

TALLINN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

School of Business and Governance

Department of Law

Nikoloz Dzneladze

**GEORGIA – GEOPOLITICAL ASPECTS OF NATO**

**INTEGRATION**

Bachelor's thesis

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Supervisor: Holger Mölder, PhD

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the paper independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors has been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.  
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Nikoloz Dzneladze .....

(signature, date)

Student code: 166351TASB

Student e-mail address: nik35d@gmail.com

Supervisor: : Holger Mölder, PhD

The paper conforms to requirements in force

.....

(signature, date)

Chairman of the Defence Committee:

Permitted to the defence

.....

(name, signature, date)

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## **ABSTRACT**

The main aim of this paper to analyze the Georgia-NATO integration process, to find out the factors stalling the process and provide suggestions on improving them. The thesis claims that the geostrategic interests of NATO over Georgia and the Black Sea region can boost the Georgian aspirations of the Alliance integration.

Framework wise, event data analysis approach is applied to analyze the relations between NATO and Georgia. Event data analysis, as suggested by Renee Marlin-Bennett (1993) in his work *Using Events Data To Identify International Processes* better helps to identify the quality of the relationship between Georgia and NATO. The thesis criticizes the approach of the current Georgian government, underlines the Georgian army contribution factor, analyzes the role of Russia in the Georgian integration process and claims that Georgia can become a NATO member state while its territories still occupied. To further prove the last point, the concept of the so called "German model" offered by Luke Coffey (2019) is introduced.

Keywords: North Atlantic Treaty Association, Georgia, Integration, Alliance, Occupation, Data Analysis

## **INTRODUCTION**

The relationship between Georgia and NATO has been a subject of discussion, in Georgia, yet outside its borders. The assessments of the general population in regards to the Georgian integration is separated; some feel that the possibility of consolidation is the reality and some case that the thought is impossible. All through its enormous and rich history, Georgia was compelled continuously to battle with the aggressors. The word freedom was often connected with war, bloodlust and selflessness. During two centuries, Georgia was the piece of the foreign empire. It has been a long time since Georgia got its statehood and unfortunately, regardless it faces a few challenges to hold it. NATO integration is an intense procedure; notwithstanding, it is crucial for Georgia to conquer the troubles related to it, as NATO is an assurance of Georgian regional trustworthiness. NATO is the association, which is referenced in the Georgian news and public every day. Erratically, the reason for existing is yet obscure for the Georgian public. NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Association is a military association that joins 29 countries under one flag. The ongoing procedures after World War 2, underlined the significance of such association to exist.

As indicated by the high-officials of Georgian, including the minister of defence MR Levan Izoria (2019) NATO integration is one of the top priorities of Georgia's foreign and security policy, therefore attaching great importance to NATO's role in strengthening the Georgian security and stability. At the same time, it is noteworthy that the reforms implemented by the Georgian authorities, comply with crucial NATO accession requirements and Alliance recommendations. As an aspirant country and a future member of the Alliance, for its part, Georgia plays an essential role in strengthening Euro-Atlantic security, via contributing actively to NATO-led peacekeeping operations.

Internationally, the ongoing process and events make security as one of the top issues for any state. Small countries have to be permanently struggling for Sovereignty, Georgia aspires to become a member of the NATO in order to become part of a unified security system. NATO has the power and resources to provide Georgia's security and stability against the background of threats. However, the Georgian integration process has become more and more challenging, and the numbers of issues arise. To clearly understand the issue of the Georgian NATO integration following questions must be answered:

- On what extent is Georgia able to strengthen NATO's security system?
- Can Georgia join NATO with its territories still being occupied?
- How can the geopolitical interests of NATO over Georgia and the Black Sea Region boost the Georgian integration process?

The main aims of the paper include determining the importance of NATO integration for Georgia, analysing the positive side of NATO integration, identifying hindering points of Georgian integration, studying the stages of the integration process and matching it to the Alliance criteria, identifying the challenges Georgia faces in the integration process and making useful recommendations towards the initial integration. The first question will use the method of an event review. Therefore the contributions of the Georgian army in NATO-led peacekeeping missions will be analysed. Indicated answers will be based on the data provided by the Defense Ministry of Georgia. To fully answer the first research question, the role of unique Georgian location ought to be considered. The answer to the second question will be based on an idea by Luke Coffey (2018), which was later supported by Anders Fogh Rasmussen (2019), suggesting that Georgian integration with the occupied regions is possible. The third question will be tackled by analysis of latest events and available literature.

# **1. UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF NATO INTEGRATION**

The fall of the Berlin Wall and breakdown of Soviet strength in Central and Eastern Europe implied countries in that area were allowed to seek after free international strategies and associations with the West. The objective of U.S. strategy was to assemble a post-Cold War Europe. Opening NATO's entryway to new individuals, as sketched out in Article 10 (The North Atlantic Treaty 1949) of the North Atlantic Treaty, was thought to propel that objective. In the early post-Cold War period, the then-16 members from NATO were careful about acquiring new individuals. Nevertheless, accord, in the end, developed an extension, joined with explicit endeavours to hoist NATO's association with Russia, and eventually came to characterize the West's way to deal with European security.

## **1.2 Georgian way and perspective**

Georgia started partaking in the Partnership for Peace program, getting one of the originators of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. Since joining the NATO peacekeeping activity in Kosovo in 1999, the Georgian military has additionally engaged with the NATO-drove peacekeeping activity in Afghanistan. Until 2002, Georgia could not flaunt any particular association with the Alliance. Other post-Soviet nations had comparative relations with NATO. Simultaneously, there was a NATO-Russia Standing Council and a NATO-Ukraine Standing Committee, which showed a subjectively more elevated level of relations between these nations and the Alliance than the Georgian side. Pichkhadze (2014) considers that the breakthrough in NATO-Georgia relations and the acknowledgement of nation's Euro-Atlantic course all in all occurred in November 2002 at the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council meeting in Prague, which was preceded by the NATO Summit. Georgian Delegation (2002) has authoritatively expressed that it aims to become a NATO member-state. In mid-2003, Georgia started building up an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO, to implement changes planned for coordinating the nation into the Alliance. The arrangement was finished in 2004 and started to be executed around the same time. The Georgian side has set a cutoff time for usage of the arrangement toward the finish of 2006; however, it is not actualized even today. The status of the IPAP is observed by the NATO Assessment Mission, which visits Georgia a few times each year and composes reports about the circumstance. Lamentably,

these reports are as yet inaccessible to the overall population. In September 2008, the Georgia-NATO Standing Committee was built up. At the 1999 Washington Summit, NATO elaborated an accession plan for prospective members -concluded that it needed to agree to the Membership Action Plan (MAP), an essential document that settles the criteria for the future member before it welcomed the State Party to join.

However, the expectations about potential integration were exaggerated in Georgia.

The new political team that came to power in 2003. The new president Mikheil Saakashvili (2004) set Georgian integration into NATO as the main priority. Senior officials have repeatedly stated that Georgia would start implementing the MAP in 2006 and become a NATO member in 2008. However, during these promises, the invitation to join the Alliance was utterly ignored. NATO officials, including members of the Assessment Mission, have repeatedly warned non-governmental organizations, the entire Georgian public and perhaps government officials that the naming of any dates and timelines for further integration would be contrary to NATO practice. The President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Pierre Lellouche (2006) pointed the same out in his report on Georgia, which stated that excessive expectations might create frustration among the population.

