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## **UKRAINIAN COURSE FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP**

**Introduction.** One of the main priorities of Ukrainian foreign policy today is to deepen cooperation with NATO in order to fulfil the criteria required for membership in this organization. The issue of a possible full membership of Ukraine in NATO is widely discussed. Some experts believe that this prospect is "very vague", but most of them still agree about the urgent need for Ukraine's accession to NATO and consider this opportunity. After achieving NATO membership, Ukraine will receive access to political decisions that do affect a wide range of European processes, and defence within NATO will be much cheaper than our own full defence.

**The objective of the paper** is to study the existing relations between Ukraine and NATO and outline the prospects of Ukraine's accession to the alliance.

Ukraine started its relations with NATO in 1992 by joining the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), which was NATO's initiative for all non-NATO European countries and in 1994 Ukraine joined the "Partnership for Peace" [6]. After Ukraine's Orange Revolution, the hopes of the new Ukrainian political leadership to obtain membership in NATO moved closer to reality. On April 20, 2005, NATO Secretary General Jaap De Hoop Scheffer stated in an interview to the Financial Times that "membership standards can be much more easily fulfilled by the V. Yushchenko's government than by the former L. Kuchma's government." [5].

After the presidency of V. Yanukovych, Ukraine has adhered a non-aligned policy of neutrality during several years. However, after the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and the beginning of the aggression in Donbas region, Kyiv began to insist on deepening cooperation with Western European countries and the US. Ukraine made a decision to renounce the neutral status, established by the previous authorities.

11-23 December 2015 in all Ukrainian regions except Crimea and the occupied territories of Donetsk and Lugansk regions, a sociological research was conducted, concerning the possible entry of Ukraine into NATO. The results showed that the relative majority – 44% in the case of Ukrainian referendum would vote for Ukrainian membership in NATO, against – 26%. The idea of membership has gained support of majority of citizens and those who would take part in an imaginary referendum for the first time since Ukrainian independence.

**Conclusion.** NATO membership currently remains Ukraine’s strategic goal, and the current Parliament fully supports this initiative. However, unfortunately, NATO membership, like EU, not only depends on the desire of the Ukrainian people and authorities. NATO membership of Ukraine requires at least the completion of the reform program. And the situation in our country, in which Ukrainian armed forces continue to lead a real war, the Ukrainian government does not have full control of its territory, Russia annexed the Crimea and pro-Russian militants continue Eastern Ukraine occupation, can seriously hamper the signing of agreement.

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