NATO-UKRAINE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS: THEORY AND PRACTICE

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The article deal with the research of Strategic Communications of NATO as one of the main directions of the Alliance's policy. The author considers various approaches to the interpretation of the essence, content, and tools of Strategic Communications. At the same time, he focuses attention on the teleological and axiological aspects of the communication process and, on this basis, offers his own definition of the concept of "NATO Strategic Communications". Based on the definite theoretical foundation, the author analyses the practice of NATO Strategic Communications in the Ukrainian case. The development of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications is divided into two stages. The first stage (1991-2013) is characterized as the gradual implementation of the so-called Master Plan. This general plan of communications aimed to stimulate political reforms in Ukraine in accordance with the democratic values of the Alliance and to contribute to the restructuring of the Ukrainian military system bringing it closer to NATO standards. The main institutions and tools of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communication are gradually being formed at this stage. The second stage (2014-present) is defined as the stage of crisis Strategic Communications. This stage began after the annexation of Crimea during Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine initially, and it reaches the highest phase beginning from February 24, 2022 – after a full-scale brutal Russian aggression. During this phase, both internal and external NATO Strategic Communications aim to provide comprehensive support to Ukraine and organize fruitful interaction to ensure its victory. At this stage, all existing and newly created institutions and tools are used with maximum effort. But the key problem of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications still lies in the parties' different understanding of the purpose of this communications. For Ukraine, it means joining Alliance as a full-rights member, and for NATO – keeping Ukraine close to the Alliance as a reliable partner. The further perspective of NATO-Ukraine Strategic

Communications requires solving this problem and providing Ukraine with clear guarantees of membership in the Alliance after its victory and the settlement of peace.

Keywords: *communication, interaction, democratic values, Ukraine, NATO, Russian aggression, security, defense.*

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Стаття присвячена дослідженню Стратегічних Комунікацій НАТО як одного з головних напрямків політики Альянсу. Автор розглядає різні підходи до тлумачення сутності, вмісту та інструментарію Стратегічних Коммінікацій. При цьому він фокусує увагу на телеологічних та аксіологічних аспектах комунікативного процесу та на цій основі пропонує власне визначення поняття «Стратегічні Комунікації НАТО». Спираючись на означений теоретичний фундамент, автор аналізує практику Стратегічних Комунікацій НАТО на прикладі українського кейсу. Розвиток Стратегічних Комунікацій НАТО-Україна поділяється на два етапи. Перший етап (1991-2013 рр.) характеризується як поступова реалізація так званого Мастер-плану, який мав на меті стимулювати політичні реформи в Україні у відповідності до демократичних цінностей Альянсу та сприяти перебудові української воєнної системи та наближення її до стандартів НАТО. Головні інститути та інструменти Стратегічної комунікації НАТО-Україна поступово формуються на цьому етапі. Другий етап (2014-теперишній час) визначається як етап кризових Стратегічних Коммунікацій. Цей етап розпочався після анексії Криму під час спочатку гібридної війни Росії проти України, та набуває вищої стадії з 24 лютого 2022 року – після повномасштабної брудної російської агресії. Під час цього етапу як внутрішні, так і зовнішні Стратегічні Комунікації НАТО мають на меті надання всебічної підтримки Україні та організацію плідної співпраці для забезпечення її перемоги. На цьому етапі всі існуючі і новостворені інститути та інструменти використовуються з максимальною напругою.

Але ключова проблема Стратегічних Коммунікацій НАТО-Україна і досі полягає у різному розумінні сторонами мети цієї комунікації. Для України вона означає бути в Альянсі як повноправний член, а для НАТО – тримати Україну біля Альянсу як надійного партнера. Подальша перспектива Стратегічних Коммунікацій НАТО-Україна вимагає розв'язання цієї проблеми та надання Україні чітких гарантій членства у Альянсі після її перемоги та встановлення миру.

Ключові слова: *комунікація, взаємодія, демократичні цінності, Україна, НАТО, російська агресія, безпека, оборона.*

Introduction. The dramatic course of modern political events, which took on a tragic character after the full-scale despicable Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the reaction to it by political actors and the population of various countries have sharpened the question of the informational influence role in politics. Although the issue of forming a new type of political power, namely communication power, has been on the agenda of modern political theory since the end of the 20th century. Generally, communication is a defining characteristic of modern politics. In the view of Karl W. Deutsch, the political system is nothing but a communication network, a communication system with processes and mechanisms for the acquisition, collection and transmission, selection and storage of information, developed over a period of time [6].

Therefore, in order to research the activities of political actors, it is necessary to study the peculiarities of their political communication. And when the research concerns the activities of such powerful global actors as NATO, then it is necessary to talk about strategic communication. But despite the importance of this issue, there is still no common understanding of the content and functions of strategic communications, neither among political practitioners nor in academic circles.

Strategic communications remains an area of practice short on conceptual foundations, often borrowing intuitively from the fields of international relations, strategic theory, communications studies, and latterly the psychology of behavioural change. Hence 'what is

strategic communications?' remains a contested question, not only because its context continues to change but so too does the focus of its attention [3, P. 9-10, 12]. As shown by the events from Afghanistan 2001 to Ukraine 2014, which are described in detail by Mark Laity in the article *The Birth and Coming of Age of NATO Stratcom: a Personal History*, this issue has more than theoretical significance [15]. Because Strategic Communications' goals and methods depend on understanding of their essence.

