

2023

## The Vilnius Summit: A Platform for Female Leadership and Flexibility in Europe's Security Infrastructure

Amber Brittain-Hale

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### Recommended Citation

Brittain-Hale, Amber and Brittain-Hale, Amber, "The Vilnius Summit: A Platform for Female Leadership and Flexibility in Europe's Security Infrastructure" (2023). Pepperdine University, *Education Division Scholarship*. Paper 312.  
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# UA: UKRAINE ANALYTICA

Issue 2 (31), 2023

PROSPECTS  
ASSOCIATION  
HARMONIZATION  
POLICIES  
DIGITAL  
INCORPORATION  
UKRAINE  
PRO-EUROPEAN  
CYBER  
SOCIETY  
**INTEGRATION**  
LEADERSHIP  
ENLARGEMENT  
SECURITY  
DEFENCE  
DIPLOMACY  
VILNIUS  
CANDIDATE  
GEORGIA

- INTEGRATION PERSPECTIVES
- EUROPEAN CHOICE
- NATO LEADERSHIP



## INTEGRATION

### **Editors**

Dr. Hanna Shelest  
Dr. Mykola Kapitonenko

### **Publisher:**

Published by NGO "Promotion of Intercultural Cooperation" (Ukraine),  
Centre of International Studies (Ukraine), with the financial support  
of the Representation of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Ukraine,  
International Renaissance Foundationn

**UA: Ukraine Analytica** is the first Ukrainian analytical journal in English  
on International Relations, Politics and Economics. The journal is aimed  
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**ISSN 2518-7481**

500 copies

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*Amber Brittain-Hale*

# SECURITY THROUGH OTHER MEANS? PROSPECTS FOR EUROPEAN- UKRAINIAN DEFENCE INTEGRATION

Justin Tomczyk  
Stanford University

*The 2009 Treaty of Lisbon introduced a concept known as the “Common Security and Defence Policy” to the legal structures of the European Union. While not initially envisioned as a military pact, the Treaty of Lisbon saw the expansion of the EU’s policy purview and laid the groundwork for the European Union to act as a unified power in foreign affairs. While the prospects for Ukrainian membership of NATO remain unclear, Kyiv’s EU candidacy means that certain elements of collective security may be secured through future membership of the European Union. This article will examine areas of security and defence integration between the European Union and Ukraine, and compare the concepts of collective security in NATO and the EU.*

Ukrainian membership of NATO remains a contentious topic of debate among western policy makers. While Ukraine has been an active participant in programmes like NATO’s Partnership for Peace<sup>1</sup> and has conducted military exercises with members of the alliance<sup>2</sup>, certain policymakers have expressed hesitancy towards extending the alliance’s collective security concept to Ukraine. This is often grounded in arguments related to either Russia’s possible response to further expansion of the alliance, or doubts about Ukraine’s ability to ensure its own territorial integrity. At the time of writing, the United States has expressed a desire to extend partnership status to

Ukraine and bypass certain requirements for membership<sup>3</sup>, but has not openly endorsed full membership.

While this question will remain a focal point for outside observers, it should be noted that concerns over Russian response to the possibility of Ukrainian Euro-Atlantic alignment are redundant in the wake of the invasion of Ukraine. Regardless of whether Ukraine is to join NATO in the future, Russia’s invasion and the actions of the Russian occupying forces have ensured that the Ukrainian government and society will view Russia as an adversarial state, and plan their security policies accordingly.

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- 1 Mission of Ukraine to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “NATO – Ukraine cooperation within «Partnership for Peace»”, December, 2019, <https://nato.mfa.gov.ua/en/ukraine-and-nato/nato-ukraine-cooperation-within-partnership-peace>
  - 2 Telewizja Polska, “Polish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian troops take part in joint drills”, July, 2021, <https://tvppworld.com/54886480/polish-lithuanian-ukrainian-troops-take-part-in-joint-drills>
  - 3 A. Ward, “Biden ‘open’ to plan that eases Ukraine’s path to NATO membership”, “Politico”, 15.06.2023, <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/06/15/biden-ukraine-nato-membership-00102331>

There is no reason to believe that the bilateral relationship between Kyiv and Moscow, seen prior to the 2014 annexation of Crimea, will be possible without massive changes to Russia's political system and leadership. There is also no reason to believe that the Ukrainian leadership would consider neutrality or non-aligned status to be a viable guiding principle of the country's defence policy, considering that Ukrainian neutrality did not prevent the 2014 invasion, and that the Russian government has openly expressed that it does not consider the post-Maidan Ukraine to have a legitimate government. It is safe to assume that Ukraine will remain on a path of active Euro-Atlantic integration for the foreseeable future.

While NATO membership remains uncertain, Ukraine has already set in motion its membership process with another key component of the Euro-Atlantic system: The European Union. As of June 17, 2022, Ukraine is formally recognised as a candidate for future EU membership. While the preceding Association Agreement was key in establishing the first connections between Ukraine and the political and market systems of the European Union, actual candidacy means that full membership is expected in the future. Although the timelines for full EU membership accession can stretch for decades into the future, this designation opens the possibility of Ukrainian integration and alignment with virtually all aspects of the European Union – including defence policy. This article will examine the benefits of closer cooperation and integration with the European Union for Ukrainian national security.

## Common Security and Foreign Policy

The European Union's ability to operate as a single, cohesive actor in foreign affairs stems from the concept of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The CFSP was included in the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht<sup>4</sup>, as one of the three pillars of political cooperation and integration within the newly-created European Union. This concept was later expanded in the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam in the section "Provisions on a Common Foreign and Security Policy"<sup>5</sup>. It is worth noting that in describing its vision for a united European security policy, the Treaty of Amsterdam references the Western European Union (WEU). The WEU was a defence and political alliance formed in the aftermath of the Second World War that had fallen into redundancy with the creation of NATO. Although the security provisions of the WEU were never fully actualised during the Cold War, its legacy provided a precedent for the incorporation of defence policies within the European Union. The Treaty of Amsterdam also included the creation of an official CFSP leadership position known as the "High Representative for EU Foreign Policy". This title is granted to a civil servant from an EU member state with a five-year mandate, following a majority approval vote in the European Council. Additionally, the High Representative for foreign policy also holds the title of Vice President of the European Commission, and works within the Commission separately from the Council and other "legislative" elements of the European Union.

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4 European Communities, "Treaty on European Union", July, 1992, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A11992M%2FTXT>

5 European Communities, "Treaty of Amsterdam amending the Treaty on European Union, the Treaties establishing the European Communities and certain related acts", October 1997, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=OJ%3AC%3A1997%3A340%3ATOC>

The creation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy in the Treaty of Amsterdam was partially a reflection of the challenges Europe faced towards the end of the 20th century. By 1997, the ongoing wars in the ex-Yugoslavia had brought about the return of armed conflict and interethnic violence on the European continent. As early as 1994<sup>6</sup>, observers had noted that Europe's response to the rapidly escalating crisis in the Balkans was simultaneously impotent in its effectiveness, and inconsistent between individual member states. Beyond the immediate failure of Europe to respond to the ongoing humanitarian disaster, macroscopic changes in the world at the end of the century would have required a new scope of policy action.



***While NATO membership remains uncertain, Ukraine has already set in motion its membership process with another key component of the Euro-Atlantic system: The European Union***

The collapse of the Soviet Union, the growing importance of emerging economies like China, and the increase in non-state actors and asymmetric warfare, meant that Europe's previous security paradigm needed to be retooled for the coming century. The 1998 Franco-British St. Malo Declaration clearly articulated the necessity for this new European security framework. Beyond the broad articles of cooperation

detailed in the Treaty of Amsterdam, the St. Malo Declaration explicitly describes the European Union as needing "...the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises"<sup>7</sup>. This is further elaborated as "...the Union must be given appropriate structures and a capacity for analysis of situations, sources of intelligence, and a capability for relevant strategic planning, without unnecessary duplication, taking account of the existing assets of the WEA and the evolution of its relations with the EU".

Two major developments followed the Treaty of Amsterdam that played a major role in shaping the current state of the CFSP. One was the establishment of the European Defence Agency (EDA) in 2004. As the first strictly security-related body within the EU, the EDA serves as a coordinating body for the development of EU-wide security policies, and is the main source of military R&D programmes within the European Union. Additionally, the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon saw the further elaboration of the CFSP through the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS). The EEAS functions similarly to an EU-wide Ministry of Foreign Affairs with its own civil service corps, and is directly responsible for administering EU diplomatic missions abroad and coordinating civilian and military missions abroad. At the time of writing, the EEAS has completed 19 missions abroad and currently oversees 12 civilian and nine military operations<sup>8</sup>.

6 N.Gnesotto, "Lessons of Yugoslavia", Western European Union Institute for Security Studies, March, 1994, <https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/cp014e.pdf>

7 United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, "Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Defence on the St Malo Agreement", Select Committee on Defence Minutes of Evidence, April, 1999, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199899/cmselect/cmdfence/39/39w17.htm>

8 European External Action Service, "Missions and Operations", January, 2023, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/missions-and-operations\\_en#11927](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/missions-and-operations_en#11927)




## Models of Collective Security

The 2009 Treaty of Lisbon also included the first legal basis for collective security within the political structures of the European Union. Article 42.7 of the Treaty of Lisbon<sup>9</sup>, titled “Mutual defence clause”, articulates a concept of collective security, tailored to the political and economic processes of the EU. In the event that a member of the EU is subject to “armed aggression” on its territory, all other EU members have an “obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter”. Like NATO’s Article V, it should be noted that Article 42.7 of the Treaty of Lisbon obliges a response to an armed attack against one of the members of the treaty, but leaves the exact course of action open to interpretation (or as it is more specifically phrased in Article V, members must take “such action as [the attacked party] deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area”). It is also worth noting that Article 42.7 does not include an explicit mutual defence clause wherein members consider an attack on one EU country to be an attack on all. It is possible that this omission is an accommodation to formally neutral countries like Austria and Ireland, which actively abstain from participation in military alliances<sup>10</sup>.

This section is elaborated by what is known as the “Solidarity Clause”. While Article 42.7 resembles a traditional guarantee of collective security, the Solidarity Clause is aimed at non-state actors and threats that exist beyond the scope of interstate conflict.

The Solidarity Clause is specifically aimed at dealing with “terrorist attacks and man-made disasters” located on the territory of an EU member. This clause requires EU members to “mobilise all the instruments at its disposal, including the military resources made available by the Member States” and lists prevention of a terrorist attack as one of its areas of coverage, alongside responding to a terror attack. The Solidarity Clause specifies that a threat against an EU member can extend beyond the physical, territorial elements of the state and include “democratic institutions and the civilian population”. The emphasis on “institutions” as being a protected subject may be targeted at a combination of abstract political threats to institutional stability, as well as threats from cyber-attacks and other non-physical forms of state aggression.

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 ***Like NATO’s Article V, it should be noted that Article 42.7 of the Treaty of Lisbon obliges a response to an armed attack against one of the members of the treaty, but leaves the exact course of action open to interpretation***

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The only instance of Article 42.7 being used by an EU member was France’s evocation following the November 13 2015 terror attack in Paris<sup>11</sup>. France’s evocation of the Solidarity Clause was met with universal approval by the European Council, and provided the justification for increased security along the European Union’s external

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9 European Council, “Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union”, May, 2012, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT:en:PDF>

10 C.S. Cramer, “Ambiguous alliance: Neutrality, opt-outs, and European defence”, European Council on Foreign Relations, June, 2021, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/ambiguous-alliance-neutrality-opt-outs-and-european-defence>

11 European Parliament Think Tank, “Activation of Article 42(7) TEU France’s request for assistance and Member States’ responses”, European Council Briefing, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS\\_BRI\(2016\)581408](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2016)581408)

borders and increased intelligence sharing between EU members. Since then, there have been references to EU members like Cyprus and Greece<sup>12</sup> hypothetically<sup>13</sup> deploying Article 42.7, but no EU state has evoked the article or its associated solidarity clause. In comparison, NATO's Article 4 (calling for a joint meeting to discuss a potential crisis facing the alliance) has been evoked seven times, all of which occurred within the past 20 years<sup>14</sup>.

It should be noted that Poland and the Baltic States chose to evoke NATO's Article 4 rather than the EU's Article 42.7, when faced with the renewed prospect of Russian aggression following the annexation of Crimea – even when Russian “hybrid warfare” seemed more related to Article 42.7's emphasis on institutions as the targets of aggression. Considering that Article 42.7 is believed to have been created in response to the 2004 Madrid subway bombing,<sup>15</sup> and that the only time the clause has been evoked was in response to the 2015 Paris terror attack, it is possible that the article is intended as a sort of intra-union defence clause, and is aimed at responding to threats entirely within the territory of the EU.

With the aforementioned differences between Article 42.7 and NATO's Article 5 in mind, we should consider the implications that either model of collective defence would have on Ukrainian national security. NATO's Article 5 would undoubtedly provide the most tangible form of deterrence against aggression from an outside party. The repeated evocation of Article 4 by

the alliance's eastern members, and the pursuit of NATO membership by formerly neutral states Finland and Sweden, suggest that even when fully integrated with the security structures of the EU, NATO is still the preferred means of deterrence against outside aggression. However, this deterrence would do little in response to an ongoing invasion, with active battles across the entirety of the line of contact. If Ukraine were to bypass the pre-membership requirements included within a Membership Action Plan, sidestep earlier concerns over territorial integrity vocalised by members of the alliance, and achieve unanimous membership approval from all members of the alliance (something which even long-time NATO partner Sweden has struggled with), then the final result would be an immediate challenge to uphold NATO's mutual defence clause. This is not to suggest that future Ukrainian NATO membership is not in the best interests of Brussels and Kyiv, but rather that this concept of deterrence would be more effective against a future threat rather than an ongoing invasion.

Additionally, Ukraine has already secured political and material support from NATO members without participation in the alliance, and has been conducting training exercises and war-games alongside NATO members since 2015. Expanding this assistance to include direct intervention would present a major political liability to certain members of the alliance, and may jeopardise the entirety of NATO's support for Ukraine. Instead of focusing entirely on future NATO membership as being Ukraine's

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12 B. Fox, “*The Brief – What to do about Article 42 as Greek-Turkish tensions escalate*”, Euractiv, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/the-brief-what-to-do-about-article-42-as-greek-turkish-tensions-escalate>

13 Dr. Adamides, “*Article 42(7) as an insufficient tool of last resort for Eastern Mediterranean stability*”, Clingendael Report, January, 2022, <https://www.clingendael.org/pub/2022/uncharted-and-uncomfortable/annex-3>

14 North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “*The consultation process and Article 4*”, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49187.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49187.htm)

15 I. Traynor, “*France invokes EU's article 42.7, but what does it mean?*”, The Guardian, November, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/17/france-invokes-eu-article-427-what-does-it-mean>

path to Euro-Atlantic defence integration, we should consider the benefits that would come from further alignment with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy.