In this paper, we will not go into the reasons why the government made such unrealistic promises. The government propaganda policy has affected NATO-backed sentiments in Georgia. The following can be seen in the results of the 2008 plebiscite. The main question of the plebiscite was the following: "Do you support Georgian integration in NATO?". The Election Administration of Georgia announced that 61% of the participants in the plebiscite supported Georgia's NATO membership. The result was different compared to the results of a poll ten months earlier, when the supporters were 82%. After that, the Election Administration of Georgia published a "verified" data, according to which the number of supporters increased to 72%.

Another example of creating excessive expectations in the country is the wrongful interpretation by the Georgian authorities about the summit document of the NATO summit in Bucharest. Through a powerful propaganda machine, the government convinced the Georgian population that this forum would allow our state to start implementing MAP. It did not happen. NATO has only promised Georgia that it will become a member of the Alliance. This promise has much to do with NATO's repeated statement (Stoltenberg 2015) that the Alliance's door is open to Georgia, as well as any European country that wants to join and that meets NATO criteria.



However, having this wrongful propaganda can be justified, as for Georgian people, NATO would have been the guarantee of long-desired peace, which itself would transmit to the country becoming more wealthy.

This wrongful propaganda has continued over the years and has annoyed the Georgian society, however according to NDI poll (2012), questioning Georgian population regarding their willingness to join the Alliance, only 33% of the Georgian society is against of the integration. (Election Administration of Georgia, 2012)

Other factors besides countries economic well-being are the collusion commitments of NATO towards its member states. As the coalition must assist their member states in unravelling their contentions, in Georgian reality, the situation concerning the territorial integrity of the country. (NATO Treaty Article 4) Erratically, NATO goes without any immediate activities when the circumstance is concerning their accomplice nation – like Georgia. For instance, according to the NATO Press Release (2008), the only framework NATO was able to operate during the 2008 proceedings in Georgia- was the dialogue.

At the point when we are examining the Georgian joining, three primary factors ought to be disregarded: Political, financial and military. Political factor implies the real presence of the democratic rule in the nation. Economic element underlines the significance of the market economy advancement, and the army factor incorporates the country to have strong and protection skilled, armed force.

The most significant factor, slowing down the Georgian reconciliation is the presence of the occupied regions. There is no such precedent in the association, any member state to have the occupied area and to have 100 000 displaced people. Regardless, the main answer for the issue is NATO integration.

NATO integration will carry harmony to the country, as Georgia won't be merely the central defender of itself, other 29 member states will be there for Georgia-on the off chance that it needs insurance. For instance, as far back as joining NATO, Albania has not been compromised by Greece.

Another significant part of the Georgian advancement in the wake of entering the plot will be an economic one, as participation is an ultimate assurance of security for the investors also. Changed and secured Georgia will be increasingly powerful as a country, and will look additionally engaging for individuals of Abkhazia and South-Ossetia. The Georgian integration isn't beneficial for Georgia only, however to the association also. Georgia will add to the security and

peacekeeping operations of the association. The geographic area of Georgia is extraordinary, and it gives an entryway among Europe and Asia. The area will raise the key conceivable outcomes of NATO and will offer a chance to the union to build up the just rule in the Caucasus region. Georgian unique location will give the Alliance better opportunity to control drug, arms and human trafficking; therefore, the nation will not only contribute to the NATO but will also be a vital contributor to the world peace.

### **1.3 NATO Integration Strategies and Frameworks**

The notion of state security in the 21st century is no longer confined to any one country. In modern times, state security depends on integration processes developed at the regional and global levels. A thorough understanding of world history will provide a clear picture of NATO as an alliance and collective security system as an unprecedented event. Since its inception, NATO has succeeded in securing the independence and territorial integrity of its member states. The main stronghold of NATO is the United States, which is a real military and economic power.

The North Atlantic Alliance was initially familiar with the US military's potential with its nuclear arsenal, which could defeat any aggressor. The main reason for the NATO membership was the presence of a common enemy that threatened the then world. The victory of the Soviet Union in World War II and the expansion of its political influence threatened the spread of communism in Eastern Europe and the rest of the world. The creation of NATO was the basis of the so-called US President Harry Truman's The doctrine of containment, whose primary purpose was the fact that the United States was to suppress the impending communist expansion by supporting anti-Soviet forces in any region of the world.

From its earliest years, the Alliance has been pursuing an "open door" policy. Namely, the founding countries of the Alliance were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States. (What Does NATO Do 2018) Soon Greece and Turkey were added to the Alliance, later part of the Federal Republic of Germany (which became a NATO member in 1955) and Spain became a NATO member in 1982. The next round of NATO enlargement came after the end of the Cold War when several Central European countries decided that NATO membership would be the best way to realize their future security interests. They expressed their position on the Alliance's desire for membership. Three former partner countries - the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland - became members of NATO in March 1999, after which the Alliance grew to 19. At the end of March 2004, seven more

states - Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, joined the Alliance, expanding NATO.

The process of enlargement of the Alliance is particularly essential in the present day when the civilized world is faced with entirely new threats and challenges. On September 12, 2001, just hours after the terrorist attack on the US, NATO addressed Article 5 for the first time in its history, saying that an attack on the United States as an alliance member would be seen as an attack on the entire Alliance. NATO views its security priorities as a broad concept that includes both political, economic, defence and other vital components. Each organization member has its function, and role rests in the implementation of the common security concept. In this far-reaching process, the Alliance plays an essential role as a guarantor of stability and security. It is ensuring security and stability in Europe. NATO's decision-making on enlargement is entirely up to NATO, and it will be consistent, well thought out and transparent. The process is based on dialogue with all stakeholders. The decision to expand is made individually. Some states wishing to join may have membership before another. Take, The rest of the applicant countries later joined in 2004.

The Washington Treaty governs the decision-making process on enlargement. Each country should be invited to Decide on his merit. One of the most critical developments in NATO enlargement is the decision taken at the Washington Summit. Approval of the Membership Action Plan (MAP), which sets out a list of recommendations for those wishing to join.

1. Political and economic issues
2. Defence and military issues
3. Resources
4. Security issues
5. Legal issue

The Accession Action Plan stipulates consultation with NATO, and there is a requirement for the Partner countries to take appropriate action within the Plan. Action Plan within the framework of NATO assumes responsibility for monitoring and producing an annual summary of the aspirant countries. The Candidate Country will be required to settle international disputes peacefully, as well as: - resolve internal ethnic and legal disputes, territorial and other disputes with neighbouring countries. - Respect the rule of law and universal principles of human rights; - Democratic and civilian control over the armed forces Imposition; - refrain from using force; - Contribute to international peace-keeping, actively participate in essential missions; - Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and Partnership for Peace Active participation in the program; - Promoting stability and

prosperity. Respect and realization of the principles of economic freedom, social justice and environmental responsibility. Including the principles, policies and procedures already adopted by all members during the NATO membership process, the implementation of these critical commitments not only in the documentary but also in practical terms, the will and ability to execute will be a decisive factor in joining a separate aspirant state. When making every decision. It should be noted that in the process of recruiting new members and joining the Alliance, there are no firm or unbreakable criteria. The list, however, would require potential new members to express their readiness to:

Incorporate the principles set out in the NATO Charter - democracy, personal freedom and the rule of law.

