article 5 protection) to *temporarily* exclude the Russian-occupied Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia from Article 5 protection. This amendment can be made with Georgia's accession protocol as it was in 1951 when Turkey and Greece joined the Alliance.<sup>249</sup>

This recommendation is important for several reasons. Firstly, it provides a solution to the concerns raised by certain Allies, and secondly, it illustrates that there is a precedent of amending Article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Moreover, implementation of this recommendation would present a clear message for Russia and retribution for Moscow's continuing violation of international law.

While offering a possible solution to the question of Georgia's membership in NATO, the report does not provide a general threat assessment of this initiative, if the Allies decided to implement it. As NATO's decision at the 2008 Bucharest Summit confirmed that Georgia will become a member of NATO, it also stated that "MAP is the next step for Ukraine and Georgia on their direct way to membership."<sup>250</sup> The divisions among the Allies and the failure of the Bucharest Summit Declaration to specify terms and timelines for Georgia's NATO membership were perceived as a window of opportunity by Russia, and the Kremlin decided to prevent Georgia's membership in NATO by attacking and occupying the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Accordingly, discussions on the possible amendment of Article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty could lead to divisions among the Allies on accepting Georgia in NATO while temporarily excluding the Russian-occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Article 5 protection. As Moscow would sense Georgia getting closer to actual membership, the Kremlin might decide to act again. Since the recommendation portrays the occupied territories as a major obstacle for Georgia to become a NATO member, Russian efforts would be directed to create additional complications in other parts of

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<sup>249</sup> Luke Coffey, "NATO Membership for Georgia: In U.S. and European Interest," The Heritage Foundation, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/nato-membership-georgia-us-and-european-interest>, 14.

<sup>250</sup> NATO, "Bucharest Summit Declaration - Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008," paragraph 23, last modified May/June 3, 2015, [https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/official\\_texts\\_8443.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/official_texts_8443.htm).



Georgia. Therefore, it is important to conduct threat assessments and risk analyses of potential Russian actions in order to determine probable Russian responses to the Alliance's discussions on Georgia's membership.

Getting a Membership Action Plan should no longer be a priority for Georgia. As illustrated in this thesis, the current mechanisms of cooperation already provide instruments for eventual membership. As NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated in December 2016, "Georgia has all the practical tools to become a member of NATO."<sup>251</sup>

Instead of getting a Membership Action Plan Georgia should focus its efforts on convincing allies to announce that current cooperation mechanisms with Georgia can lead to membership without a Membership Action Plan. This would allow the Alliance to accept Georgia's membership when the window of opportunity opens, and this would send a strong signal to Russia and the Georgian public that NATO values Georgia as a reliable partner and a future member of the Alliance.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

To conclude, U.S. leadership is crucial to building a consensus among the Allies on Georgia's eventual membership in the Alliance. As with the international situation after the end of Second World War, when the United States played an integral role to re-build and re-unite war-torn Europe, determined U.S. leadership is critical today to help the European states defend Euro-Atlantic security and forge an effective international order.

In addition to political support, the practical assistance of the United States and the European Union is of utmost importance for Georgia in order to boost its defense capabilities, thus building resilience and deterrence potential against emerging security challenges.

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<sup>251</sup> NATO, "Joint Press Point with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Kvirikashvili," NATO, last modified December 5, 2016, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_138555.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_138555.htm).

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