## Ukraine and the CFSP

As a formal candidate for EU membership, Ukraine is expected to harmonise its judicial, legal, and political systems with those of the European Union. This includes approximation to EU policies in areas related to the Common Foreign and Security Policy – or at the very least, ensuring a degree of congruence that would not prevent future membership. This is explicitly outlined in Chapter 31 of the EU membership acquis,<sup>16</sup> which all candidates are expected to comply with prior to membership. While EU candidacy means that at some point Kyiv will need to be integrated into the security structures of the EU, it also provides the opportunity for short-term elaboration of pre-existing defence cooperation with the EU. Even without full membership of the European Union, it is possible for Ukraine to integrate itself with nearly all aspects of the EU's CFSP, and ensure active support from Brussels.

An example of defence integration prior to full membership can be seen in Croatia's EU Candidacy. Similar to modern Ukraine, Croatia was grappling with simultaneously being part of the "new democracies" of Eastern Europe, as well as contending with the recent experiences of the Yugoslav wars. Although pursuit of NATO membership took priority over defence integration into the EU, close approximation to elements of Euro-Atlantic defence policies allowed Croatia to attend EU meetings on matters

of foreign and security policy, prior to receiving full membership<sup>17</sup>. Like Croatia, Ukraine's candidacy status may open up the possibility of similar participation in EU meetings related to defence and foreign policy, and may enable greater coordination with EU-wide defence policies.

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***While EU candidacy means that at some point Kyiv will need to be integrated into the security structures of the EU, it also provides the opportunity for short-term elaboration of pre-existing defence cooperation with the EU***

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The CFSP may not be designed to fully deter interstate conflict, but it may be useful in meeting certain security challenges currently seen in Ukraine. Participation in the CFSP may be used as a pretext for the sharing of military intelligence between individual EU members and Ukraine, as well as the continued outside training of Ukrainian military personnel or the formation of joint military units. Considering that any active conflict will lead to the proliferation of small arms and explosives among criminal and terrorist networks, the Solidarity Clause may be an effective pretext for Ukrainian collaboration with EU members on countering arms trafficking and other illicit activities.

We should also consider that the counterterrorism provisions of the Solidarity Clause could be used in response to current or future "hybrid warfare" strategies

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<sup>16</sup> European Commission, "Chapters of the acquis", European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/conditions-membership/chapters-acquis\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/conditions-membership/chapters-acquis_en)

<sup>17</sup> L. Vukadinović, "The Croatian View on the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)", Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy, January, 2014, <https://www.aies.at/download/2014/AIES-Fokus-2014-01.pdf>


deployed by the Russian government. This would be particularly relevant if the plausible-deniability strategies used in the annexation of Crimea or early stages of the war in Donbas are used following a “Refreezing” of the conflict, as these challenges may technically be approached as a domestic security threat within Ukraine rather than in terms of an interstate conflict. This would also likely include coordinating responses to cyber-attacks against Ukrainian telecommunications or critical infrastructure. Even without the same obligation of action seen in NATO’s Article 5, the EU’s Article 42.7 could still be evoked in response to an attack on Ukrainian territory.

The long-term participation of Ukrainian forces in the EU’s Battlegroup system would be one of the most tangible examples of continued defence integration between Kyiv and Brussels. Ukraine has already participated in the 2011, 2014, 2018, and 2020 Balkan Battlegroup, as well as the 2016 Visegrad Battlegroup. Continued training missions and exercises within the EU battlegroup system provide opportunities for the integration of Ukrainian forces into the wider command and intelligence structures of the European Union, as well as person-to-person contacts and the normalisation of participation in EU-led missions. The Battlegroup model’s emphasis on reaction and rapid deployment means that Europe and Ukraine would be prepared for any future flashpoints or crises within the continent.

At the time of writing, material support for Ukraine is provided by members of the European Union through three different avenues. The first is the direct bilateral

supply of equipment, ammunition, or arms by individual states, as seen in the case of Poland<sup>18</sup> prior to the 2022 invasion. The second avenue is the participation in multilateral formats like the “Rammstein Format”, where multistep plans for the supply of equipment or the training of crews and specialists are organised by several states. The third is the direct supply of military equipment to Ukraine by the institutions of the European Union as part of the CFSP. This material support is primarily handled by the aforementioned European Defence Agency, as well as parts of the European Commission.

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***it is crucial that forthcoming defence acquisitions are carried out with the supranational structures of the EU as the primary contact point. Coordination from an overseeing group like the European Commission could be the key to avoiding acute shortages***

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Short-term defence integration with the European Union could mean using points of contact within the European Commission<sup>19</sup>, the EEAS, and the EDA as channels for the procurement of contemporary European weapons systems. While individual EU members were quick to provide Ukraine with munitions, artillery, and infantry carriers during the opening months of the war, the increasing amount and complexity of western military aid may present a future challenge to military supply chains. With this in mind, it is crucial that forthcoming

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18 Ukrinform, “Poland handing over defence aid to Ukraine – Duda’s Office”, January, 2022, <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-defense/3394872-poland-handing-over-defense-aid-to-ukraine-dudas-office.ht>

19 European Commission Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, “European Peace Facility”, [https://fpi.ec.europa.eu/what-we-do/european-peace-facility\\_en](https://fpi.ec.europa.eu/what-we-do/european-peace-facility_en)

defence acquisitions are carried out with the supranational structures of the EU as the primary contact point. Coordination from an overseeing group like the European Commission could be the key to avoiding acute shortages<sup>20</sup> of munitions or specific weapons systems within individual EU members, as Europe gradually rebuilds its military manufacturing capabilities. Additionally, this framework of cooperation would also minimise the political burden placed on an individual EU member, advocating for the delivery of major defence elements such as airframes or air defence systems.

A secondary benefit of this process would be the standardisation of military hardware. While the EU does not maintain strict military standardisation like NATO, most European militaries utilise STANAG compatible rifles chambered to 5.56×45mm NATO rounds. The topic of EU military standardisation has already been explored by a subcommittee of the European Parliament<sup>21</sup>. While early material support for Ukraine involved the delivery of older Soviet-produced<sup>22</sup> vehicles by former members of the Warsaw Pact, we should remember that these deliveries were based on what equipment would require the minimal training for Ukrainian forces. However, the lack of momentum by the Russian forces, and the stabilisation of the line of contact, has given EU members the

capacity to train Ukrainian military personal on the usage of western-produced hardware like the Leopard-2 tank<sup>23</sup> and IRIS-T air defence system<sup>24</sup>. The usage of western-produced equipment has extended to the level of individual infantry materiel through the proliferation of AR-clone rifles like the Zbroyar UAR-15<sup>25</sup>. Establishing points of contact with the supranational structures of the European Union can lay the groundwork for future Ukrainian integration into European defence manufacturing.

Close defence cooperation with the EU and the CFSP may also shape the conditions in post-war Ukraine. The civilian missions of the CFSP provide a window into the European Union's possible role during the reconstruction processes. Demining operations, decontamination of heavy metals from soil, and the restoration of utilities will undoubtedly be required following the end of the conflict. The European Union has already applied the CFSP towards aid missions in former conflict zones, as well as peacekeeping and stability operations in areas like the Western Balkans. The EU Monitoring Mission to Ukraine established in 2014 provides a precedent for post-war monitoring and peacekeeping, and could be used as a launching point for enforcement of a ceasefire, armistice, or other type of cessation of hostilities.

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20 H. Foy, "Explosives shortage threatens EU drive to arm Ukraine", *Foreign Policy*, March, 2023, <https://www.ft.com/content/aee0e1a1-c464-4af9-a1c8-73fbc46ed17>

21 European Parliament Policy Department for External Relations, "European armaments standardisation", <https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Defence%20study.pdf>

22 R. Brobst, "Non-NATO Sources of Soviet and Russian Arms for Ukraine", *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, July, 2022, <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2022/07/06/non-nato-sources-of-soviet-and-russian-arms-for-ukraine>

23 E Braw "Ukraine's Leopard Tank Crews are Trained and Ready to Fight", April, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/04/10/ukraine-russia-war-leopards-tank-warfare/>

24 S. Siebold "Under the radar, Germany trains Ukrainians on advanced air defence weapon", March, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/under-radar-germany-trains-ukrainians-advanced-air-defence-weapon-2023-03-03>

25 E. Sof, "Uar-15: A new Ukrainian clone of the AR-15 rifle intended to replace Kalashnikov", *Spec Ops Magazine*, June, 2022, <https://special-ops.org/uar-15-zbroyar-z-15-rifle/>

## Conclusion

While future Ukrainian NATO membership will remain a topic of debate throughout Europe and the United States, it is crucial that we remember that NATO membership is only one component of Ukraine's integration into the wider Euro-Atlantic system. Elements of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy may provide some tangible benefit to Kyiv both in the near future and in the long run. Through close cooperation with its EU partners and with coordination from the European Commission, EDA, and EEAS, Ukraine's military may continue to procure munitions, arms, and equipment needed, while gradually incorporating elements of

modernisation seen among the militaries of the EU and NATO. Although not a military alliance, the concepts of collective security included in the European Union following the Treaty of Lisbon may provide an adequate guarantee of security against future terror and asymmetric threats seen in Ukraine.

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*Justin Tomczyk is a graduate of Stanford University's Master's program in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. His research is focused on Eurasian integration and Russian foreign policy in the South Caucasus. From 2017-2019 he lived in Yerevan, Armenia and he is currently based in Lower Manhattan.*

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# DIGITAL INTEGRATION OF UKRAINE TO THE EU: WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITIES OR ELUSIVE GOAL?

Viktoriia Omelianenko

Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism"

*With the full-scale Russian invasion, Ukraine has made digital transformation and technologies one of the pillars of its resilience and strength. Digital integration is an area where Ukraine has already achieved significant progress. Ukraine's practical experience of introducing digital technologies is highly valued by the EU, while Ukraine follows the implementation of the European regulations and standards to become part of the EU Single Digital Market and digital space overall. This article provides an overview of the results and gaps in the digital integration processes of Ukraine, with the designed recommendation of how to achieve the maximum win-win in EU-Ukraine cooperation in the digital domain.*

## Introduction

The EU's digital policy is a dynamic area enhanced by the fast development of technologies and the benefits they bring to the economies and people of the region. Not only does the EU make digital policy a priority for its domestic agenda but it also takes advantage of its power when it comes to the geopolitical agenda, where technologies long ago started to impact the playing field, especially in the triangle of the US-EU-China.

EU digital policy is based on a human-centred approach, aimed at the respect and protection of fundamental human rights, and promotion of democratic technology

governance, where data protection and cybersecurity are the points of convergence. In 2015, the EU adopted its broad strategy on the Digital Single Market (DSM) which rests on three main pillars: improving access to digital goods and services; an environment where digital networks and services can prosper; and digital being a driver for growth.<sup>1</sup> The DSM includes: e-healthcare, e-transport, e-government, e-trade, telecommunications, development of artificial intelligence, 5G, cyber security, cloud computing, Big Data, the Internet of Things, 3D printing, and IT.<sup>2</sup> It is also a framework document that first of all is about the harmonisation of the regulations and the approaches to the development of a digital society within the EU.

1 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe*, European Commission, 2015, 20.08.2023, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52015DC0192>


2 Fact Sheet 'The ubiquitous digital single market', European Parliament, 20.08.2023, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/43/the-ubiquitous-digital-single-market#:~:text=0n%206%20May%202015%2C%20>



Ukraine is an advanced country when it comes to digital policy and cybersecurity. The digital integration agenda is defined by the integration of Ukraine into the EU Digital Single Market, which also means adopting the EU rules and legislation to access such a market. The Association Agreement (AA) defines the requirements concerning digital integration within Chapter IV, Chapter V and Annexes XVII and XXXVII.<sup>3</sup> Research dated 2020 outlined the significant economic benefit for Ukraine from the integration into the EU's DSM: reduction of transaction and costs in the trading of goods and services between the EU and Ukraine; growth of business efficiency and the GDP of Ukraine (from 2.5 up to 12.1%); and an increase in the well-being of the citizens of Ukraine. Potential benefits for the EU include better access and lower prices for innovative digital goods and services; protection of consumer rights; and the development of innovative products and services and digital infrastructure.<sup>4</sup>

In 2018, Ukraine adopted the roadmap of integration into the EU Digital Single Market on the basis of the Association Agreement.<sup>5</sup> Analysis of Ukraine's progress in implementing the AA in the area of electronic communication and e-commerce for the period from 2014 to 2019 indicates that Ukraine achieved progress in the electronic trust services, but lots of work still had to be done in accordance with the

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***Ukraine is an advanced country when it comes to digital policy and cybersecurity. The digital integration agenda is defined by the integration of Ukraine into the EU Digital Single Market***

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European Electronic Communications Code adopted by the EU in 2018, and satisfying the rest of the requirements: development of the broadband connection, strengthening of the independence of the telecommunication regulator, e-governance, implementation of the cyber security standards, and data protection regulation, etc.<sup>6</sup>

### **'Quantum Jump' in Ukraine's Digital Integration**

With the establishment of the Ministry of Digital Transformation in Ukraine, digital transformation and harmonisation with EU regulations began to be significantly fostered. In 2020, the Ministry presented an updated roadmap of the integration to the Digital Single Market that implied the implementation of the 75 EU acts, with 141 measures to take before 2023.<sup>7</sup> In 2021, another important development took place – the Ukraine-EU Associate Committee approved the amendments to Annex XVII, concerning telecommunication

- 3 Movchan V., Kosse I., Integration within the association: Dynamics of the implementation of the agreement between Ukraine and the EU, 2021, [http://www.ier.com.ua/files/Projects/Integration\\_UA\\_EU/Report\\_Integration\\_final\\_ua.pdf](http://www.ier.com.ua/files/Projects/Integration_UA_EU/Report_Integration_final_ua.pdf)
- 4 Yavorskyi P., Taran S., Shepotylo O., Gamanyuk O., Ukraine's integration into the EU's single digital market: potential economic benefits, International Trade Research Center Trade+ at the Kyiv School of Economics and NGO "Ukrainian Center for European Policy", 2020, <https://ucep.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/ukraines-integration-into-the-eus-digital-single-market-potential-economic-benefits.pdf>
- 5 The "road map" includes 57 European integration projects – Klympush-Tsintsadze, Ukrinform, 20.06.2018, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/amp/rubric-polytics/2484375-u-doroznu-kartu-vkluceni-57-evrointegracijnih-proektiv-klimpuscincadze.html>
- 6 Ukraine and Association Agreement: Monitoring of the implementation 2014-2019, Ukrainian Centre for European Policy, Conrad Denaur Foundation in Ukraine, Kyiv, 2020, pp.149-153, [https://ucep.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/zvit\\_5\\_2020\\_web\\_FINAL\\_2.pdf](https://ucep.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/zvit_5_2020_web_FINAL_2.pdf)
- 7 The Digital Ministry presented the updated Roadmap for integration into the EU's Single Digital Market, Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, 2020, <https://thedigital.gov.ua/news/mintsifra-predstavila-onovlenu-dorozhnyu-kartu-integratsii-do-edinogo-tsifrovogo-rinku-es>



services. Ukraine set the goal of getting a so-called “digital visa-free agreement,” which meant in practice becoming part of the internal market in the sector for electronic communications.<sup>8</sup>

Back in 2020, the abovementioned report stated that, in terms of digital integration, Ukraine was ready for the ‘Quantum jump’. It was possible due to the work done in 2020-2022 within the digital integration process, and the whole digital transformation that modernisation of the legislation implied.