- Adhere the principles established by "Partnership for Peace" project document.
- Commit to consultations within NATO and participate in decision-making procedure
- Establish a permanent representation with NATO Headquarters.
- Allocate appropriate financial resources to contribute to the Alliance's budget
- Obtain relevant documents that provide the basis for the Alliance For existing policies and more

### **NATO-Georgia Commission**

Unequivocal political support from the Alliance is very important for Georgia, especially after Russian aggression against Georgia in August 2008.

On August 19, 2008, a special meeting of the Alliance's Foreign Ministers was held in Brussels, which condemned the actions of the Russian Federation against Georgia. The meeting decided to set up a NATO Georgia Commission (NGC) and a visit of the North Atlantic Council in Georgia on September 15-16, 2008 (Statement Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the Foreign Ministers level at NATO Headquarters, Brussels).

On September 15-16, 2008, within the framework of the visit of the North Atlantic Council to Georgia, the founding meeting of the NATO-Georgia Commission was held. At the NGC Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels on December 2-3, 2008, the Allies decided that the NATO-Georgia Commission would monitor the implementation of the Bucharest Summit decision, conduct a political dialogue between Georgia and NATO at various levels and be used as a practical Companion Lobby coordination mechanism (Chairman's Statement).

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

## **Annual National Program – ANP**

The most important outcome of the NATO Foreign Affairs Ministerial held on December 2-3, 2008 was the launch of cooperation with Georgia in the framework of the Annual National Program. The Annual National Program is a mechanism of practical cooperation between the countries and the Alliance under the Membership Action Plan (MAP) phase; therefore, Georgia has been of crucial importance in adopting this instrument of practical cooperation. It can be said that without political decision-making on the MAP, Georgia has adopted the practical tools necessary for membership under this format. The Annual National Program is a detailed list of reforms planned by the Georgian side during the year and various measures aimed at bringing the country closer to Euro-Atlantic standards. The Alliance evaluates the implementation of the program annually and discusses the results with the Georgian side. Georgia is currently developing its 10th Annual National Program. (NATO, Relations with Georgia, 2019)

## **North Atlantic Council Visits**

The North Atlantic Council visits Georgia periodically to assess progress made in the process of Euro-Atlantic integration and to demonstrate Georgia's support.

Following its first visit in September 2008, the North Atlantic Council visited Georgia again on 9-10 November 2011. During the visit, the NATO-Georgia Commission held a Joint Statement. On June 26-27, 2013, the third visit of the North Atlantic Council to Georgia took place. The fourth visit of the North Atlantic Council to Georgia took place on 7-8 September 2016. During the visit, the North Atlantic Council visited the NATO-Georgia Joint Training and Evaluation Center (JTEC).

## 1.4 Georgian Contributions to NATO

Military cooperation between Georgia and NATO began in 1992 when Georgia joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. However; there has been no real impact from this collaboration during that time. Therefore in 1996, the establishment of the program – "Partnership for Peace" can be considered as the actual start of military collaboration between Georgia and NATO. Already existent relationship strengthened after the creation of an Individual Partnership Program (IPP), which included an individual work-frame between Eastern European and Post-Soviet countries. The central part of the document states that Georgia is committed to strengthening the Euro-Atlantic security system. The critical part also emphasizes that the Individual Partnership Program should be annually reviewed and updated, considering the interests of both parties. The first part of the document covers the topics and proceedings that must be taken into consideration. These topics are:

- Civil emergency planning;
- Crisis management;
- Democratic control over the armed forces in Georgia;
- Defense Planning and Budgeting;
- Provision of defence, material-technical supplies;
- Defence policy and strategy
- Defence structures, exercises, and operations within which to plan training of Georgian officers, peacekeeping, search and rescue and for humanitarian operations.

The main aims of IPP regarding Georgia are the modernization of the Georgian armed forces, strengthening the ties with NATO structures and ensuring national security.

Particular attention must be paid to IPP standardization and compatibility with Georgia. It is a fact that the Soviet and NATO armies were rebuilding independently from each other; therefore, the existence of the joint army standards was impossible. Following was the main factor taken into consideration when planning the training of the Georgian army. However, in reality, the case concerned not only military armaments but also a wide range of related military and civilian activities areas. In the scope of the IPP, the exceptional attention was paid to education and military training, which included the language courses, exchange programs and scholarships. The main

goal of the IPP was to remodel the Georgian army, transform it from Soviet army to NATO level army, therefore making it acceptable for the NATO criteria.

Georgian armed force has contributed its faculty in missions everywhere throughout the planet, further demonstrating the point that Georgian armed force is "NATO ready".

The first contribution of the Georgian military in NATO missions was peacekeeping operation in Kosovo.

Toward the finish of the twentieth century, the world confronted the issue of reasonable goals of the Balkan struggle. In such a manner, the universal peacekeeping strategic a significant job, wherein Georgian officers likewise took an interest. Even though the Georgian Armed Forces were altogether beneath universal military guidelines at the time, with the assistance of the Turkish Armed Forces, a "Kojori" unit was created and was dispatched to the Mamuša, Kosovo, where the army was conducting the order of the peacekeeping activities under the authority of the Turkish contingent.

The Turkish side was responsible for the Georgian military gear and personnel.

Since 2003, the Georgian contingent in Kosovo has grown to 300 soldiers.

The duty of the Georgians in the peacekeeping mission in Kosovo was: to fulfil the peace agreement, to maintain law and order, to secure the mission and the population, to protect several bases (MNB (SW) HQ, Prizren, Camp Airfield, Camp Toplicane), to reconstruct and to provide humanitarian assistance.

One can securely say that drawing in Kosovo peacekeeping was one of the initial moves towards Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration.

A portion of the soldiers, debilitated by the constant absence of subsidizing and preparing, had the option to accomplish the objectives effectively. This implied Georgian armed force was creating and changing from soviet into, progressively Western-fit.

The most important missions that Georgian armed force participated were the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

#### 1.4.1. Iraq

First, in 2003, 70 military doctors were deployed to Iraq. Later in 2004, the number of the Georgian troops expanded to 300, and since 2005, 850 soldiers have proceeded with their peacekeeping strategic. Nevertheless, after two years in July 2007, with the activity of the President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili, 2000 additional soldiers were sent to partake in peacekeeping missions in the Iraqi city of Al Kut (territory of Wassit). After one year, extra powers were added. Georgian military in Iraq was sent at a few bases including "Delta" (territory of Wasit) with 1500 troops, at the base "Clare" - 350 and St. Baghdad - with 150 military staff. The soldiers of the First Infantry Brigade returned to their homeland in August 2008. The mission in the Republic of Iraq ended in 2011. According to Civil Georgia (2013), the Georgian contingent participating in the Iraqi mission suffered casualties. It should also be noted that participation in such a large-scale military mission has further enhanced the professionalism and compatibility of Georgian military personnel with NATO forces.

#### 1.4.2. Afghanistan

Georgia is the biggest supporter of the NATO-drove military activity in Afghanistan (ISAF). In 2004 without precedent for the ISAF activity, 50-man Georgian squad was conveyed. Their undertaking was to guarantee the security of the presidential elections in Afghanistan.

Since April 2010, 749 servicemen of the 31st Infantry Brigade had been conveyed in Helmand Province, south of Afghanistan, doing a full scope of activities under the sponsorship of the US Army.

Furthermore, in January 2010, 2 Liaison Officers were dispatched to Kabul Regional Command Headquarters in Kabul, where they stayed for a year.

The exercises directed by the Georgian armed force are perceived as positive, and quantities of fruitful missions are further demonstrating this point. This achievement implies that Georgian armed force is now NATO ready. Georgian side satisfies one of the primary NATO criteria of having a skilled armed force; regardless, the integration procedure has not pushed ahead.

The Georgian contributions have been recognized as success; however, there are parts of society who are against such significant contributions. Participating in peacekeeping missions is a dangerous activity, especially when soldiers are patrolling the hottest parts of the world. Some of the arguments are entirely natural and contain logic, though officials, who openly express their



political sympathies to Russia, often present them. The main argument of those opposed to participating in peacekeeping missions is that Georgia has suffered quite many casualties during this engagement, namely 29 Georgians have been killed and many more wounded, which is not an insignificant figure for a small country like Georgia. (Georgian Soldier Killed in Afghanistan, Civil Georgia, 2017)

Apart from the significant loss, a part of the society considers the quantitative value of the Georgian contingent unacceptable. It is often ahead of the NATO contingent, and in Afghanistan, for example, it was the third-largest contingent after the United States and Great Britain. Since 2013, the number of Georgian troops has increased to 1675, surpassing Australia, which had the largest contingent of non-member states.

Socially, the Georgian population is divided into two when it comes to NATO mission involvement. According to one of the critical arguments, the experience had already shown the dangers of a large contingent when 10% of Georgian troops were out of the country during Russian military aggression in August 2008.

According to the second argument, although Georgia has suffered a great deal in peacekeeping operations, the casualty has not been able to provide adequate assistance from the international community in August. It is noted that Georgia has no guarantee that the country will receive self-sacrifice if necessary. The arguments mentioned above have the right to exist, if not overlooked. However, the benefits that the Georgian army has gotten from partaking in these operations are also worth mentioning. The benefits, as seen by the author, are:

1. Increasing the level of training of Georgian soldiers and compatibility with NATO standards, which is a huge step taken towards fulfilling the NATO criteria of having a skilled army.
2. Improving practical and theoretical knowledge of counterterrorism issues. Mentioned contributes to the level of security both inside and outside the country, as due to Georgian location the country has been a subject of terrorist attacks, especially on Chechnya border. For example killing of ISIS terrorist Akhmed Chatayev in 2017 in Tbilisi further proves the point
3. Modernizing the military equipment and free training. Modern military equipment is vital to have a strong army; therefore modernizing the equipment serves as a step taken forward towards having a robust and reliable army.

4. Presenting Georgia as a contributor to international security. Rising the status of Georgia in the eyes of international actors can boost the countries chances of NATO integration, as there are still some doubters of the ability of Georgia to become a member. Contributing to international security can prove doubters that the Georgian army is "NATO ready"

5. The international prestige of the Georgian army has grown, and they are now training independently Afghan soldiers;

6. All international partners point out that this contribution will bring Georgia closer to the Euro-Atlantic alliance.

Participation of Georgian soldiers in international peacekeeping missions is essential for Russia occupies the young Georgian state, which has a territorial integrity problem and 20% of its territories. This participation helps to integrate the country into the Euro-Atlantic area, and NATO-, which is the most potent military-political alliance in today's world. While the partaking in peacekeeping missions has resulted in a significant loss for Georgia, it will in the future bring tangible benefits and accelerate the country's integration into NATO and Europe (Stoltenberg 2019), which on the other hand, is one of the critical preconditions for the successful and secure development of the country.

From the above processes, it is clear that Georgia is actively engaged in NATO peacekeeping operations and makes every effort to meet the standards. This engagement would be unthinkable without economic support because of the military strength of the modern state is based entirely on economic strength. Therefore, new policies ensure that the military aspirations of Georgia are adequately financed, without hindering other processes in the country.

Georgian government identifies the Alliance integration as its main priority, Georgian contributions are further proving this point. However, the society has one question – What practical results have the cooperation with NATO brought to Georgia? – The answer to this question is following – The cooperation helped in establishing the Georgian army, which is based on modern standards. The ongoing process of modernizing the Georgian army can be graded as a positive, as having a modern, well-equipped, and the skilled army is difficult, especially for a developing country like Georgia. In order to have a robust and modern army, modern vision is also essential; therefore, NATO training serves the goal of modernizing the Georgian thinking.

## **2 Integration and Challenges**

Georgia is now at an essential stage of its development. Since the state's independence, the country has had to overcome numerous obstacles, both inside and outside the country. Since the Rose Revolution, the country has changed dramatically in its foreign course, and today it is directed towards the West. In almost every phase of Georgia's existence, neighbouring or non-neighbour countries were interested in the country's geopolitical location. The loss of independence played a considerable role in stalling the Georgian development, yet the country is more or less back on its trail now.

The anarchy in the international politics urges small countries to unite into international organisations; Georgia is one of those countries and has been using all its efforts for the last few years to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In 2008, NATO member states affirmed that Georgia was ready to become a NATO member; however, that is when the most recent troubles started for Georgia. The result of the 2008 war still has its toll on the political and economic instability in the country. New Russian borders appear almost every day on the Georgian territory, therefore distancing Georgia from the Alliance membership standards. However, besides the external problems, internal ones also arise. Before talking about an actual integration, the obstacles must be analysed and solved.

### **2.1 Declining enthusiasm from the Georgian government**

At the Washington-based European Policy Analysis Center, NATO officials discussed the security of the Black Sea, (Flanagan, 2019) the role of countries in the region, and the need for NATO to pay more attention to the Black Sea Region. Speakers at the meeting emphasized the importance of strengthening NATO in the Black Sea basin and that Georgia, along with other countries, also plays a massive role in promoting stability in the region.

Retired Lieutenant General Ben Hodges told Voice of America that Georgia is an essential player in the region, which has done everything to be a NATO member. However, the general says there has been a decline in enthusiasm from the government lately.

General Hodges (2019) believes that Georgia should already be a member of NATO. However, he also notes that the same enthusiasm cannot be felt from the government, as before. Hodges added that the Georgian army is a professional and dedicated as ever, but, enthusiasm for Western integration from government officials has declined.

The security of the eastern flank of the Black Sea and the successful completion of the Anaklia Port project are interconnected topics. If Anaklia port is built, it can serve as an economic portal between Europe and Asia. European companies will invest more in Georgia. That is why Russia does not want it to be built. The port of Anaklia is a commercial project, though its potential economic development also includes political aspects. Anaklia could also attract US warships to Georgia. In 2019 under the Montrée Convention, the US Navy was visiting the ports of Odesa and Constance in the Black Sea. As claimed by Kurt Volker (2019), if Georgia will be able to build such Anaklia port the USA and therefore, NATO would easily use the port for preventive, logistical, or many other reasons. That is another reason why the Russian Federation is not keen on Georgia building this port. Supporters of Anaklia port idea, including Volker (2019) claim that the port will boost the country's economy and enhance security. Therefore, the Georgian government should continue to work on the Anaklia port project, instead of stalling it, as done in 2019 by freezing accounts of a Georgian businessman Mamuka Khazaradze, who was planning to start building Anaklia port with his funds.