In January 2022, the Ukrainian Law “On Electronic Communications” entered into force. The law implements the European Electronic Communications Code, simultaneously with the EU states. In February 2022, another crucial law entered into force – the Ukrainian Law “On the National Commission Carrying Out State Regulation in the Fields of Electronic Communications, Radio Frequency Spectrum and the Provision of Postal Services. It provides a legal status for the regulatory body in the field of electronic communications (NKEK), and its powers and independence are fully in line with European approaches.<sup>9</sup> Apart from the regulations, Ukraine prioritises digital development, putting the needs of its citizens at its core; and that has resulted in the rapid digitalisation of public services with the Diia app and platform. Ukraine was the first country in the world to introduce digital passports. In December 2022, the European Commission supported the application of

the international consortium POTENTIAL (which includes Ukraine) to develop a European digital wallet (European Digital Identity Wallet).<sup>10</sup> Also, the functioning of the infrastructure was significantly upgraded. In September 2021, the national broadband plan for 2021-2022 was approved, and included the establishment of the broadband coverage platform ‘broadband.gov.ua’.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Ukraine has also adopted the Digital Competence Framework for Educators, and has been actively developing the Diia education platform with accessible educational materials for citizens.<sup>12</sup>

### **EU’s Support Complementing Ukraine’s Efforts of Digital Integration with Ups and Downs**

Since 2016, the EU has been supporting Ukraine in this digital transformation. It has launched the flagship regional program, EU4Digital Initiative, to support digital transformation and the harmonisation of digital markets in those countries that are part of the Eastern Partnership (EaP). In 2020, Ukraine, in cooperation with the EU, launched a continuation project called EU4DigitalUA (2020-2024). This project aims to enhance the process of digital transformation in Ukraine, and focuses on five key goals: interoperability and digital government infrastructure; institutional strengthening and capacity development; communication and informing the public; development of electronic services; and cyber security and data protection. Last but not least, the EU continues to support the

8 Order dated October 28, 2021. No. 1361, Cabinet of Ministers Of Ukraine, Kyiv, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1361-2021-p#Text>

9 Report on the implementation of the Association Agreement in 2022, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2023, p.71, [https://eu-ua.kmu.gov.ua/sites/default/files/inline/files/zvit\\_pro\\_vykonannya\\_ugody\\_pro\\_asociaciyu\\_za\\_2022\\_rik.pdf](https://eu-ua.kmu.gov.ua/sites/default/files/inline/files/zvit_pro_vykonannya_ugody_pro_asociaciyu_za_2022_rik.pdf)

10 Report on the implementation of the Association Agreement in 2023, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2023, p.71, [https://eu-ua.kmu.gov.ua/sites/default/files/inline/files/zvit\\_pro\\_vykonannya\\_ugody\\_pro\\_asociaciyu\\_za\\_2022\\_rik.pdf](https://eu-ua.kmu.gov.ua/sites/default/files/inline/files/zvit_pro_vykonannya_ugody_pro_asociaciyu_za_2022_rik.pdf)

11 Internet for everyone: The government approved the plan of measures for the development of broadband access for 2021-2022, Ministry of Digital Transformation, Governmental Portal, 2021, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/internet-dlya-kozhnogo-uryad-zatverdiv-plan-zahodiv-iz-rozvitku-shirokosmugovogo-dostupu-na-2021-2022-roki>

12 Diia.Osvita, <https://osvita.diia.gov.ua>

digital transformation of Ukraine through the project “Support for Digital Policy in Ukraine” (2021-2024) aimed at the fulfilment of Ukraine’s obligations under the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU.<sup>13</sup>



***In January 2022, the Ukrainian Law “On Electronic Communications” entered into force. The law implements the European Electronic Communications Code, simultaneously with the EU states***

After Russia’s full-scale invasion, the EU along with all its other support, has been committed to providing help to Ukraine in the digital domain as well. Since February 2022, two landmark processes have started. Firstly, on April 8, 2022, the European Commission and the Parliament issued a joint statement of EU and Ukrainian operators, regarding the provision of free accommodation and free calls from abroad to Ukraine. In April 2023, the EU Council and the European Commission supported Ukraine joining the free-roaming agreement with the EU on a permanent basis. For this, the European Commission proposed to include provisions on roaming in Annex XVII-3 of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, and it was approved by the Council of the European Union.<sup>14</sup> Secondly, in September 2022, the European Commission supported the accession of Ukraine to the Digital Europe Program. Within this programme,

Ukrainian businesses, organisations, and public administration bodies will be able to benefit from the programme’s funding and support, in areas such as supercomputers, artificial intelligence, and digital skills.<sup>15</sup>

Such support is the result of years of work by Ukraine, and the EU’s commitment towards Ukraine’s integration into the EU digital space, providing it with the most benefits. On Ukraine obtaining the status of candidate country in June 2022, and after the visit of the Commission and the EU-Ukraine summit in February 2023, the agenda for 2023 in terms of digital integration was clearly defined:

- Updating the Roadmap of Ukraine’s integration into the Single Digital Market, based on the EU’s Digital Decade programme by 2030;
- Assessment of the sphere of trust services of Ukraine by the EU;
- Ukraine’s integration into the EU Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI);
- Launch of 5G technology and joining the EU transport 5G corridors;
- Approval of the updated Annex 17-3, which will ensure the receipt of the internal market regime in the telecoms sector, and bring it closer to a single roaming space with the EU.<sup>16</sup>

As of August 2023, a great deal of progress has been achieved. Now Ukraine is obliged to put its legislation on the roaming sector in accordance with the EU before April 2024. Moreover, in April 2023, Ukraine achieved another milestone: the European Commission recognised that Diia.Signature-

13 Ukraine, EU4Digital, <https://eufordigital.eu/uk/countries/ukraine/>

14 Ministry of Statistics: Roaming as if at home for Ukrainian refugees continues for another year, Ministry of Digital Transformation, Governmental Portal, 2021, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/mintsyfry-rouminh-nache-vdomadlia-ukrainskykh-bizhentsiv-prodovzhuietsia-shche-na-rik>

15 Ukraine joined the “Digital Europe” Program: what does it mean, Ministry of Digital Transformation, 2023, <https://thedigital.gov.ua/news/ukraina-doluchilasya-do-programi-tsifrova-evropa-shcho-tse-oznachae>

16 Ukraine is approaching a single digital market with the EU, Liga Zakon, 2023, 06.02.2023, [https://biz.ligazakon.net/news/217228\\_ukrana-nablizhatsya-do-dinogo-tsifrovogo-rinku-z-s](https://biz.ligazakon.net/news/217228_ukrana-nablizhatsya-do-dinogo-tsifrovogo-rinku-z-s)

EU complies with the EU's eIDAS regulation, and can be used to sign documents or contracts valid in both Ukraine and the EU.<sup>17</sup> For its part, Ukraine has already recognised EU-qualified trust services.



***in April 2023, Ukraine achieved another milestone: the European Commission recognised that Diia.Signature-EU complies with the EU's eIDAS regulation, and can be used to sign documents or contracts valid in both Ukraine and the EU***

But there is still a lot of work ahead. The development of 5G has significantly slowed down, because of the difficulties in allocating necessary frequencies for the deployment of the 5G, as well as because of the damage to all the ICT Infrastructure by the Russian attacks. Another important task for Ukraine is to be included in the EU's Digital Economy and Society Index, which measures the progress of the digital transformation of the EU member states. That was initiated by Ukraine rather than was set as a requirement of the EU.<sup>18</sup> However, the main problem lies within the collection of data required by the EU to include Ukraine in this Index. Nevertheless, the DESI case proves that Ukraine's digital integration is not only about the

requirements outlined in the Association Agreement, but also about a broader scale of actions initiated by Ukraine, so as to be on the same page as the EU member states when it comes to digital development.

Considering all the progress and all the other work carried out on telecommunications, electronic identification, and so on, the one area of policy that has always lacked attention is data protection. If Ukrainian business wants to be able to work in the EU market, it has to comply with GDPR principles – the legal obligation of Ukraine under the Association agreement. Two draft versions of the new law on data protection are still on hold: the draft law on the protection of data No.5628 dated June 7, 2021,<sup>19</sup> and the draft law on the National Commission for the Protection of personal data and access to public information No.6177 dated October 18, 2021.<sup>20</sup>

In terms of cybersecurity, in 2021, Ukraine updated its strategy, dated 2016. Ukraine has been the constant target of Russian cyber-attacks, and accumulated a unique experience of resilience that has been of interest to the EU. Thus, in 2021, the first Cyber Dialogue between the EU and Ukraine was conducted. The dialogue confirmed their joint commitment towards building safe cyberspace, but in practical terms, the EU embarked on providing significant support for Ukraine in the implementation of the NIS Directive and other necessary requirements for harmonisation with EU legal and

17 Important step towards digital visa-free regime: Ukrainian e-signatures and seals on digital documents can be verified in EU member states, Ministry of Digital Transformation at Governmental Portal, 04.05.2023, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/vazhlyvyi-krok-do-tsyfrovoho-bezvizu-ukrainski-elektronni-pidpysy-ta-pechatky-na-tsyfrovykh-dokumentakh-mozhut-pereviryaty-v-derzhavakh-chlenakh-ies>

18 Mangelo O., "Ukraine plans to become a part of the Single European Digital Market before EU membership – head of policy development in the field of telecommunications", Ministry of Digital Transformation, Interfax, 19.04.2023, <https://interfax.com.ua/news/interview/904978.html>

19 Draft Law on Personal Data Protection, The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 25.10.2022, <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billInfo/Bills/Card/40707>

20 Draft Law on the National Commission on Personal Data Protection and Access to Public Information, The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 18.10.2021, [http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4\\_1?pf3511=72992](http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=72992)

institutional bases.<sup>21</sup> The second Cyber Dialogue was conducted in September 2022, confirming the support of the EU for Ukraine in the implementation of the regulations and resistance against cyber-attacks.<sup>22</sup>

## Digital Integration: An Elusive Goal or Just a Challenge to Address?

Implementation of the EU's digital regulatory acts is a constantly-moving target that requires consistency and close coordination with the EU. In 2021, the EU issued the communication "2030 Digital Compass: The European Way for the Digital Decade". The Digital Compass sets clear objectives to be achieved in terms of the following four pillars: a digitally skilled population and highly skilled digital professionals, secure and performant sustainable digital infrastructures, the digital transformation of businesses, and the digitalisation of public services.<sup>23</sup>

The digital domain is constantly developing in the EU, with a number of new regulations and indicatives that the EU has set up yet to roll out. The most recent EU files need to be examined and taken into consideration: The Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act. They aim at creating a safer digital space, where the fundamental rights of

users are protected, and establishing a level playing field for businesses.<sup>24</sup> These acts are ground-breaking and strive to regulate digital platforms and the services they provide. They may also affect the Ukrainian companies operating in the EU market.

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**Implementation of the EU's digital regulatory acts is a constantly-moving target that requires consistency and close coordination with the EU**

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Another highly discussed issue is artificial intelligence regulation. In 2023, the European parliament approved the EU Artificial Intelligence Act. It sets "harmonised rules for the development, placement on the market and use of AI systems in the Union following a proportionate risk-based approach".<sup>25</sup> Geopolitically, the topic of the regulation of AI is crucial for the EU. Ukraine has started work on the development of the legislative base for artificial intelligence. According to the Deputy Minister for Digital Transformation Oleksandr Borynyakov, the EU approach is not the only option to follow.<sup>26</sup> While Ukraine considers different

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21 Ukraine and the EU launched the Cyber Dialogue, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 04.06.2021, <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/ukrayina-ta-yes-zapochatkuvali-kiberdialog>

22 Ukraine and the EU held the second round of dialogue on cyber security issues, State Service of Special Communication and Information Protection of Ukraine, 4.10.2022, <https://cip.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-ta-yes-proveli-drugii-raund-dialogu-z-pitan-kiberbezpeki>

23 Europe's Digital Decade – Questions and Answers, European Commission, 9.03.2021, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda\\_21\\_984](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_21_984)

24 The Digital Services Act package, European Commission, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-services-act-package>

25 European Commission, Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down harmonized rules artificial intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act) and amending certain Union legislative acts, COM(2021) 206 final, Brussels, 2021, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:e0649735-a372-11eb-9585-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:e0649735-a372-11eb-9585-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF)

26 Nesenjuk A., Palantir is tearing up, OpenAI and Microsoft are in touch. How the Ministry of Digitization wants to attract top AI companies to Ukraine and is doing its version of regulation. Blitz interview of Oleksandr Borynyakov, Forbes, 7.08.2023, <https://forbes.ua/innovations/palantir-rvetsya-openai-ta-microsoft-na-zvyazku-yak-mintsifrikhoche-zaluchiti-v-ukrainu-topovi-shi-kompanii-i-robit-svoyu-versiyu-regulyuvannya-blits-intervyu-oleksandra-borynyakova-07082023-15281>

approaches to regulation, including work on its own, it is important to align with the EU AI Act, in terms of the principles and the risk-based approach.

Last but not the least is cybersecurity. The EU has also been active in the introduction of new regulations in the cybersecurity domain: the update of the NIS Directive to NIS2, design of the EU Cyber Resilience Act that strives to make business more resilient to cyber threats, and the EU Cyber Solidarity Act in May, 2023 aiming to create a “Cybersecurity Shield” and establish operation residence in the domain, while also introducing a Cybersecurity Academy initiative.<sup>27</sup> In the meantime, Ukraine is working on harmonisation with the NIS Directive moving to NIS2 requirements, but recent regulations need to be on the agenda as well.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations to Foster Ukraine-EU Cooperation in the Digital Domain**

Ukraine has huge practical experience of fast digitalisation and cyber resilience in the context of the full-scale invasion, and what might be called the first World Cyberwar. Having a large number of best practices to share with other countries and with the EU, Ukraine has also significantly advanced the in harmonisation of legislation within the area of telecommunications, electronic identification and trust services, digital skills, broadband development, and generally the requirements set by Annex XVII with all its updates.