Georgia's security depends mainly on its neighbours and the United States. Therefore, Georgia must do everything to prevent Russia from curbing it. This means that Russia should be detained so that it can never think of turning Georgia over. The leaders of the Georgian Armed Forces must realise that Russia is a massive threat to Georgian security. Therefore they should pursue buying the right weapons, developing the right tactics, using the complex landscape of the country to their advantage. Georgia should be able to contain Russia before the allies come to help. Increasing US military presence in Georgia would be one of the strongest guarantees for the country's defence.

## **2.2 Low level of Democracy**

Low quality of democracy in Georgia is a hindrance that is entirely at Georgian disposal. Many NATO documents point directly to the low quality of democracy. Take, for example, Pierre Lellouche (2006) report- *Where is NATO headed?* Alternatively, a summary of the NATO Riga summit (2006, 39), in which NATO expects more progress in political, economic and military areas, as well as judicial reform.

The Experts noted that the need for political reform was first and foremost a direct recommendation for judicial reform. It is also worth noting that the reforms carried out by NATO and Georgian Western partners in the military field are considered to be the most successful. The Georgian authorities are creating an illusion, that development of the military of the country can overshadow the low quality of the democracy. The government insists that the abovementioned advancements are the only way to NATO integration. The construction of a robust NATO-compatible military cannot compensate for the absence of functioning democratic institutions in the eyes of NATO.

The internal problems of Georgia can and must be solved by the Georgian government, especially when according to the ex-Parliament speaker Irakli Kobakhidze (2017) the primary aspiration of Georgian government is integration into the EU and NATO.

### **2.3 Review of 2008 War**

More than a decade after the 2008 war, the significance of the events in Georgia in August 2008 become more transparent for Georgia and the whole world. Large-scale Russian aggression has raised the issue of Georgia's presence or absence. Neither the civilised world nor Georgia expected such developments. Everyone saw that Russia was becoming more aggressive towards Georgia, and the "creeping annexation" policy in Abkhazia in the Tskhinvali region was increasingly active. Georgian aspirations of joining the Alliance annoyed Kremlin. Therefore, with the 2008 actions, Russia decided to show its power, scare Georgia and affect the general direction of the country.

As we look at the developments of that time, the purpose and motif of Russian actions become clear. However, the historical analysis of events is likely to give a better understanding of the process.

- Eastern enlargement of NATO and the EU in 1999 and 2004, leading to three Baltic States becoming NATO members. In 2008, NATO invited two states, Albania and Croatia, to join. In 2007, two states of the Black Sea joined Bulgaria and Romania.
- Development of alternative Caspian energy transport routes, bypassing Russia. In 2008, the so-called "Century Contract" was signed between the leading oil companies of the West and the Government of Azerbaijan. Its purpose was to transport oil and gas extracted in the Caspian region to the West bypassing Russia, therefore declining the dependence on Russia.

- The "Color Revolutions"- When the 2003 election in Georgia was rigged, the Rose Revolution happened, and Eduard Shevardnadze stepped down. The faulty elections were followed by the fraudulent elections in Ukraine in 2004, the Orange Revolution and the pro-Western coalition of Viktor Yushchenko coming to power. Therefore two Russian oriented governments of Georgia and Ukraine were changed by West oriented governments.
- Recognition of Kosovo's independence by most Western countries
- At the Bucharest Summit in early April 2008, NATO decided not to propose a Membership Action Plan (MAP) for Georgia and Ukraine, though it did guarantee that they would become member states,
- In April 2008, a Russian MiG-29 shot down a Georgian drone over Abkhazia.

Latest point resulted in a verbal exchange between Georgian and Russian army commanders. Georgian army Colonel Nariashvili (2008) claims that the presence of Russian MiG in that region was illegal. However, the Russian side called this fact nonsense. The lack of attention from NATO or the EU made it clear for Russia that the illegal activities on the Georgian territory would have any consequences.

Due to abovementioned reasons, in August 2008 Russia conducted large-scale military aggression against Georgia, which affected different areas of the country including Ground attacks in Tskhinvali region, cyberattacks on different Georgian institutions, and military aggression in the Abkhazia region. Georgian airspace was violated more than 200 times and bombings of army bases and inhabited areas, resulting in deaths of peaceful population. One of the goals of Russia in August 2008 was to stop the strengthening of Georgia's state institutions. A large part of the population of Georgia in 2004-2008 believed that the state of the country could already deal with the significant challenges facing the country. In 2006, significant reforms were implemented to fight corruption, develop a new tax system, and strengthen the security sector in Upper Abkhazia. The public was convinced that the state could respond effectively to everyone, including a loud neighbour like Russia

By conducting large-scale aggression against Georgia, Russia tried to create a new geopolitical situation and return the region as a whole to its sphere of influence. Following these processes, the signs of a new geopolitical situation in the Caucasus are:

- Russia's military dominance in the Caucasus and "open arms" for hostilities
- Russia's attempt to deprive Georgia of its transit function;

Western support for Georgia cannot offset the consequences of Russian aggression. In the current situation, Georgia's main task is to avoid these and other negative geopolitical trends.

## **2.4 Russian Factor**

Moscow contradicts further NATO development to previous socialist space and proceeds with the East-West battle for impact over post-Soviet states. Besides, President Vladimir Putin and other high positioned Russian authorities, like Lavrov (2015) keep illustrating NATO enlargement as a risk to Russian security and national interests.

Russia is not shy of implementing either soft or hard power instruments in Georgia and Ukraine. Occupation and formal acknowledgement of Georgia's breakaway regions as autonomous countries, presence of Russian soldiers there, fortification of its situations by conducting Treaties and forming alliances with Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region for further coordination of their security and economies with Russia are key elements of Russian Hard power tools. When it comes to the soft power raising Georgian economic dependence on Russia, work of NGOs', media and pro-Russian political parties serve the creation of a positive image of Russia in the Georgian borders, as well as hindering the Georgian aspirations of joining the Alliance. This statement is further supported by the Georgian scholar Korneli Kakachia in his publication *Religion As a Soft Power and Political Instrument*. Secondly, France, Italy and Germany do not accept that NATO nearness would add to the security and soundness of Georgian breakaway regions. Instead, they contend that bringing Georgia into NATO would expand dangers, originating from Russia.

Specifically, there is a peril that the Alliance will be not able to protect Georgia if there is a potential for intrusion or strife circumstance with Russia.