The EU sees Ukraine as a reliable and trusted partner, and provides constant help and support. Digital policy and digital integration are already constituents of a win-win process for Ukraine and for the

EU, as Ukraine has lots of best practices and unique experience in the digitalisation of public services, digital education and cyber security. But Ukraine still has lots of work to do to close the current gaps in legislation, and take advantage of digital integration to the greatest extent, becoming not only a valuable partner of but, in the end, a valuable member of the EU.

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***Having a large number of best practices to share with other countries and with the EU, Ukraine has also significantly advanced the in harmonisation of legislation within the area of telecommunications, electronic identification and trust services, digital skills, broadband development***

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First, Ukraine needs to continue to work on tasks defined for 2023: updating the Roadmap of Ukraine’s integration into the Single Digital Market, and starting assessment of the sphere of trust services. These two tasks can be fulfilled in close coordination with the EU partners. At the same time, on a unilateral basis, Ukraine needs to develop an action plan for the deployment of 5G networks, taking into account conditions in which ICT infrastructure is applied during war time. The private telecommunications sector should be an active participant in this process. The same goes for the harmonisation of the legislation for accession to the single roaming space with the EU. To achieve inclusion in the EU’s Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), Ukraine has to prepare, collect and standardise data for the assessment.

<sup>27</sup> Omelianenko V. EU’s and Ukraine’s approaches to digital diplomacy in the geopolitics of technologies, Ukrainian Prism, 2023, <http://prismua.org/en/english-eus-and-ukraines-approaches-to-digital-diplomacy-in-the-geopolitics-of-technologies/>

Second, Ukraine needs to adopt the law this year to align its regulations with the EU's GDPR. This should be the focus of Ukrainian civil society and the government.

Third, at a time when cyberwar operational resilience is crucial, as well as the strategic systemic changes in the institutional and legislation setting, Ukraine needs a systematic approach and fast implementation of the NIS2 regulation which above all puts emphasis on the safety of the critical infrastructure. Considering the new legislative proposals of the EU, Ukraine needs to develop a roadmap for the integration into the EU cybersecurity, with clearly delineated tasks, deadlines and entities responsible for it. In the coming Cyber Dialogue in September 2023, digital integration should be on the agenda and discussed in detail, with the request to the EU to assist on a regular basis in implementation of its legally binding acts in Ukraine. At the same time, Ukraine is to share its best practices in the area of the cyber security, namely the efficiency of its public-private partnership, defensive and offensive capabilities, and provision of cybersecurity in times of a cyberwar. In this regard, Ukraine also needs the implementation of a cyber-diplomacy strategy, in order to evaluate the global geopolitical state of play in cyberspace, reinforcing both bilateral relations with the EU, and joint cooperation within multilateral fora, so as to advocate for support in the cyber war, and in making Russia responsible for its cybercrimes, and for them to be qualified as such.

Last but not least, sealing gaps in legislation is only a matter of time and coordinated work of the respective ministries along with the legislators, while the most important step forward is in the way of "thinking", i.e. finding a human centred regulatory approach that respects and enforces the

fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens, and strives to bring the most benefits from the development of technologies. Such an approach includes systematic and strategic work on the legislative and institutional coherence and cooperation in the realisation of digital policies, and safeguarding cybersecurity, with the evaluation, detection and response to the risks, while taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the digital environment.

In September 2023, the European Commission will present a comprehensive review of Ukraine's European integration process, with regard to its candidate status. But digital integration remains a significant window of opportunity for Ukraine, owing to the fact that it is a changing and constantly transformative domain, where Ukraine needs to build a solid foundation within the digital integration processes, and then upon this to apply and promote its own approaches and practices that are of high value and highly needed in the EU.

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# THE FAILURE OF GEORGIA'S PRO-EUROPEAN FOREIGN POLICY THE MAIN OBSTACLE TO OBTAINING CANDIDATE STATUS

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*In June 2022, the EU granted candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova, while Georgia's application was rejected. The European Commission presented 12 conditions, in the case of fulfilment of which Georgia will receive candidate status in December 2023. Particularly important points refer to issues such as overcoming political polarisation, the effective functioning and independence of institutions, the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, de-oligarchisation and media freedom. In the light of the ongoing war in Ukraine, the "failures" in Georgia's pro-European foreign policy became especially clear. The official positions of Tbilisi often contradict the policies of the United States and the European Union towards Russia. Moreover, at the level of political narrative, they often coincide with the positions of the Kremlin. Hence, our main research questions will be as follows: What factors caused Georgia to fail to receive candidate status in June 2022? What factors and reasons cause "failures" in the pro-European course of Georgia's foreign policy and, possibly, its deviation towards Russian positions?*

## Introduction

This paper reviews the serious changes that have taken place in Georgia's foreign policy in recent years, and which have come to the surface more clearly since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. One can easily notice how the foreign (and also domestic) policy discourse of the current political leadership of Georgia gradually has changed – how it is moving away from a pro-European course and how it is more and more aligned with the interests of the Kremlin. As a rule, such behaviour is justified by official Tbilisi with the motive of

maintaining peace in the country (although, at the same time, the Georgian authorities do not actually back down, and claim that they fully support Ukraine's struggle for freedom).

In June 2022, the European Union refused to grant candidate status to Georgia (unlike Ukraine and Moldova), and gave the latter a kind of "probationary" period until the end of 2023. After discussing their application for membership, the European Council "stated its readiness to grant Georgia EU candidate status once the priorities set out in the European Commission's opinion on its

EU membership application are addressed”.<sup>1</sup> This referred to the 12 conditions presented by the European Commission which Georgia must fulfil in order to receive EU candidate status in December 2023. The European Parliamentarians and European Commissioners often emphasise the readiness of the Georgian people to get closer to the European Union.<sup>2</sup> According to the latest polls, 83% of the population of Georgia supports the country’s integration into European and Euro-Atlantic organisations<sup>3</sup>, and in March 2023, tens of thousands of people took to the streets of Tbilisi to protest the adoption of a Russian-type law by the Parliament of Georgia. For reference, in 2022, the Russian State Duma adopted the law “On control over the activities of persons being under foreign influence”.<sup>4</sup> The Georgian bill was almost identical to the Russian one.

In the light of all this, one can see a Georgian drift away from Europe. Such a dual foreign policy of the Georgian authorities caused the hesitation in the European Union to give Georgia candidate status along with Ukraine and Moldova. This not only threatens Georgia’s European prospects, but also seriously harms the interests of the West in the Black Sea region. In any case, the national interest of Georgia is under serious threat, and its deviation towards the strategy of jumping on Russia’s bandwagon can be



**12 conditions presented by the European Commission which Georgia must fulfil in order to receive EU candidate status in December 2023**

noticed. Certainly, the EU has observed these developments, and after the March protests in Tbilisi, the High Representative urged the Georgian government “to uphold its commitment to the promotion of democracy, the rule of law and human rights”.<sup>5</sup> And one commentator more harshly distinguished between the divergent positions of the Georgian government and the Georgian people, urging that “Georgians have big EU dreams, but fear their government is more interested in keeping sweet with the Kremlin”.<sup>6</sup> This results in a strong alienation between the people and the government, which can have negative consequences for the country.

**The 2008 August War: A Lesson Not Learned by Georgia?**

After NATO failed to provide the Membership Action Plan (MAP) for Georgia at the NATO summit in April 2008, this move by the Alliance turned out to be a “green light” for Russia to launch a war against Georgia (and

- 1 Council of the EU, EU Enlargement Policy: Georgia, 09.02.2023, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/enlargement/georgia/>
- 2 In March 2023, the Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament clearly stated that they “always stand by people who defend democracy, promote democratic reforms and strive to fulfil their European aspirations. We support the Georgian People.” 14.03.2023, <https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/sds-deplore-georgian-prime-ministers-statement-against-european-parliament>
- 3 A. Paul and I. Maisuradze, *Georgia must get its act together to become an EU candidate country*, 27.03.2023, <https://www.epc.eu/en/Publications/Georgia-must-get-its-act-together-to-become-an-EU-candidate-country~4f4ad4>
- 4 The State Duma, *New law on activities of foreign agents*, 29.06.2022, <http://duma.gov.ru/en/news/54760/>
- 5 European Union External Action, *Georgia: Statement by the High Representative on the adoption of the “foreign influence” law*, 07.03.2023, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/georgia-statement-high-representative-adoption-“foreign-influence”-law\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/georgia-statement-high-representative-adoption-“foreign-influence”-law_en)
- 6 D. Parulava, *Georgians fear their government is sabotaging EU hopes*, “POLITICO”, 11.07.2022, <https://www.politico.eu/article/georgian-fear-government-sabotaging-eu-hope/>




also against Ukraine later) in August of the same year. In the Bucharest Declaration, one can read that “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... MAP is the next step for Ukraine and Georgia on their direct way to membership”.<sup>7</sup> The 2008 Russian-Georgian War significantly hindered Georgia’s aspiration to join Europe, too. At the same time, the consequences of this war created a serious destabilisation of the post-Soviet space as a whole. The European Parliament observed that “Ukraine, Azerbaijan and the countries of ex-Soviet Central Asia have all experienced increased Russian pressure since the crisis in Georgia”.<sup>8</sup> It means that the August War was not just a local conflict, but it had wider regional reactions and impacts.

Henry Kissinger held a very similar position on Russia’s invasion of Georgia in 2008, as well as Russia’s annexation of Eastern Ukraine and Crimea in 2014 and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022.<sup>9</sup> In September 2008, he wrote that “isolating Russia is not a sustainable long-range policy”<sup>10</sup> His realist considerations are often incomprehensible to the countries which are victims of Russian aggression. As for Russian-Georgian relations, “the situation deteriorated through the years

and in 2008 the August War between Russian and Georgia was a culmination of Russia’s foreign policies and for Georgia’s further disintegration”.<sup>11</sup> Considering this, it seems very difficult to understand, especially in the light of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine War, why the Georgian government pursues an “appeasement” policy towards Moscow and, in some cases, even aligns its interests with it.

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**2008 August War is not a lesson learned for the Georgian authorities, because the “Georgian Dream” party’s flirtation with the Kremlin corresponds with neither Georgia’s historical-cultural proximity with Europe, nor with the Georgian people’s aspirations towards EU integration**

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To some extent, Kissinger was accusing Georgia of making mistaken political calculations; in his words, “the Georgian crisis originated in a series of miscalculations. Georgia’s leadership misjudged the scope for military action and the magnitude of Russian response”.<sup>12</sup> Frequently, the official statements of Georgia seem to be critical of Russia; as Georgia’s

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7 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*, 03.04.2008, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_8443.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm)

8 European Parliament, Directorate General External Policies of the Union, *Briefing Paper: Georgia after the August War: Implications for EU Engagement*, October 2008, chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcjpcgclefindmkaj/[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2008/406969/EXPO-AFET\\_NT\(2008\)406969\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2008/406969/EXPO-AFET_NT(2008)406969_EN.pdf)

9 J. Bosco, *Kissinger need another reversal*, 17.02.2023, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2023/02/17/2003794499>

10 H. Kissinger, *Finding Common Ground*, 30.09.2008, <https://www.henrykissinger.com/articles/finding-common-ground/>

11 I. Javakhishvili, *Covid-19-Pandemic Measures in Conflict Zones in 2020 and 2021 – The Case of the OSCE and South Ossetia in Georgia*, p. 262, in A. Mihr (ed.), *Between Peace and Conflict in the East and the West*, Springer Publication, 2021.

12 H. Kissinger, *Finding Common Ground*, 30.09.2008, <https://www.henrykissinger.com/articles/finding-common-ground/>

ambassador to the EU stated, the “‘exercises’ of 2008, 2014, and 2022 are parts of the same strategy of Russia to redraw the borders in Europe and establish the new so-called zones of influence, undermining the independence and the European aspirations of sovereign countries. And the target here is the collective West per se”.<sup>13</sup> But in daily political discourse, one can clearly see how the leading figures of the “Georgian Dream” party accuse ex-president Saakashvili and the United National Movement not only of starting the war in August 2008, but also of trying to drag Georgia into war with Russia now.<sup>14</sup>

It is clear that the 2008 August War is not a lesson learned for the Georgian authorities, because the “Georgian Dream” party’s flirtation with the Kremlin corresponds with neither Georgia’s historical-cultural proximity with Europe, nor with the Georgian people’s aspirations towards EU integration.

### **The “Peace Discourse” as the Main Tool for Georgia’s Drift away from Europe**

To avoid supporting Ukraine and, more generally, expressing a clear pro-European position, the current Georgian government actively uses the theme of ‘peace’, effectively manipulating a significant portion of Georgian society. In this regard, Prime

Minister Irakli Garibashvili often emphasizes the importance of maintaining peace and staying calm, but not infrequently one can easily notice ambiguity in some of his statements. In October 2022, the Georgian PM stated that “We must be very calm, we certainly have the challenges – 20% of the country is occupied, and considering all this, we need intelligence, lack of emotions, more work and economic development, as well as more prosperity, love and positivity”<sup>15</sup>. On the other hand, he immediately added that “the main thing I want to tell you is that the country does not face any challenges, we very firmly follow our path, our chosen peaceful policy, and our citizens will not have any interruptions in the winter in terms of energy supply”<sup>16</sup>.

Such rhetoric has a considerable influence on a large part of the population, although the pro-European part of Georgian society also openly expresses its position. The main message is that the Georgian government does not echo the will of the Georgian people. In March 2022, participants at a large demonstration in support of Ukraine in Tbilisi publicly announced: “We are not our government”<sup>17</sup>. This fact once again shows serious divisions between the Georgian Dream party and the Georgian people. In March 2022, The Caucasus Research Resource Centres reported that 85% of the Georgian population urged their government to provide humanitarian

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13 V. Makharoblishvili, *Lessons from 2008: 14 years since Russia’s military aggression in Georgia*, 08.08.2022, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/eastern-europe/opinion/lessons-from-2008-14-years-since-russias-military-aggression-in-georgia/>

14 Irakli Kobakhidze, chairman of the Georgian Dream often calls them the Global War Party. See *Irakli Kobakhidze: “It is time to neutralize United National Movement”*, “Caucasus Watch”, 22.04.2023, <https://caucasuswatch.de/en/news/irakli-kobakhidze-it-is-time-to-neutralize-united-national-movement.html>

15 *Georgian PM stresses importance to maintain peaceful environment in country, to be calm, firm, continue development*, “Agenda.ge”, 09.10.2022, <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2022/3916>

16 *Georgian PM stresses importance to maintain peaceful environment in country, to be calm, firm, continue development*, “Agenda.ge”, 09.10.2022, <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2022/3916>

17 C. Sheils, “*We are not our government*”: *Georgians slam Ukraine war response*, Al Jazeera, 05.04.2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/4/5/we-are-not-our-government-georgians-slam-ukraine-war-response>

aid to Ukraine, 79% supported the idea of accepting Ukrainian refugees in Georgia, and 61% believed that the government should support Ukraine more.<sup>18</sup>

Civil society and the non-governmental sector often criticise the Georgian government for its non-pro-European policies. In March 2022, Transparency International – Georgia, one of the most influential Georgian non-governmental organisations, stated that “we should unambiguously stand with the West. No other choice will ever be accepted by the Georgian society! Unfortunately, the steps taken by the government, their obscure and inconsistent rhetoric, puts a question mark over Georgia as a reliable and loyal partner for the West”<sup>19</sup>. Georgian Dream does not share the positions of the civil sector and, moreover, tries in every way to limit the scope of the latter. As time goes by, Georgia is ever more open to criticism by the European Union.<sup>20</sup> This is another indicator that there may be a serious threat to Georgia’s EU candidate status.

Georgian Dream is also criticised also by President Salome Zourabichvili. While delivering her state-of-the-nation address to the legislature earlier in 2023, she reproached the ruling party: “Where do

you stand today? Why have you strayed from the people’s will, from the mandate given to you by the people?”<sup>21</sup> Zourabichvili emphasised that during the rule of Georgian Dream, Georgia’s commitment to European integration has been called into question. She also criticised the rhetoric of the Georgian government that some internal forces are trying to open a “second front” in Georgia against Russia. Zourabichvili told them that “you can speak all you want of second front conspiracies, but the people are well aware that the EU was founded on the idea of peace, not war”<sup>22</sup>. Certainly, the Georgian President often becomes the object of harsh criticism from the ruling party.

In this way, the “Peace Discourse” is a very effective means in the hands of Georgian Dream not to support Ukraine in practice, and little by little to move away from the European Union, or as *Le Monde* calls it, “the Georgian government has used one word as a totem: ‘peace’”<sup>23</sup>. Obviously, supporting Ukraine does not mean Georgia going to war with Russia; therefore, making a strong impression remains as simply an excuse and justification for the Georgian government to avoid identifying with Europe, and to try to flirt with Moscow again, albeit to no purpose.

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18 *CPRC: გამოკითხულთა 79% ფიქრობს, რომ საქართველოს უკრაინელი ლტოლვილები უნდა მიიღოს (79% of respondents think that Georgia should accept Ukrainian refugees)*, “რადიო თავისუფლება”, 15.03.2022, <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31753719.html>

19 Transparency International – Georgia, *Georgia Should Firmly Stand with the West*, 23.03.2022, <https://www.transparency.ge/en/post/georgia-should-firmly-stand-west>

20 E. Avdaliani, *Georgia and the West Fall Out*, “CEPA”, 03.03.2023, <https://cepa.org/article/georgia-and-the-west-fall-out/>

21 G. Lomsadze, *Georgian president rails against Georgian government*, “Eurasianet”, 31.03.2023, <https://eurasianet.org/georgian-president-rails-against-georgian-government>

22 G. Lomsadze, *Georgian president rails against Georgian government*, “Eurasianet”, 31.03.2023, <https://eurasianet.org/georgian-president-rails-against-georgian-government>

23 F. Vincent, *War in Ukraine: Georgia’s ambiguous neutrality*, “Le Monde”, 17.12.2022, [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/12/17/war-in-ukraine-georgia-s-ambiguous-neutrality\\_6008070\\_4.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/12/17/war-in-ukraine-georgia-s-ambiguous-neutrality_6008070_4.html)

## 12-Point Conditions for Georgia

Why did the European Union refuse to grant Georgia candidate status in June 2022? Why is Brussels dissatisfied? On June 17, the European Commission recommended that Georgia should be given the prospects of membership of the EU. To achieve this, Georgia must fulfil several important conditions. This is a “ticket” for Tbilisi to obtain the status. We can highlight some important priorities such as addressing the issue of political polarisation, guaranteeing the proper functioning of state institutions, implementing transparent and effective judicial reforms, the commitment of “de-oligarchisation”, a free, professional, pluralistic and independent media environment, ensuring the involvement of civil society in decision-making processes, etc.<sup>24</sup> A few days before this report, there were already doubts regarding candidate status for Georgia, as on June, 9th, 2022, the European Parliament adopted a resolution regarding the violations of media freedom, and problems faced by the issue of journalists’ safety in Georgia.<sup>25</sup>

In July 2022, the representative of the European Commission clearly stated that “After careful consideration, we decided that we should not rush the Georgian political elite in their efforts to depolarize the country so that they can sit down at the same table and work hard on reforms. At the request of the European Council,

we will prepare a reprioritization of the expansion package by 2023. This will give the political system of Georgia enough time to carefully work out priorities”<sup>26</sup>. Paata Gaprindashvili, the director of Georgia’s Reforms Associates (GRASS), a non-partisan, non-governmental policy watchdog, concluded that “the 12 priorities put more emphasis on the fundamental political issues and therefore pose a unique challenge for the country”<sup>27</sup>. He also highlighted that Georgian Dream was against the active involvement of NGOs in parliamentary working groups at the preparatory stage of Georgia’s application for candidate status.

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**Civil society and the non-governmental sector often criticise the Georgian government for its non-pro-European policies**

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Several days after the commission’s report, the Political Council of the Georgian Dream party met to discuss the possibilities of fulfilling the conditions. Chairman Irakli Kobakhidze argued that this fulfilment should be in an “appropriate time and manner”<sup>28</sup>; as a rule, the creation of various monitoring and working groups within the framework of the parliament was chosen as the most proven method. Whatever it is, the

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24 European Commission, *Opinion on the EU membership application by Georgia*, 17.06.2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA\\_22\\_3800](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA_22_3800)

25 *Georgian NGOs present a plan for obtaining EU candidate status*, “JAMnews”, 04.07.2022, <https://jam-news.net/georgian-ngos-present-a-plan-for-obtaining-eu-candidate-status/>

26 *European Commission pushed assessment of Georgia’s readiness for candidate status to 2023*, “JAMnews”, 14.07.2022, <https://jam-news.net/european-commission-pushed-assessment-of-georgias-readiness-for-candidate-status-to-2023/>

27 P. Gaprindashvili, *Georgia can show positive trajectory and get EU candidate status*, “EURACTIV”, 13.02.2023, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/opinion/georgia-can-show-positive-trajectory-and-get-eu-candidate-status/>

28 *Ruling party presents strategy for EU membership candidate status*, “Agenda.ge”, 01.07.2022, <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2022/2534>

fact is that if in December 2023 “Georgia is unable to attain candidate status, it will be a strategic failure for the EU and could push the country closer to Russia”<sup>29</sup>. However, on the other hand, it is clear that Georgia’s failure to obtain candidate status in June 2022 was caused by problems related to democracy and the rule of law within the country.

In December 2022, civil society organisations also actively responded to the European Council, on giving Georgia a “European perspective” and assigning the 12 priorities. They addressed the President of the European Commission and the European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement: “On the one hand, the Government of Georgia states that it will address the priorities set as prerequisites for receiving the European Union membership candidate status. On the other hand, it is a matter of great debate in the Georgian public whether the decisions made by the Georgian Government will actually secure the candidate status for the country, since at this stage the government does not show enough political will and readiness to fully implement the 12 priorities”<sup>30</sup>. Indeed, this is the position of the civil society in Georgia; it does not believe that the Georgian government has the political will and ability to fulfil the conditions set by the European Union in order to receive candidate status.

## “Foreign Agents” Bill and Its Repercussions

After Georgia failed to gain candidate status from the EU, the hostile attitude towards the non-governmental sector became even stronger. The representatives of the mentioned sector were especially discredited by members of the parliamentary majority and persons affiliated with Georgian Dream. At the end of December 2022, one such close-knit group (“People’s Power”) announced the formulation of the so-called “Foreign Agents” bill. As a rule, such a law is a good tool in the hands of the government to label any representative of civil society and the non-governmental sector which is undesirable to the government as an “agent”. A classic example of this is to be found in Russia.<sup>31</sup> This is another step in which Georgian Dream is clearly imitating Moscow.

The official purpose of this new bill was to strengthen defence against malicious foreign influence. This official aim was to ensure the transparency of the NGOs, but in reality, the political rhetoric was aimed at exposing “agents of foreign influence”. On March 7, 2023, the Georgian Parliament adopted the bill in its first reading. This act was criticised by influential international non-governmental organisations; Human Rights Watch said that “The ‘foreign agent’ bills seek to marginalize and discredit independent, foreign-funded groups and media that serve the wider public interest

29 S. Stone, S. Kevkishvili, A. Kupatadze, T. Oniani, G. Gigladze, G. Gvilava, S. Gvineria and O. Vartanyan, *Reform and Resistance: Georgia’s Path to EU Candidacy*, “Center for European Policy Analysis”, 06.04.2023, <https://cepa.org/comprehensive-reports/reform-and-resistance-georgias-path-to-eu-candidacy/>

30 *Civil society organizations appeal to the European Commission to increase oversight over Georgia’s implementation of 12 priorities*, “Georgian Court Watch”, 14.12.2022, <https://courtwatch.ge/en/articles/civil-society-organizations-statement/>

31 At the beginning of December 2022, Human Rights Watch stated that the “Foreign Agents” Law which entered into force in Russia expanded “the country’s oppressive and vast ‘foreign agents’ legislation” and that “the law is yet another attack on free expression and legitimate civic activism in Russia”. *Russia: New Restrictions for “Foreign Agents*”, “Human Rights Watch”, 01.12.2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/01/russia-new-restrictions-foreign-agents>

in Georgia,” and “They clearly aim to restrict critical groups and crucial media, violate Georgia’s international obligations, and would have a serious chilling effect on groups and individuals working to protect human rights, democracy, and the rule of law”<sup>32</sup>. According to Amnesty International, “If adopted, the bills would also impose additional onerous reporting requirements, inspections, and administrative and criminal liability, including up to five years in prison for violations”<sup>33</sup>. The most important protest came from the people. Tens of thousands of people took to the streets of Tbilisi to protest the said decision of the parliament. After two days of demonstrations, the authorities backed down and rejected the bill at the second reading. In this pro-European victory, the so-called Gen-Z made a great contribution<sup>34</sup>.

The West also reacted very negatively to the bill; the USA and the EU condemned this step taken by the Georgian authorities. EU High Representative Josep Borrell stated that “This is a very bad development for Georgia and its people”<sup>35</sup>. Then he clarified that “This law is incompatible with EU values and standards. It goes against Georgia’s stated objective of joining the European Union, as supported by a large majority of Georgian citizens. Its final adoption may have serious repercussions on our relations”<sup>36</sup>. These words show that the adoption of such a law and even its initiation poses a serious

threat to Georgia’s European perspective, and in a short period of time it is very counterproductive for the country’s hopes of receiving candidate status. However, at this stage the pro-European civil society won the battle. Reiterating that after large-scale demonstrations, the Georgian Parliament rejected the bill on foreign agents at the second reading.

## Conclusion

Georgia’s pro-European foreign policy faces a serious risk of failure. Overall, this threatens Georgia’s centuries-old European identity. The war waged by Russia against Ukraine, which continues today, turned out to be a good ‘litmus test’ to reveal the real direction of Georgia’s foreign policy. In this regard, this article has emphasised the important policies – those of real support for Ukraine and fulfilling the 12-point recommendation. In the light of all this, a number of steps taken by the Georgian government put into serious question whether the country will obtain EU candidate status in December of this year. Notable among them are unfriendly rhetoric (and, in some cases, actions too) towards Ukraine, very frequent and inaccurate criticism of EU officials, refusal to join sanctions against Russia, a “Peace Discourse” as a tool of manipulating the population, informal governance (oligarchisation) and, not the least significant, efforts to pass the “Foreign Agents” Bill.

32 Georgia: “Foreign Agents” Bill Tramples on Rights, “Human Rights Watch”, 07.03.2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/03/07/georgia-foreign-agents-bill-tramples-rights>

33 Georgia: “Foreign agents” bill tramples on rights by restricting freedom of expression and association, “Amnesty International”, 07.03.2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/03/georgia-foreign-agents-bill-tramples-on-rights-restricting-freedom-of-expression-and-association/>

34 F. Vincent, *Gen Z Georgians push back against “foreign agents” law*, “Le Monde”, 13.03.2023, [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/03/13/gen-z-georgians-push-back-against-foreign-agents-law\\_6019128\\_4.html#:~:text=In%20all%20night%20demonstrations%20in,an%20unprecedented%20turn%20toward%20authoritarianism.](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/03/13/gen-z-georgians-push-back-against-foreign-agents-law_6019128_4.html#:~:text=In%20all%20night%20demonstrations%20in,an%20unprecedented%20turn%20toward%20authoritarianism.)

35 US, EU criticize Georgia’s foreign agents law that sparked protests, “Anadolu Agency”, 08.03.2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/us-eu-criticize-georgias-foreign-agents-law-that-sparked-protests/2839748>

36 European Union External Action, *Georgia: Statement by the High Representative on the adoption of the “foreign influence” law*, 07.03.2023, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/georgia-statement-high-representative-adoption-“foreign-influence”-law\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/georgia-statement-high-representative-adoption-“foreign-influence”-law_en)

The “Peace Discourse” is a very effective policy for Georgian Dream in order to, in an indirect way, mobilise Georgian society against the West and justify the policy of “warming” towards the Kremlin. For the ruling party, this policy is its primary means of persuading the domestic audience that it is unnecessary for the nation to actively pursue a pro-Western policy and to ‘irritate’ Russia. The non-European attitudes of the society can have a grave indirect effect, in creating obstacles on the path to obtaining candidate status. Today Georgia faces a historic challenge – the failure of its pro-European foreign policy, with all its characteristics, may turn out to be a real obstacle to obtaining candidate status. The former is directly proportional to the latter.

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# NATO AFTER THE MADRID AND VILNIUS SUMMITS: IN SEARCH OF SHADES

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*This article seeks to dissect the contemporary developments surrounding the concept of 'strategic competition' by examining the outcomes of two successive NATO summits in Madrid and Vilnius. During these summits, the Allies not only exhibited a unified front in their support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russia but also reaffirmed their commitment to honour mutual defence guarantees should the Alliance itself come under attack. This article delves deeper into the evolution of the concept of strategic competition following the Madrid and Vilnius summits, where the Allies sought to formulate effective responses to the turmoil wrought by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.*

## Introduction

In this era of democratic unrest and global instability, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization sees its role as reaffirming its values and principles. NATO's Madrid and Vilnius summits attempted to respond to the current challenges towards the East, in particular defining the priorities of the Allies.