Another major factor, connected to Russia and muddling the circumstance is that since 2008 Russian-Georgian war one-fifth of Georgia's territory stays occupied by Russia. Regardless of the reality, that the Allies bolster Georgia's regional trustworthiness and approach Russia to invert its acknowledgement of Georgia's breakaway areas of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as free nations, a few NATO nations contend that Georgia will bring precariousness into NATO as the nation doesn't have full power over its domain. The Russian side, concretely Dr Buzhisnky (2015) straightforwardly says that should Georgia accomplish its objective of joining the NATO, Russia would almost certainly react by reinforcing its battalions and perhaps growing bases in

the breakaway regions. It is a popular thought in the Russian government, that if Georgia joined NATO, they would attack Abkhazia, so would react, as they are obliged to by their concurrences with Abkhazia. At that point, NATO would need to choose what to do. Therefore, it appears that NATO does not have a reasonable strategy and an assembled situation towards Georgia what is energised for the most part by Russia. The way that numerous European countries are exceptionally reliant on Russian vitality and that NATO states look for Moscow's assistance to battle against psychological oppression in Syria additionally complicates a job. Besides already existing hindrances, potential threats must not be overlooked. The potential threats may include political and financial factors.

#### **2.4.1. Political**

The Russian state The Duma may adopt a law that will simplify the accession of foreign territories to the Russian Federation, and in the case of Georgia's breakaway regions, this may be explained by the "Georgian aggression. Therefore explained, as an action taken for the protection of South Ossetia and the physical protection of small nations. In this respect, the Russian Federation may use the "Kosovo precedent" in its favour. Russia will increase the amount of assistance to the de facto authorities of the breakaway regions of Georgia, both in terms of financial and economic support, as well as in the provision of various types of military equipment to the breakaway regions. For example, information has already been leaked that during 2008, Abkhazia received about 2 billion Russian rubles from Russia. Russia will lobby for anti-Georgian policy at all levels of international organisations. Russia will declare an information war on Georgia will try to create a negative image of Georgia in the eyes of the whole world. The clear proof of this, for example, are the statements made by the Russian envoy to the UN regarding the events in July 2006 in Upper Abkhazia.

In connection with this, Russian officials from the UN tribune have said that Georgia intends to resolve the issue of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by military means. Alternatively, noteworthy, are the statements made by Russian delegates to the Council of Europe, about the mass human rights abuses in Georgia and the undemocratic conduct of the 2008 presidential election.



## **2.4.2. Financial**

Russia will try to raise prices for Russian natural gas further and force Georgia to buy gas at a much higher price than before; Russia might refuse to restructure Georgia's state debt to Russia (which amounts to approximately \$ 140 million) and accordingly demand payment of Georgia's state debt as soon as possible that will negatively impact Georgian budget;

Moscow will try not to allow Georgian wine and mineral waters to be exported to the Russian market in the future, as well as to impose customs duties on other goods exported from Georgia to Russia, such as ferroalloys and other products that still are being exported. Thereby preventing

## **2.5 Occupied Regions Factor**

On Georgia's NATO path, perhaps no other event or trend has been as damaging as the August 2008 events. In 1995, NATO adopted a document entitled "Research on NATO Enlargement". It states, among other things, that "States engaged in ethnic or out-of-country territorial disputes, including those related to irredentism or domestic jurisdictional disputes, shall settle these disputes by peaceful means under OSCE principles; before they become members." Without relations with Russia, resolving conflicts depends on both sides, and there is an assumption that if the leaders of the breakaway regions and their patron Russia persist in maintaining or aggravating the situation, Georgia will be powerless to do anything. That is, again, the key to Georgia's further integration into NATO is in the hands of a third party. Furthermore, again, that is not entirely true. As suggested by the ex-President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili (2010), Both NATO and Western leaders have seen that Georgia is irrevocably on a peaceful path to conflict resolution.

If the July 2004 events in the Tskhinvali region were largely forgotten in the West, the constant war propaganda and rhetoric and August 2008 raised some doubts about Georgia's ability to negotiate and avoid conflict situations. As said Georgia faces nonconformity by the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Georgian authorities imagine that progress toward Alliance integration, in the long run, will urge the breakaway districts to reconnect with a steady, peaceful and prosperous Georgia.

## **The German Model - Solution of the Occupied Regions Dilemma**

Giorgi Kvirikashvili (2016) claims that, Georgian integration into the Alliance is the key priority of the Georgian foreign policy, as well as the significant factor in bringing the long-desired peace and stability to the country. However, the integration has been stalled mainly because of the Russian factor. Russian Federation is using the frozen conflicts of Abkhazia and so-called South-Ossetia as leverage, ensuring that the Georgian integration will not happen, while the territories are still occupied. Solving the internal factors is in the hands of the Georgian government, while the solution of the frozen conflicts dilemma is where Georgia needs the help of the Alliance. Against this backdrop, the use of a model of Germany in relation to Georgia seems to be quite attractive to the nation, but on the other hand, this idea on the part of Georgian society raises serious fears about the future fate of the occupied territories. Therefore, an in-depth explanation of the idea to the public and an assessment of its feasibility is the responsibility of Georgian experts and academics and the political elite.

West Germany joined NATO in 1955, mainly to prevent communism from spreading from the East to West. In 1949 Germany, together with its capital Berlin was divided into two parts. East Germany was controlled by Communist nations and the West by Western countries. The fifth article of NATO played a massive role in West-Germanys NATO integration. As discussed before the fifth article covers the area of the common defence, therefore Communist attack against West Germany would be considered as an attack on the whole alliance. This was the factor that prevented USSR from attacking West Germany, therefore stopping the communism from spreading. Arguing that German and Georgian cases are completely similar is untrue, as the interest of the Alliance and the

For the first time, Georgia's specific strategy for NATO membership was publicly offered was in a report authored by American researcher Luke Coffey (2018), which, among other recommendations, suggested to the US and Georgian governments that Georgia should join NATO, while its territories are still occupied. As suggested by Coffey (2018) **accession could be possible**

**by temporary amendment of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty Article 6. Article 6 specifies the geographical area to which Article 5 of the Treaty applies, which in turn implies the principle of collective defence.** However, this idea remained as just a thought and did not get the attention it deserved.

However, after the September statement by former NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen (2019) at a conference in Tbilisi, intensified discussion of the idea in the Georgian society. According to Rasmussen, this idea should be actively discussed in Georgia, which was followed by an emotional reaction from the Georgian side. **The idea implies that NATO and all its member states recognize Georgia's internationally recognized borders, but does not assume responsibility for Georgia's military assistance if Georgia, Russia or de facto authorities launch hostilities on the occupied territories.** On the other hand, NATO will protect the territory controlled by Tbilisi, just like any other member state's territory and sovereignty. Accordingly, it should be emphasized that the wording "Without Abkhazia and Tskhinvali" is incorrect for Georgia's NATO membership. This idea does not automatically mean the recognition or permanent loss of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It only means that Tbilisi will not launch military operations in these regions, and if it does, it should have no hope of NATO support. In this respect, it is essential to note that Georgia already commits non-resumption of hostilities. (Sarkozy-Medvedev agreement 2012) Consequently, NATO membership forbids Georgia to regain control of the occupied territories by force, which is not planned by Tbilisi.