NATO's newly adopted strategy<sup>1</sup> (2022) encompasses the idea that allied security

will hinge both on Russia's threat to Europe and China's high stakes in the Indo-Pacific region. It delves deeply into the concept of '**strategic competition**', within our 'contested and predictable' world. Moreover, many of the NATO allies followed this trend in 2022 and reviewed or elaborated their security and/or defence strategies: the US National Defence Strategy<sup>2</sup>, the UK's 2023 Integrated Review<sup>3</sup>, Germany's first-ever post-Cold War National Security Strategy<sup>4</sup>, the National Strategic Review in France<sup>5</sup>, the Danish Foreign and Security Policy,<sup>6</sup>

1 NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, adopted by the Heads of State during Madrid Summit 2022, 29.06.2022, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf)

2 US National Security Strategy 2022. White House. October 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>

3 Integrated Review Refresh 2023: Responding to a more contested and volatile world, presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister by Command of His Majesty, 13.03.2023, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-review-refresh-2023-responding-to-a-more-contested-and-volatile-world>

4 Integrated Security for Germany. National Security Strategy 2023, June 2023, <https://www.nationalesicherheitsstrategie.de/National-Security-Strategy-EN.pdf>

5 National Strategic Review, France. 2022, <https://www.sgdns.gouv.fr/files/files/rns-uk-20221202.pdf>.

6 Foreign and Security Policy Strategy, Regeringen, May 2023, <https://um.dk/en/foreign-policy/foreign-and-security-policy-2023>



as well as the Defence White Paper in the Netherlands<sup>7</sup>.

Following the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, NATO's focus underwent a transition towards non-conventional threats, prompted by Russia's increased aggression targeting NATO and its members, albeit remaining below the threshold for invoking Article 5. These tactics are commonly referred to as hybrid warfare, but they can also be categorised as activities within the 'grey zone', covert actions weaponizing energy and commodities, and nuclear threats, not to mention the information space and the environment<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, the rise and return of the strategic competition between the US and China, as well as the US and Russia has started to challenge the Euro-Atlantic space simultaneously. The present article attempts to delve deeper into the evolutions of the strategic competition concept after the subsequent Madrid and Vilnius summits, where the Allies tried to respond effectively to the turmoil caused by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

### **Strategic Competition as a US-Originated Concept**

The developments sketched above, culminating in Russia's invasion of Ukraine, make it urgent to launch a serious inquiry into a potential revision of the NATO role in Europe and, in particular, its geo-strategic importance in the European security

architecture. In a world characterised by different kinds of globalisation and anti-globalisation, where security is a continuum in the absence of a stable international system, it is imperative for Europe as a continent to positively contribute to regional and trans-continental stability. In this regard, NATO is recognised for its pivotal position in framing and then promoting effective international security mechanisms.

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### ***the rise and return of the strategic competition between the US and China, as well as the US and Russia has started to challenge the Euro-Atlantic space simultaneously***

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It has been observed that strategic competition as a notion was used to mark the US's evolving rivalry with China<sup>9</sup>. In general, it represents a long-lasting endeavour involving those vested in upholding the established international framework of rules and norms that goes back to the period after World War II, alongside the efforts of revisionist powers, aiming to disrupt or reconfigure this very framework<sup>10</sup>. Living in times of high stakes, strategic competition is also compared or referred to by some scholars as 'strategic hedging'<sup>11</sup>. Coming from the world of finance, it has appeared to

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7 Defence White Paper 2022, Ministry of Defence of the Netherlands, 19.07.2022, <https://english.defensie.nl/downloads/publications/2022/07/19/defence-white-paper-2022>.

8 NDC Research Paper 28: *War changes everything: Russia after Ukraine*, edited by Marc Ozawa, NATO Defence College Research Paper #28, 13.02.2023, <https://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=1798>

9 Stephanie Christine Winkler, Strategic Competition and US-China Relations: A Conceptual Analysis, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 2023, p.9.

10 Paul, Christopher, Michael Schuille, Michael Vasseur, Elizabeth M. Bartels, and Ryan Bauer, The Role of Information in U.S. Concepts for Strategic Competition. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2022. p. 2. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA1256-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1256-1.html)

11 Bruni J. Strategic Hedging: The Growing International Competition for Influence in the Indo-Pacific. <https://www.interregional.com/en/strategic-hedging/> 05.09.2023; Didier, Brice. "Reacting to the Decline of the West? The European Union's Embrace of Strategic Hedging." *European Review of International Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2021, pp. 191–220. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27142375>

be used in international relations mostly to indicate Indo-Pacific military dynamics<sup>12</sup> or US-China developments<sup>13</sup>.

However, there is still a lack of an all-encompassing understanding of what the toolkit is for the 'strategic competitors' to use. There is no consensus about what the competition is mostly about, its priority framework, where it leads to, or how countries succeed in this area.

Deepening rivalries between the US and China, and the US and Russia have scaled up the new episodes of the strategic competition era. In such a way, during the years of the Biden administration, competitive strategy is being viewed as a challenging option for the great powers to co-exist, taking into account their diverse visions of global order<sup>14</sup>. Over the last two decades, China, Russia, and Iran have manifested steadfast efforts to systematically modify the prevailing regional arrangements in Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East<sup>15</sup>.

Following Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, NATO's discernible emphasis on

fostering partnerships with non-allies and a focus on collective defence reached a new level. It directed its energies towards the imperative task of maintaining trust with its partners after NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan. Since then, there has been an observable trend whereby the United States and other NATO allies have increasingly chosen to circumvent the conventional NATO framework, an option for more pliable and adaptable collaborative formats<sup>16</sup>. In the context of the United States, the prospect of a confrontation with Russia due to its full-scale invasion of Ukraine is coupled with escalating tensions vis-a-vis China. It has propelled the pressing consideration of close vicinity to the two-front war as a simultaneous challenge<sup>17</sup>.

### **Strategic Competition and its Implications for NATO Since 2022**

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has brought a new intensity to the competition, but the long-term implications of the war remain unclear<sup>18</sup>. In this context, the North Atlantic Council has convened twice,<sup>19</sup> both at the level of heads of state/governments as well

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- 12 Hu, Weixing. "The United States, China, and the Indo-Pacific Strategy: The Rise and Return of Strategic Competition." *China Review*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2020, pp. 127–42. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26928114>
  - 13 Tessman, Brock, and Wojtek Wolfe. "Great Powers and Strategic Hedging: The Case of Chinese Energy Security Strategy." *International Studies Review*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2011, pp. 214–40. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23017154>
  - 14 Stephanie Christine Winkler, Strategic Competition and US–China Relations: A Conceptual Analysis, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 2023
  - 15 Gilli, Andrea, et al. "NATO from 2010 to 2022: What Has Changed?" *Strategic Shifts and NATO's New Strategic Concept*, NATO Defense College, 2022, pp. 5–10. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep42156.8>
  - 16 Lisa Aronsson, Brett Swaney, Priorities for NATO Partnerships in an Era of Strategic Competition, INSS Strategic Perspectives 40, <https://inss.ndu.edu/Media/News/Article/3252474/priorities-for-nato-partnerships-in-an-era-of-strategic-competition>
  - 17 Mark Webber, NATO and strategic competition: time for Allies to step up, NDC Policy Brief 04–2023, p. 2.
  - 18 Stephanie Christine Winkler, Strategic Competition and US–China Relations: A Conceptual Analysis, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 2023, p. 2.
  - 19 Statement by the North Atlantic Council on Russia's attack on Ukraine, NATO official website, 24.02.2022. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_192404.htm?utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_medium=smc&utm\\_id=220224%2Bukraine%2Bnac%2Bstatement](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_192404.htm?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=smc&utm_id=220224%2Bukraine%2Bnac%2Bstatement); Statement by NATO Heads of State and Government on Russia's attack on Ukraine, NATO official website, 25.02.2023. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_192489.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_192489.htm); Statement by NATO Heads of State and Government, NATO official website, 24.03.2022. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_193719.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_193719.htm)

as ministries,<sup>20</sup> to condemn “in the strongest possible terms Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine” and reassure their allies that they are committed to use “Article 5 of the Washington Treaty” when it is necessary to ‘protect and defend all the Allies’<sup>21</sup>.

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***The ineffectual approach undertaken by NATO to curtail Russia’s actions, stemming from the resolutions adopted at the Bucharest Summit of 2008, should have ideally catalysed the Alliance to undertake reciprocal supplementary measures at the Vilnius Summit, thereby advancing Ukraine’s trajectory towards potential membership***

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Within the framework of the NATO Strategic Concept, formulated and endorsed during the proceedings of the Madrid Summit in June 2022, the consensus among members of the alliance was unequivocally established<sup>22</sup>. It was collectively affirmed that, notwithstanding NATO’s inability to regard Russia as a potential partner, the Alliance persists in its willingness to uphold unfettered lines of communication with Moscow, a stance consistent with its prior position. This deliberate continued

engagement with Moscow serves multifarious objectives, encompassing the domains of risk oversight and mitigation, the forestalling of potential escalatory scenarios, and the augmentation of overall transparency. Moreover, “pervasive instability, rising strategic competition, and advancing authoritarianism” are considered the biggest threats to the Alliance space<sup>23</sup>.

The ineffectual approach undertaken by NATO to curtail Russia’s actions, stemming from the resolutions adopted at the Bucharest Summit of 2008, should have ideally catalysed the Alliance to undertake reciprocal supplementary measures at the Vilnius Summit, thereby advancing Ukraine’s trajectory towards potential membership. Perhaps NATO’s ‘naiveté’ towards Russia started to decrease there. The summit communique signified the onset of a discernible alteration in global power dynamics, as NATO aligned itself against Russia and China<sup>24</sup>. Moreover, it expands the conventional understanding of the word ‘security’ to encompass space, water, technology, and cyberspace, with precaution in mind<sup>25</sup>. It demonstrates that the Alliance was trying to sound more solid and proactive in the strategic environment, with the understanding that it is not only European security that is under attack, but that the threats being faced are “ global and interconnected”<sup>26</sup>.

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20 Statement by NATO Foreign Ministers, NATO official website, 29-30.11.2022, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_209531.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_209531.htm?selectedLocale=en)

21 Statement by the North Atlantic Council on Russia’s attack on Ukraine, NATO official website, 24.02.2022. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_192404.htm?utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_medium=smc&utm\\_id=220224%2Bukraine%2Bnac%2Bstatement](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_192404.htm?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=smc&utm_id=220224%2Bukraine%2Bnac%2Bstatement)

22 NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, adopted by the Head of States during Madrid Summit 2022, NATO official website, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_files2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_files2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf)

23 NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, p. 1

24 Vilnius Summit Communiqué, articles 11, 12, 13. NATO official website, 2023, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_217320.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_217320.htm)

25 Hasim Turker, NATO’s Vilnius Summit: Hints of a New Cold War, Geopolitical Monitor, 14.07.2023, <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/natos-vilnius-summit-hints-of-a-new-cold-war/>

26 NATO 2022 Strategic Concept. p. 3.


However, the NATO response to strategic competition is marked by a more future-oriented agenda, and via regional defence planning and expenditures, enhancing the alliance's capacity to deter and its own self-defence. The adoption of the new NATO Force Model during the Madrid Summit, represents a transformative development, bolstering alliance capabilities to deploy up to 300,000 troops at a high readiness level. Together with the Allied Reaction Force, designed to swiftly address the emerging threats, NATO is continuing its process of realignment and restructuring<sup>27</sup>.

Endeavouring to respond to the strategic threat after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, NATO has reasserted its unwavering support for that country which, in reality, is being seen mostly as a presumed European NATO member-state; individual assistance military packages have been provided, with US 'backup' as a final instance. Although NATO has reconfirmed Ukraine's future in NATO, the alliance member-states have gone far beyond believing in it as a possibility. The *communiqué* further delineated the establishment of a collaborative NATO-Ukraine Council, continued non-lethal assistance via the Comprehensive Assistance Package, and presented a NATO-EU Staff Coordination mechanism, aimed at strengthening NATO's support for Ukraine<sup>28</sup>. While this summit did provide a degree of clarity regarding Ukraine's prospective role within the alliance, it was found lacking in two significant respects: firstly, it failed to furnish the comprehensive security assurances sought by President Zelenskyy in the months leading up to the summit,

and secondly, it fell short in furnishing a precise and defined timeline for Ukraine's membership.

Indeed, during the Vilnius Summit 2023, the assurances of new armaments and a coalition for training Ukrainian pilots hit the ground, but in the final communiqué of the summit, there was no mention of a specific timeline for Ukraine's NATO membership. Instead, there were general statements emphasising the need for additional reforms before an invitation was extended.

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***the NATO response to strategic competition is marked by a more future-oriented agenda, and via regional defence planning and expenditures, enhancing the alliance's capacity to deter and its own self-defence***

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Encouragingly, there exist noteworthy accomplishments within this framework. Notably, the G7 nations have collaboratively formulated assurances of collective security for Ukraine<sup>29</sup>. This collaborative declaration, slated for endorsement on the periphery of the summit, is poised to delineate the structure through which allied support for Ukraine will be extended in the forthcoming years.

To sum up, we can say that the ongoing strategic competition is already resulting in an expansion of NATO's influence, not

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27 Jason C. Moyer, Henri Winberg, NATO Vilnius Summit 2023: A Summit for Implementation, 11.07.2023, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/nato-vilnius-summit-2023-summit-implementation>

28 Vilnius Summit Communiqué, articles 11, 12, 13, 2023, NATO official website, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_217320.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_217320.htm)

29 Alberto Nardelli, Jennifer Jacobs, Natalia Drozdziak, G-7 Nations to Give Individual Security Pledges to Ukraine, Bloomberg, 11.07.2023. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-07-11/g-7-countries-to-offer-individual-security-assurances-to-ukraine>

necessarily solely through the process of enlargement. Thus, the scope of enlargement has evolved to encompass broader global partnerships<sup>30</sup>. One such example is NATO's partnership with the Indo-Pacific region, strengthened after the Vilnius Summit<sup>31</sup>. Moreover, it was also presented in the format of enhanced partnerships. In particular, in the aftermath of the Partnership Interoperability Initiative, NATO extended customized "enhanced opportunities," designed to foster deeper collaboration with specific partner nations. Presently, the Enhanced Opportunities Partners encompass Australia, Georgia, Jordan, Sweden, and Ukraine<sup>32</sup>.