Socially, the idea of this kind of integration raised considerable debate in Georgia. There are supporters of this idea, as well as - its opponents, and part of society is merely sceptical of the actuality of the idea. There are two popular thoughts regarding the German model in the Georgian society: First school of thought fears the separation of the occupied territories from the rest of Georgia, which may lead to their permanent loss. Second school of thought is scared of Russia's preemptive reaction to Georgia's immediate accession, which may result in another armed conflict. Another major debate point regarding the implementation of the German model in Georgia is the issue of comparability of the nation. It is worth noting that in diplomacy, there are no two identical cases. Therefore, it is not surprising that the West German case in 1955 and the Georgian case in 2019 are different contexts. The point is how well the German case can inform the scenarios of Georgian reality development. For example, the difference was that Germany was a divided nation, and in the case of Georgia that makes no difference, as the attitude of the Abkhaz and Ossetians does not change depending on whether Tbilisi's territory will be protected by NATO or not. In NATO history, one part of the country joined the Alliance, and the second part automatically came

under the umbrella of the Alliance as soon as the split country was united. This factor must be the most important for the Georgian society, as this is where the answer to the compatibility question lies.

Unfortunately for official Tbilisi, Russian and local militias are already building a dividing wall along the occupation line and even in the heavily controlled territory of Tbilisi, known as the "borderization" process. The process of "borderization" started in 2009-2010 and has become intense since 2013. As a result of this process, people living along the occupation line have many problems and often all these results not only in the loss of their right to move but also in the loss of their home or arable land. If the occupation line is controlled with the help of the NATO armed forces, Russia will lose the desire to invade Tbilisi-controlled territory.

On the other hand, Russia may take precautionary steps before Georgia becomes a member of the Alliance. For example, it is possible that signals from Russia about the attempt to further integrate Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. Russia's attempt to annex the territories should not come as a surprise, as Moscow is already annexed Ukraine controlled -Crimea. In addition, nothing can stop Russia from doing what it wants to do today. The point is that Georgian society may hope that Russia will not conduct more military operations in Georgia, simply because official Tbilisi behaves the way Moscow wants it to. This expectation resembles the idea of resolving Georgia's territorial conflicts through reintegration with Russia.

However, the idea has one major problem. Georgia's population is already convinced that they want to join NATO: 75% of NDI polls in June (2018) support Georgia's NATO membership, besides, 40% of the surveyed population cites Russia as a number one enemy of Georgia, followed by Turkey and the US with only 3–3%. Consequently, it can be said that NATO is much more acceptable to the population than Russia. Moreover, Ukraine's example shows that Russia itself violates its security guarantees. Therefore, Georgia's goal should not be to get security from Russia but to join a military alliance that offers adequate guarantees.

In reality, it should be noted that Georgia has not formally gotten membership proposal from NATO. The decision shall be taken by consensus of the Member States, with the consent of all Members. For its part, convincing European capitals, especially Berlin and Paris, is a separate issue, because, without their support, Georgia would not be a member of the Alliance under any circumstances.

## **4. GEOPOLITICAL ASPECTS**

It is crucial for Georgia that, in close consultation with the Alliance, all possible actions regarding the security of the black sea area will be taken. That includes a full range of actions to develop defences against both land, sea and air, as well as hybrid threats. Based on preliminary consultations, we can say that NATO is interested in cooperation with Georgia in the exchange of intelligence and analytical information related to Black Sea security. It is also possible to deepen relationships with joint exercises and operations providing direction. Cooperation in the field of strategic communications is vital to address hybrid and asymmetric threats. Further enlargement of NATO to the Black Sea region is the only adequate response to address existing threats and challenges adequately. Consequently, Georgia needs membership to maintain positive process dynamics and take concrete steps in the direction of the Bucharest Summit decision. The Black Sea region is significant for NATO, as it represents a significant bridge between East and West, and as a barrier against various dangers and challenges.

### **4.1 Geostrategic Interests towards Georgia**

When discussing Georgia-NATO relations, one question is always asked: "What interests might the Alliance have towards Georgia?"

NATO's sphere of interests is not only Georgia but also the whole South Caucasus region, therefore making the relations with the black sea area countries – Georgia and Ukraine special. Besides the interest in the black sea area, there are several reasons for this. Primarily both countries. Foreign policy priority is to deepen relations with Western countries and Western structures. Particularly strengthened efforts are related to integration into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Also of interest is the alliance democratic transformations in these countries, but at the same time, it is worth noting that when we talk about NATO regional policy, we must emphasize the specificity of each region on the way to NATO cooperation in particular. As we have already mentioned, NATO has its interests in the South Caucasus as a whole, but at the same time, only Georgia aspires to

join NATO. Therefore, in the case of the Caucasus, the expected NATO enlargement will be considered only concerning Georgia.

One of the main reasons for the Alliance's interest in the Caucasus is energy projects in the Caspian region. Projects related to the transportation of these resources westward through Georgia. Sources of energy, especially the issue of diversification of relevance for Europe bought by a factor of Europe's energy security for providing for alternative ways to import oil and gas, to avoid the politically unstable Persian Gulf or Russia. It should be noted that the energy crisis that took place in early 2006 and January 2009 was caused by the delay in the transportation of Russian natural gas through Ukraine. The situation is exacerbated by the volatile situation in the oil-rich regions of the Persian Gulf and Iran, which further increases the importance of alternative sources.

Thus, the energy resources in the Caucasus and the Caspian region and their steady supply to Europe are already a priority area of interest for NATO and European Union states. The Eurasian Corridor project, which will be able to connect Europe and the Far East through the territory of Georgia and develop trade-economic relations between them, can also play an essential role in finding the alternate sources of energy for Europe. The Baku-Tbilisi-Akhalkalaki-Kars railway could become such a project. NATO, as a military-political bloc in the Caucasus region, also has its military-strategic interests, which necessarily include military, geographical and political factors.

The military planning principle of the North Atlantic Alliance is based on a "flexible response" strategy, which implies rapid response if necessary to conduct military action and The South Caucasus deserves much attention from the Alliance.

At this stage, when the Alliance perceives the political processes in Afghanistan, the Persian Gulf and the Middle East as a significant source of danger. NATO is forced to implement and intensify its policy in these regions, and Georgia's strategic importance to the Alliance is growing. Another critical aspect that could boost the Alliance's interest in Georgia may be the NATO membership of Turkey, as there is growing tension between Turkey and the West. Therefore, it could be possible for NATO to lose its partner in the Middle East.

At the current stage, when the Alliance views terrorism as a significant threat to the Western world, it is closely linked to the Greater Middle East. Due to its proximity and strategic location, the Alliance considers the South Caucasus region a priority area of interest. And more specifically the Black Sea region. NATO, however, considers the rapprochement with the states of the region a necessary condition for confronting new threats. NATO may have the following interests in Georgia:

- Geo-economic interests: One of the main reasons for the Alliance's interest in the South Caucasus is the energy resources in the Caspian region, projects related to the transportation of these resources westward through the territory of Georgia. The issue of diversifying energy sources has gained particular prominence for Europe since Europe is seeking alternative ways of importing oil and gas to ensure its energy security to avoid politically unstable energy supplies to Russia or the Persian Gulf.
- Geostrategic interests: NATO-as, a military-political bloc in the Caucasus region, also has its military-strategic interests, which must necessarily take into account military, geographical and political factors. We can focus on the military-strategic factor. The military planning principle of the North Atlantic Alliance is based on a "flexible response" strategy, which implies rapid military response if needed, and a region with a favourable strategic location, such as the South Caucasus, deserves much attention from the Alliance.

Several essential factors can have a positive impact on Georgia's future NATO membership, in particular:

- Geostrategic Interest: Integrating into Euro-Atlantic Space for Georgia and Specifically Full NATO Membership will play a huge role in defining against the Russian aggression and balancing its interests. On the other hand, the membership of the North Atlantic Alliance will help Georgia to repel the aggression of radical Islam, at least on an international scale.
- Civilization Factor: NATO membership for Georgia will create a solid basis for full integration into the Euro-Atlantic area. Full membership of the Alliance and participation in NATO activities will further strengthen the perception of "European" status in Georgian society, and by sharing Western values with a full European family, this will have a positive impact on improving economic and social conditions and raising the standard of living.
- Political Factor: Joining the Alliance will contribute to the strengthening of democratic institutions and the development of universal principles of human rights in Georgia and will stimulate their actual establishment. On the other hand, joining NATO would be the best way to guarantee the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- Military Factor: Despite recent military reforms in Georgia's defence sector that have significantly increased Georgia's combat capability, Georgia's defence resources are still inadequate at present. If it is to cope with the external threat posed by its geopolitical location and to meet all the challenges that exist in the modern era around the world. Economic factor, in terms of meeting NATO standards, Georgia today needs rapid socio-economic development,

Nevertheless, the development of the economy will inevitably require a stable environment and require foreign policy assurances of security, which NATO is best able to provide. The strategic importance of the Caucasus region has doubled in the post-Soviet period, and its relevance is gradually gaining in scale.



## CONCLUSION

After the disintegration of the USSR, Georgia has reliably demonstrated its European identity. However, the more Georgia draws nearer toward the Western world and shows its Euro-Atlantic goals, the more Russia undermines and shows its resistance. The 2008 Bucharest Summit denoted an achievement for the NATO-Georgia relations. Overall, from that point forward and after the war with Russia, dialogues on the inevitable NATO participation keep on being confused because of inner disunity of the Alliance. There is presently an absence of accord among the NATO individuals whether to welcome Georgia to the Alliance or not.

Nevertheless, this is brought about by the compromising strategy of Russia, while supporters of Georgia's participation stress that NATO's strategy ought not to be impacted by some other non-part state. At the minute, Georgia meets the necessities for receiving the MAP, while on the other hand the Alliance still considers the confounded relations with Russia. The issue of Georgia's regional trustworthiness is likewise urgent concerning NATO enrollment and ought not to be precluded.

Even though Georgia meets the requirement of having a skilled, defence-capable army and has been proving so by successfully taking part in NATO-led peacekeeping operations, an actual membership date is not known, or even an action plan for Georgia is absent. The solution to the internal problems of Georgia is depended on Georgia only. However, the Russian factor is when NATO has to make a clear decision.

Georgia, despite its' small size and population, is the fifth-largest contributor, and the first most significant non-member contributor to the Alliance, therefore proving its commitment to the needs of Alliance. Georgian readiness to take part in any NATO peacekeeping mission and establishing the world peace is worth mentioning. The Alliance itself is thankful for Georgian commitment. This kind of large scale involvement of Georgian armed forces into NATO operations means that Georgia is close to being a full member and can be argued that Georgia is already a full member without official membership.

From our research, we can conclude what geopolitical interests NATO has in the Caucasus region in particular in Georgia and how those interests can boost the integration process All the questions asked in the introduction of the paper were answered.

From the geopolitical point of view of the Black Sea region, Georgia's aspiration to become a NATO member is essential. Despite NATO support, there are still many problems on Georgia's Alliance integration path, including:

Conflicts in Georgia hinder the aspiration for Euro-Atlantic integration. Conflicts are mainly caused due to the distrust of government structures created by the media's stimulating environment. The media often covers information that is directly aimed at lowering political, political and intellectual levels. Recent events have shown that the judiciary system is unmanageable and the legal branch is likely to be controlled by government officials. Another hindrance is that membership requires the consent of all NATO member states –Georgia, although friendly with almost all member states, this situation still cannot change the rules of the game in the international system, as the main driving, starting point for all countries are their national interests and national security. The allied European countries, which are still energy dependent on the Russian Federation, will not be able to say a word about Georgia's accession to NATO. Georgia once had a clear example of this, when France and Great Britain did not support Georgia joining the League of Nations in 1918-1921. It was at the meeting of 1919 that France emphasized the interests of the Russian Federation towards Georgia, and this was why Georgia lost its independence back then. All of the above indicates that Georgia, at this stage, does not meet NATO standards.

Another critical problem, which hinders the development of cooperation in the Black Sea region is the strained bilateral relations between the number of states, in this case, Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, strained relations between Russia and Georgia, and on the other hand, Turkey and Armenia, as well as Russia and Moldova should be noted.

Economic problems and challenges are primarily related to the region's energy security and the weak socio-economic development of most Black Sea countries. Despite these problems, the positive developments that have taken place in recent years give hope that the tensions in the region will gradually be resolved. One of the essential factors in this regard is the enlargement of NATO and the increased role of the Alliance in shaping the global security system. Industrial projects can play a significant role in resolving problems in the region. After acquiring a new geostrategic function, the Black Sea region has attracted economic interests of the governments of many of the world's leading states and large energy companies. The region has always had its geostrategic significance and has become the target of attacks by various powerful states. The leaders of these countries were well aware of the importance of the region with strategic ports and other essential transport communications located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia.

Other research question this paper aimed to answer – On what extent is Georgia able to strengthen NATO's security system? - Georgia has an important territorial location and presence in the region that could hinder drug trafficking in Europe and reduce the risks of terrorism. Membership of

Georgia means establishing control over both land and sea, as Georgia has two significant seaports in Batumi and Poti, which are characterized by high throughput and efficiency. Georgia can also be the key bridge for energy carriers between the East and the West. Europe is seeking alternative ways of importing oil and gas to ensure its energy security to avoid energy dependence on politically unstable Russia or the Persian Gulf.

Another question answered in this paper was regarding the ability of Georgia to become part of the Alliance while its territories are still occupied. The answer to this question lies in the so-called "German model, which means that the integration could be possible by transitory correction of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty Article 6. Article 6 indicates the topographical zone to which Article 5 of the Treaty applies, which like this infers the guideline of the aggregate guard. Nevertheless, this thought stayed as only an idea and did not get the consideration it merited.

The last research question was around the debate on how much will NATO be able to provide Georgia's security.

Joining the Alliance will contribute to the strengthening of democratic institutions and the development of universal principles of human rights in Georgia and will stimulate their actual establishment. On the other hand, joining NATO would be the best way to guarantee the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Georgia's integration into the Euro-Atlantic area and full NATO membership will play a vital role in defending Russia's expected aggression and balancing its interests. On the other hand, the membership of the North Atlantic Alliance will help Georgia to repel the aggression of radical Islam, at least on an international scale. The recent military reforms in Georgia's defence sector, have significantly increased the capability of the Georgian Armed Forces.

In terms of meeting other NATO standards, Georgia needs rapid socio-economic development. The economic development will inevitably require a stable environment and require external assurances of security, which NATO is best able to provide.

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