## Conclusion

NATO's unwavering commitment to safeguarding its interests within the evolving global order, marked by multifaceted competition across various domains, underscores its enduring dedication to principles of collective defence, shared values, and adaptability. The NATO 2022 Strategic Concept provides a comprehensive roadmap for securing the success of the Alliance. Its updated strategy reflects a keen awareness that the security of its member states is contingent not only on addressing Russia's threat to Europe but also, increasingly, on

navigating the complex challenges posed by China's ascension, particularly in areas such as emerging technologies and climate change. As NATO continues to adapt and strengthen its posture in response to contemporary security dynamics, it remains a cornerstone of stability and security in an ever-evolving global landscape.

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30 Interview mit Generalsekretär Jens Stoltenberg: "Ich bin für eine globalere Nato", RND, 13.07.2020, <https://www.rnd.de/politik/nato-generalsekretar-jens-stoltenberg-im-interview-ich-bin-fur-eine-globalere-nato-JQ4PZWC6XZFFQ7KCTSFK5HZHESE.html>

31 Relations with partners in the Indo-Pacific region, NATO official website, updated 17.08.2023, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_183254.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_183254.htm)

32 Partnership Interoperability Initiative (updated 25.04.2023), NATO official website, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_132726.htm#:~:text=The%20Enhanced%20opportunities%20Partners%20currently,%2C%20Jordan%2C%20Sweden%20and%20Ukraine](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_132726.htm#:~:text=The%20Enhanced%20opportunities%20Partners%20currently,%2C%20Jordan%2C%20Sweden%20and%20Ukraine)

# THE VILNIUS SUMMIT: A PLATFORM FOR FEMALE LEADERSHIP AND FLEXIBILITY IN EUROPE'S SECURITY INFRASTRUCTURE

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*This paper examines the strategic evolution of Europe's security framework in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian War and the concluded Vilnius Summit — a critical juncture, with the possibility of selecting a new Secretary General. Among the nominees was Kaja Kallas, Estonia's Prime Minister, whose innovative vision advocated a departure from traditional models. Kallas promoted a more inclusive and flexible NATO membership structure, more active and robust support for Ukraine against Russian aggression, increased roles for women in security architecture and policymaking, and the utilisation of public diplomacy and strategic communication in novel ways. The summit culminated in the reappointment of the well-respected Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, deferring the transformative opportunity represented by Kallas's candidacy for the future. Kallas's bold yet strategic approach effectively rallied support, justifying the paper's focus on her. This reappointment underscores a missed-for-now chance to evolve Europe's security architecture, leaving Kallas as a promising future prospect. The paper employs a mixed-methods case study on Kallas's approach, recognising the Summit as both a reflection of continuity, and a beacon for potential future transformation.*

## Introduction

Since its founding, NATO has proven a stalwart force upholding international security. However, today's landscape reveals a new set of complex strategic challenges. The emergence of disruptive hybrid warfare and grey zone aggressions signal concerning shifts. While NATO's long-time principles remain relevant, these opaque dangers demand policy evolution. The alliance now faces vexing threats shrouded in uncertainty. Still, NATO possesses the insight and resolve to adapt its frameworks to meet challenges. By carefully understanding the technological forces reshaping conflict, NATO can

confidently confront the future. Renewed strategies are needed to meet testing new realities. With cohesion and vision, NATO can craft an innovative path that is true to its enduring purpose.

The Russo-Ukrainian War exemplifies these challenges, and underscores the urgency for a responsive NATO framework. The Vilnius Summit in July 2023 presented an opportune moment to address these pressing matters, with a specific focus on Ukraine's security needs. Among the nominees for Secretary General was Kaja Kallas, Estonia's Prime Minister, who possesses a historical, geopolitical, and



empathetic understanding of the war. A savvy digital operator, Kallas recognises the need for informational sovereignty, and has actively advocated for a more inclusive and flexible NATO structure to support Ukraine against Russian aggression. Although the summit culminated in the reappointment of the respected Jens Stoltenberg, deferring transformative changes, Kallas's candidacy symbolised a missed-for-now opportunity for NATO's evolution. This paper explores the two most urgent issues highlighted at the summit, positioning Kallas's insights and vision as a reflection of continuity within NATO's framework, and as a beacon for potential future transformation in support of Ukraine<sup>1</sup>.

NATO must undergo organisational reframing and adaptation to effectively address the new security challenges of the rapidly changing global landscape. The Vilnius Summit provided a crucial opportunity to tackle two critical areas<sup>2</sup>. Firstly, there was a pressing need for a specific and time-bound pathway to NATO membership for Ukraine. As Ukraine grapples with an ongoing Russian aggression, NATO membership can offer the much-needed protection and stability it seeks. Secondly, the selection of a new Secretary General is paramount<sup>3</sup>. The

chosen candidate should possess a deep understanding of the Russian threat and the complexities of ambiguous postures that have contributed to the current war. By addressing these areas, NATO can ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness in promoting security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region.<sup>4</sup>

Lastly, the paper advocates for a leadership transition within NATO, emphasising the importance of selecting a candidate who embodies qualities essential for navigating the challenges ahead. This includes a nuanced understanding of Russian intentions, expertise in managing hybrid warfare, and proficiency in risk communication. Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas exemplifies these qualities and has been presented as a suitable candidate for the leadership role. By appointing a leader with such attributes, NATO can strengthen its ability to address emerging security threats, and effectively communicate its objectives and strategies<sup>5</sup>. The paper thus presents Kallas as a suitable candidate to succeed Jens Stoltenberg, the current Secretary General of NATO<sup>6</sup>. Kallas, along with Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and EU President Ursula von der Leyen, has consistently articulated the need for increased support for Ukraine throughout the Russo-Ukrainian

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1 NATO, NATO Heads of State and Government to meet in Vilnius on 11-12 July 2023, 16.06.2022, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_208802.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_208802.htm)

2 NATO, NATO Secretary General announces dates for 2023 Vilnius Summit, 9.11.2022, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_208802.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_208802.htm)

3 Barry, C., & Skaluba, C., Defining success for NATO's Vilnius summit: A primer. Atlantic Council, 11.04.2023, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/defining-success-for-natos-vilnius-summit-a-primer/>

4 France 24. Estonia PM Kaja Kallas: 'At the end of the war in Ukraine, the only guarantee for peace is NATO', 18.05.2023, [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/05/18/estonia-pm-kaja-kallas-at-the-end-of-the-war-in-ukraine-the-only-guarantee-for-peace-is-nato\\_6027124\\_4.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/05/18/estonia-pm-kaja-kallas-at-the-end-of-the-war-in-ukraine-the-only-guarantee-for-peace-is-nato_6027124_4.html)

5 Guardian. Kaja Kallas: Russia is a threat to us all, NATO must be ready for war, 01.03.2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/01/kaja-kallas-russia-is-a-threat-to-us-all-nato-must-be-ready-for-war>

6 Kauffmann, S., & Jacqué, P. P., Estonia PM Kaja Kallas: 'At the end of the war in Ukraine, the only guarantee for peace is NATO'. Le Monde, 18.05.2023, [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/05/18/estonia-pm-kaja-kallas-at-the-end-of-the-war-in-ukraine-the-only-guarantee-for-peace-is-nato\\_6027124\\_4.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/05/18/estonia-pm-kaja-kallas-at-the-end-of-the-war-in-ukraine-the-only-guarantee-for-peace-is-nato_6027124_4.html)

war. Estonia, under Kallas's leadership, is setting a striking example for the alliance, by providing more military aid relative to its GDP than other nations<sup>7</sup>.



***the paper advocates for a leadership transition within NATO, emphasising the importance of selecting a candidate who embodies qualities essential for navigating the challenges ahead. This includes a nuanced understanding of Russian intentions, expertise in managing hybrid warfare, and proficiency in risk communication***

During a joint appearance in Estonia, in February 2023, Stoltenberg, von der Leyen, and Kallas expressed a unified stance on the objectives and strategy for the European Union and NATO partnership<sup>8</sup>. They also recognised the significant contributions made by Estonia, highlighting its role in the alliance. Stoltenberg further emphasised that, although concerns about potential escalation associated with supporting Ukraine might exist, it is essential to acknowledge that there were no risk-free options in this intricate situation. Stoltenberg underscored the fact that the greatest risk was if President Putin prevailed,

as this would present a more substantial threat to global stability and increase the vulnerability of the alliance. This is precisely why the NATO allies are banding together to provide extraordinary assistance to Ukraine, as it strengthens our common security and ability to counter possible threats<sup>9</sup>.

The Russian war in Ukraine has underscored the need to reassess NATO's current policies and consider more flexible approaches to alliance membership<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, there is a growing recognition of the unique contributions of female leaders, like those of Estonia's Prime Minister, who can bring to the table fresh perspectives and innovative approaches.

## **A Dynamic Approach to NATO Membership and Leadership**

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a cornerstone of security and stability for Europe and North America. As the global security environment is constantly transformed, NATO acknowledges the necessity to adapt its policies and practices accordingly<sup>11</sup>. A central element of NATO's overarching approach involves promoting its expansion, and facilitating the inclusion of new member states, emphasising the organisation's commitment to collaboration and growth<sup>12</sup>. Contemporary academic discourse and policy conversations have emphasised the need for a more versatile

7 Stoltenberg, J., This is NATO's role in defending Ukraine from repeated Russian attacks, Washington Post, 17.05.2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/05/17/ukraine-nato-membership-russia-attacks/>

8 Stoltenberg, J., Kallas, K., & von der Leyen, U., Joint press conference. NATO Official website, 24.02.2023, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_212277.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_212277.htm)

9 Kononenko, V., Novikova, L., & Pushchaienko, O., Joining NATO as a guarantee of Ukraine's national security. Current situation and prospects. Uzhhorod National University Herald. Series: Law, 2022

10 Kononenko, V., Novikova, L., & Pushchaienko, O., Joining NATO as a guarantee of Ukraine's national security. Current situation and prospects. Uzhhorod National University Herald. Series: Law, 2022

11 Poast, P., Measuring War Planning and Negotiation Outcomes. In *Arguing about Alliances: The Art of Agreement in Military-Pact Negotiations* (pp. 45–63). Cornell University Press, 2019, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctvfc52c5.7>

12 Dinicu, A., NATO's Nordic Expansion, A Decision at Stake. Consequences Upon the European Security Landscape. International Conference Knowledge Based Organization. Volume 28 (2022) – Issue 1 (June 2022). pp. 21 – 28. <https://doi.org/10.2478/kbo-2022-0004>



NATO membership framework, to respond effectively to changing security dynamics.<sup>13</sup> The open-door policy functions as a mechanism to evaluate potential new members and broaden the alliance's scope, which is essential for achieving the desired adaptability<sup>14</sup>. By welcoming new members, NATO can bolster its collective defence capabilities, and contribute to upholding peace and security in Europe<sup>15</sup>.

The strategy of expanding NATO and welcoming new member states has been seen as vital for adapting to evolving security dynamics and fortifying the alliance's collective defence. However, some argue that these moves have exacerbated tensions and irritated Russia<sup>16</sup>. Critics contend that by steadily increasing its membership and "intruding on Russia's traditional sphere of influence", NATO has heightened tensions, and fuelled the perceptions of a Western threat<sup>17</sup>.

While NATO portrays its open-door policy as promoting stability and strengthening collective defence, some contend it

has contributed to a more adversarial relationship with Russia<sup>18</sup>. They argue that the alliance's development has produced a sense of encirclement and uncertainty for Russia, prompting it to adopt a more assertive and defensive stance<sup>19</sup>. Additionally, critics believe that NATO's expansion has strained relations with Russia, and hampered constructive conversation and cooperation prospects<sup>20</sup>. Instead of expanding its membership, they argue that NATO should have focused on establishing a more inclusive and cooperative security architecture in Europe that includes Russia as a partner rather than as an opponent<sup>21</sup>.

Moreover, the acknowledgment of women in senior leadership roles within NATO is growing in importance, due to their contributions to decision-making processes, incorporating diverse experiences, expertise, and viewpoints. Both scholars and practitioners recognise that the strategic development of Europe's security infrastructure can be enriched by amplifying female leadership within NATO's organisational framework<sup>22</sup>.

13 Barry, C., & Skaluba, C. Defining success for NATO's Vilnius summit: A primer. Atlantic Council, 11.04.2023, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/defining-success-for-natos-vilnius-summit-a-primer/>

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15 Wintour, P. NATO members may send troops to Ukraine, warns former alliance chief. *The Guardian*, 7.06.2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/07/nato-members-may-send-troops-to-ukraine-warns-former-alliance-chief>

16 Koronacki, J. (n.d.). NATO Expansion. *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism*. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29901-9\\_300681](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29901-9_300681)

17 Brodfuehrer, J., & Sergejeva, Z. How NATO can take a 360-degree approach to the Vilnius summit. Atlantic Council. *The Atlantic Council*, 17.05.2023, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/commentary/event-recap/how-nato-can-take-a-360-degree-a>

18 Poast, P., & Chinchilla, A. Good for democracy? Evidence from the 2004 NATO expansion. *Int Polit* 57, 471–490 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-020-00236-6>

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20 Gautam, A. Russia's evolving military strategy in response to NATO expansion: Continuity and changes. *International Journal of Political Science and Governance*, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.33545/26646021.2022.v4.i2a.170>

21 Megoran, N., "Russian Troops Out! No to NATO expansion!" A pacific geopolitics for a new Europe. *Political Geography*, 2022, 102699–102699, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2022.102699>

22 Driving diversity at NATO, Official NATO website, 7.03.2019, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2019/03/07/driving-diversity-at-nato/index.html>


It is important to first acknowledge the exceptional credentials of several notable women under consideration for leadership roles in NATO. The distinguished list includes Kaja Kallas, Prime Minister of Estonia; Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission; Zuzana Caputova, President of Slovakia; and Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, former president of Croatia (2015-2020), who has served as Croatia's ambassador to Washington and worked within NATO as assistant secretary general for public diplomacy. Also worth acknowledging are Mette Fredericksen of Denmark and Ingrida Simonyte of Lithuania. These women have demonstrated their capabilities as influential change-makers in Europe's security landscape.

Their leadership roles have been pivotal in shaping the NATO membership structure, with each woman proving to be a trailblazer. A case in point is the transformative effect on NATO's collective security and the Vilnius Summit of Kaja Kallas's approach to public diplomacy, alongside von der Leyen's significant influence within the European Union's foreign policy. This analysis highlights the potential for a strategic evolution in Europe's security architecture, underscoring the significance of their leadership within the current geopolitical climate.

Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas has emerged as a singular voice in the discourse concerning Ukraine's potential accession to NATO, emphasising the need for a flexible and inclusive membership framework. Her geopolitical insights and understanding of the Russo-Ukrainian War, and her innovative approach to public diplomacy and digital security have established her as the sole subject of investigation for a short case study. The NATO summit in Vilnius presented a vital juncture for advancing these critical discussions, including Ukraine's possible NATO membership, and the exploration of transformative leadership figures such as Kallas.

These discussions in Vilnius emphasise NATO's commitment to inclusivity and flexibility in membership considerations, reinforcing the alliance's pledge to assess prospective entrants and broaden its influence in a swiftly evolving security environment. Kallas's advocacy for maintaining robust deterrence and collective defence within NATO has been conspicuous. Her leadership is demonstrated in diverse public diplomacy strategies, ranging from fortifying the physical infrastructure to fostering resilience in the digital realm.

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***the acknowledgment of women  
in senior leadership roles  
within NATO is growing in  
importance, due to their contributions  
to decision-making processes,  
incorporating diverse experiences,  
expertise, and viewpoints***

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Her leadership in promoting digital innovation has notably positioned Estonia as a frontrunner in this field, reflecting a broader understanding of the new dynamics of strategic competition. Kallas's participation in the joint press conference with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on February 24, 2023, further illuminated her central role in shaping the dialogue around Ukraine's potential NATO membership. This engagement with key NATO leaders, alongside her steadfast support for Ukraine, reflects a broader vision for an adaptable and resilient NATO, capable of meeting contemporary challenges.

While Kallas's role is undeniable, this article focuses on her more assertive, potentially hawkish approach to security issues. It seeks to draw attention to the potential risks

of such an aggressive stance, which could instigate unnecessary confrontations and even destabilize the region.

This investigation, supported by a linguistic analysis of Kallas's rhetoric, strives to validate or contest claims of her employing extreme rhetoric<sup>23</sup>. Grasping these dynamics is critical for ensuring NATO's sustained relevance and efficacy in navigating modern security challenges. This analysis highlights a critique often directed at Kallas – her possibly hawkish approach to international relations. By focusing on Kallas, this piece invites an exploration of her decisive and sometimes contentious leadership style. It sparks debate on whether this perceived hawkishness serves NATO's objectives and regional stability<sup>24</sup>.

The emphasis on Kallas as a case study, in contrast to the other leaders, is mainly due to her pronounced defence and security stance. This stance contrasts starkly with the more balanced and diplomatic approaches of her counterparts. Moreover, as the Prime Minister of Estonia, a Baltic state on NATO's Eastern frontier, Kallas's policies and rhetoric carry substantial weight.

This article tackles these issues by surveying the historical context, relevance, and implications of a more flexible NATO membership structure, and the rise of women to leadership positions within the alliance. By scrutinising the interplay between the open-door policy, the Vilnius Summit, and

Kaja Kallas's approach to public diplomacy, this study aims to spotlight the potential for strategically reshaping Europe's security architecture. Understanding these dynamics is indispensable to effectively guaranteeing NATO's sustained effectiveness and relevance in addressing today's security challenges.

## **Kallas and Female Leadership at NATO**

The discourse analysis of the Estonian Prime Minister's public diplomacy reveals her direct and powerful communication style and skill in leveraging language to garner support for her positions<sup>25</sup>. In an opinion piece published in *The New York Times*, Kallas argues that NATO's focus should be on helping Ukraine in every possible way and demonstrating to the aggressor that NATO is prepared to defend itself and engage in conflict if necessary<sup>26</sup>. She emphasises the imperative to strengthen the collective defence, particularly on the alliance's eastern flank that borders Russia. Kallas suggests that all NATO countries should allocate a minimum of 2% of their GDP to defence spending, ensuring collective safety.

In her address to the Estonian parliament in March 2022, Kallas further reinforces her stance: "We Estonians are acutely aware of what it means to live under the shadow of Russian aggression. This threat has been a part of our lives for centuries. We're all in on the fact that Russia will not think twice about using force to achieve its objectives.

23 Hall, B., Calls for ceasefire in Ukraine are 'premature', Estonia's PM warns, *Financial Times*, 6.06.2022, <https://www.ft.com/content/8296294b-6684-4e32-a467-ba4e4ba11b36>

Sytas, A., Estonia PM focused on defence spending and same sex marriage law. *Reuters*. 12.04.2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/estonia-pm-focused-defence-spending-same-sex-marriage-law-2023-04-12/>

24 VOA News. NATO Chief Stoltenberg Departure Plan Relaunches Succession Race. *VOA News*. 13.02.2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/nato-chief-stoltenberg-departure-plan-relaunches-succession-race/6959854.html>

25 Brittain-Hale, A., *She Speaks for Millions: The Emergence of Female Diplomatic Voices in the Russo-Ukrainian War*. Paper presented at the 21st Annual International Conference on Politics & International Studies organized by the Politics & International Affairs Unit of ATINER, Athens, Greece. 2023

26 *The New York Times*, NATO's Next Leader: Who's on the Shortlist? 14.06.2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/14/world/europe/nato-leader-shortlist.html>

That's precisely why we're all in on NATO membership. NATO is our guarantee of security. It's our insurance against the menace of Russian belligerence".

Kallas's discourse integrates historical references to underscore the importance of NATO membership to Estonia's security, aligning with her call to strengthen collective defence and support Ukraine. Her direct and powerful communication style, policy proposals for defence spending, and focus on assisting Ukraine make her a notable advocate for NATO's strategic evolution. Within this context, the paper's exploration and analysis are centred around Kallas, through a mixed-methods case study that emphasises the pivotal role she could play in integrating a more adaptable NATO membership framework and elevating the role of female leadership within the alliance. The findings of this study could offer valuable insights for policymakers and strategists who attended the Vilnius Summit, contributing to the broader discourse on the future of Europe's security infrastructure.

The research methodology employed in this study was a mixed-methods case study approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The initial research stage involved data collection from Kallas's Twitter account, @kajakallas (n.d.). This was achieved using Tweepy (n.d), a Python<sup>27</sup> library for accessing the Twitter API (Twitter Developer, n.d), and the developer tools provided by Twitter. This approach allowed for the comprehensive mining of tweets for further analysis.

Subsequently, a qualitative contents analysis was conducted, manually reading and coding Kallas's tweets. The coding focused on identifying tweets that emphasised Ukraine and NATO, providing insights into the themes central to Kallas's public diplomacy.

Following the qualitative analysis, the study proceeded with a quantitative evaluation of Kallas's Twitter contents. This phase was carried out using LIWC-22, a natural language processing tool designed to measure the emotional and cognitive tone of the text<sup>28</sup>.

This section compares the LIWC summary variables scores<sup>29</sup> for Kaja Kallas's tweets to average tweets<sup>30</sup>. The analysis reveals notable differences across several categories, providing valuable insights into the linguistic characteristics of Kallas's public discourse. By examining the scores in analytical thinking, clout, authenticity, and emotional tone, we enable understanding of Kallas's communication style and its potential implications for effectively conveying her positions and engaging with her audience. The results show that Kallas's tweets exhibited a significantly higher score in analytical thinking than average tweets, indicating a substantial increase in her use of logical reasoning and critical thinking in her public discourse<sup>31</sup>. Furthermore, Kallas's tweets scored higher in clout, suggesting a language style that conveys influence and power. These findings point to a tendency towards more analytical and influential language in Kallas's tweets, aligning with her strategic approach to communication.

27 Python. (n.d.). *Welcome to python.org*. <https://www.python.org/>

28 Pennebaker, J.L., Boyd, R.J., Ashokkumar, A., & Francis, M.E. (n.d.). *Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count LIWC22*. Pennebaker and Associates. <https://www.liwc.app>

29 Boyd, R. L., Ashokkumar, A., Seraj, S., & Pennebaker, J. W. *LIWC-22 descriptive statistics and norms, 2022*, <https://www.liwc.app>

30 Kallas, K. [@kajakallas]. (n.d.). Twitter. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/kajakallas>

31 Boyd, R. L., Pasca, P., & Lanning, K., The personality panorama: Conceptualizing personality through big behavioral data. *European Journal of Personality*, 34(5), 2020, 599–612. <https://doi.org/10.1002/per.2254>

On the other hand, the analysis reveals lower authenticity and emotional tone scores for Kallas's tweets compared to average tweets. This indicates a different style in terms of perceived genuineness and emotional expression. Kallas's tweets demonstrate a more controlled and measured approach, focusing on delivering strategic messages rather than emotional appeals.

The analysis of LIWC summary variables scores for Kaja Kallas's tweets compared to average tweets reveals significant differences across several categories:

- Analytical Thinking: Kallas's tweets ( $M = 83.46, SD = 19.87$ ) showed a marked increase in analytical thinking compared to the average tweets ( $M = 42.86, SD = 27.28$ ), representing a 94.64% increase.
- Clout: Kallas's tweets exhibited a 63.45% increase in clout ( $M = 80.26, SD = 12.33$ ) compared to average tweets ( $M = 49.10, SD = 28.36$ ).
- Authenticity: Kallas's tweets were found to have a decrease of 32.04% in authenticity ( $M = 35.55, SD = 12.81$ ) compared to average tweets ( $M = 52.33, SD = 25.58$ ).
- Emotional Tone: Emotional tone in Kallas's tweets ( $M = 31.68, SD = 21.64$ ) exhibited a decrease of 46.37% compared to average tweets ( $M = 68.00, SD = 26.36$ ).


These findings contribute to our understanding of the linguistic features of Kallas's public discourse, and shed light on her potential role within NATO leadership. Further discussion will elaborate on the implications of these findings for Kallas's public diplomacy strategies, and their alignment with the Vilnius Summit goals.

## Discussion

The research findings comparing the linguistic characteristics of Kaja Kallas's public diplomacy to average discourse offer valuable insights that could be important

for her potential NATO leadership role. The higher scores in analytical thinking indicate a tendency towards more thoughtful and analytical language in Kallas's public diplomacy. This suggests that she approaches her communication strategically, employing logical reasoning and critical thinking to convey her messages effectively. This characteristic can be crucial for NATO leadership, as it requires individuals to assess complex security challenges, make informed decisions, and communicate them persuasively.

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***While the contributions of major powers like the U.S. and Germany are essential, the Vilnius Summit provides an opportunity to explore how leaders from smaller member states can also shape the alliance's direction***

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Similarly, the higher scores in clout suggest that Kallas's public diplomacy conveys a sense of influence and power. This implies that she uses language that commands attention and portrays a strong presence. In a leadership position within NATO, having the ability to project influence and assertiveness is essential for advancing the alliance's goals, promoting unity, and effectively engaging with external actors.

On the other hand, the lower scores in authenticity and emotional tone indicate that Kallas's public diplomacy may come across as less genuine and less emotionally expressive compared to average discourse. This finding suggests that she prioritises a more controlled and measured approach to her communication, focusing on delivering strategic messages rather than emotional appeals. While authenticity and emotional expression can be important for establishing trust and rapport with the public, Kallas's

style may reflect a deliberate effort to maintain a professional and objective tone in her official communications.

These findings broaden our understanding of the dynamics within NATO and Europe's security infrastructure, particularly in a landscape where U.S. and German leadership have played outsized roles. The selection of Kallas as the subject of this case study is not arbitrary; rather, it serves as a poignant exemplification of an emerging style of European leader whose foreign policy and diplomacy are historically informed, geographically nuanced, and digitally innovative.

Estonia's unique geopolitical position, coupled with its advanced digital infrastructure, provides Kallas with perspectives that are both deeply rooted in the Baltic region's history, and sharply attuned to the demands of contemporary international relations. Her leadership exhibits a synthesis of traditional diplomacy and modern digital governance, rendering her a compelling figure in the broader discussion of NATO's evolving structure.

Furthermore, the emphasis on Kallas serves to highlight the multifaceted nature of leadership within a complex alliance such as NATO. While the contributions of major powers like the U.S. and Germany are essential, the Vilnius Summit provides an opportunity to explore how leaders from smaller member states can also shape the alliance's direction. This perspective is critical for a more adaptable NATO membership framework, and for elevating the role of female leadership within the alliance.

The analysis of Kallas's public diplomacy, set against this rich backdrop, provides insights into her linguistic characteristics and communication style — key components of leadership. By understanding these characteristics, policymakers and strategists

can assess how Kallas's communication style sits alongside their goals and priorities for NATO's strategic evolution, while also recognising the importance of diverse and nuanced approaches in shaping Europe's security architecture.



***The unrelenting aggression from Russia and the critical need to support Ukraine unequivocally underscore the vital necessity for resolute leadership within multinational security organisations like NATO***

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Building on the broader context of Kallas's historical, geographical, and digital influences, we can further delineate the specific attributes of her communication style that align with the goals at the Vilnius Summit. The analytical data reveals that Kallas's higher scores in analytical thinking and clout reflect a communication style that emphasises informed decision-making, strategic planning, and the effective representation of NATO's interests. These qualities coincide with NATO's drive for a more responsive and adaptable structure, embodying a leadership style that can navigate both traditional diplomatic channels and emerging challenges.

Conversely, the lower scores in authenticity and emotional tone may not necessarily be limitations but rather indicators of a communication approach focused on professionalism and objectivity. This can be seen as conducive to enhancing diplomatic interactions, fostering constructive dialogue, and furthering the goals of alliance cohesion and collaborative action. Kallas's ability to merge the robustness of analytical thought with the finesse of diplomatic objectivity underlines her suitability as a leader

and highlights the importance of diverse leadership styles within NATO's complex, multi-national framework.

In summary, these findings shed light on the linguistic characteristics of Kallas's public diplomacy, highlighting her strengths in analytical thinking and clout while pointing to a different style regarding authenticity and emotional tone. Understanding these characteristics can be valuable for the NATO leaders, as they consider the role of female leadership and the strategic evolution of the alliance, particularly at the Vilnius Summit, where discussions about NATO's membership framework and the appointment of leaders like Kallas were likely to occur.

## Conclusion

The unrelenting aggression from Russia and the critical need to support Ukraine unequivocally underscore the vital necessity for resolute leadership within multinational security organisations like NATO. Prime Minister Kaja Kallas's visionary diplomacy and steadfast commitment to progressive foreign policy initiatives reveal a leader well-equipped to navigate these complex challenges. Her focus on analytical thinking, technological innovation, and digital

infrastructure security resonates with the demands of modern security management. Kallas's leadership not only exemplifies the significance of embracing female leaders' unique contributions, but also illuminates a path for NATO to follow to fortify its strategies and effectiveness in a rapidly changing global landscape. By integrating diverse perspectives and fostering innovative approaches, NATO can further solidify its pivotal role in upholding security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region, and present an unyielding and assertive stance in support of Ukraine

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Issue 2 (31), 2023

ISSN 2518-7481