The study of the theoretical and practical aspects of NATO's Strategic Communications became especially relevant after the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. Since then, they have undergone drastic changes. But the fact that NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications have been performing their external function for a long time, despite Ukraine's aspiration to transform them into internal ones by acquiring full membership in the Alliance, remains the main problem of NATO-Ukraine interaction. Therefore, the presented research has to help Ukraine to solve this issue.

The research aims to reveal the problems and show the prospects of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications based on the definition of their value essence and purpose, as well as the practices of using their tools in historical retrospect.

Methods. To achieve this goal, the following research methods were applied:

- analysis of communication theory basic provisions was applied to create own definition of NATO Strategic Communication;

- cross-temporal comparative analysis was used to show the dynamics and problems of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications development in the prewar and wartime periods.

- content analysis was used to study the content of official documents, statements, and speeches of public figures and scientific publications;

- the analysis of statistical data was used to reveal the state and dynamics of changes in Ukrainian society's attitude to issues related to joining NATO.

NATO's Strategic Communications: theoretical background

The term'strategic communication' entered political usage in the late 1990s. For the first time, it was publicly announced in 1997, when the UN Report called *Global Vision, Local Voice: A Strategic Communications Programme for the United Nations* was published in the framework of a Task Force on the Reorientation of United Nations Public Information Activities. This document proclaimed: "The communication function should be placed in the heart of strategic management of Organization, its image-indeed its long-term survival-depends upon effectively communicating its message its activities to an increasing cost-resisting world" [29]. In this mean, it gives a general idea of the content of the term 'strategic communication'. The International Strategic Communications Summit, which took place on December 2-3 2022 in Istanbul, offered an innovative and resilient platform for discussion and negotiation in the context of policy development, coordination, and governance for major crises faced by states and citizens in the age of post-truth and uncertainty [11].

However, it is clear that in this case the appearance of the term does not coincide with the appearance of the phenomenon itself. Strategic communications as such have existed in political practice since ancient times. The outstanding Chinese military leader Sun Tzu wrote about the importance of informational influence for achieving military and political superiority as early as the 6th century. B.C. Also Napoleon is often quoted as saying, "Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets". However, understanding the importance of strategic communications does not mean understanding what strategic communications are, what areas of activity they cover and tools they involve and how they should work. And after strategic communications acquired a certain institutionalization in international organizations and state structures from the beginning of the 21st century, the differentiation in approaches to their interpretation only increased. The various interpretations given in official documents and used in political discourses are shared into two approaches: instrumentalist and value.

James Farwell, and Christopher Paul are the representatives of the first approach in theoretical sphere despite some differences. Farwell define strategic communications as "the use of words, actions, images, or symbols to influence the attitudes and opinions of target audiences to shape their behavior in order to advance interests or policies, or to achieve objectives" (7, pp. xvii–xix). And Cristofer Paul points to the similarity of strategic communications and public diplomacy concepts. But he has argued elsewhere for broad conceptions of communication (to include the message content of policies and actions) and for the coordination of communications of all kinds with other activities in the pursuit of strategic or operational goals [26, p. 2].

However, in this sense strategic communications essentially differ little from classical propaganda or political manipulation. After all, Harold D. Lasswell gave the definition: "Propaganda is the management of collective attitudes. The word attitude is taken mean to a tendency to act according to certain patters of valuation" [17, p. 627]. In turn, Robert Noggle defines "Manipulation is a means by which a person is gotten to do something that the person was not initially inclined to do, and, as such, it is a form of power"[23]. Mark Laity draws attention to this problem: "I regard the 'inform v influence' argument as an intellectual rabbit hole. All information influences and imagining we can inform without influencing is a cop-out. Trying to draw some unsustainable line between informing and influencing avoids the far more taxing issue of what I regard as 'ethical influencing' – working in that grey zone of trying to influence without sliding into manipulation or distortion" [15, p. 46].

And if we talk about ethics, then it is clear that we enter the world of values. Therefore, Neville Bolt proposes an integral view of the Strategic Communications essence. In the foreword to the 10th-anniversary issue of *Defence Strategic Communications*, he presents a broader opinion of the instrumentalist approach and

notes that "strategical communications project foreign and security policies aimed at changing the attitudes and behavior of targeted audiences when strategic effects are achieved using words, images, actions, and non-actions in the national interest or the interest of a political community" [3, p. 12]. And in the paper *'Improving NATO Strategic Communications Terminology'* he advocates a value approach, and argues that "a holistic approach to communication is based on values and interests that encompasses everything an actor does to achieve objectives in a contested environment" [4, p. 48].

To understand the essence and purpose of strategic communication, including the features of its implementation in Ukraine, it is necessary to understand the theoretical origins of these two approaches and define their co-relationship.

The instrumentalist approach to evaluating strategic communication is based on criteria that were formulated by Harold Lasswell. Lasswell's model analyzes communication in terms of five basic questions: "Who?" – Management analysis, "What?" – Content analysis, "In What Channel?" – Analysis of the method, "To Whom?" – Audience analysis, and "With What Effect?" – Performance analysis [16, p. 117]. These questions refer to the most salient components of the process of communication.

But this model does not reveal the difference between informing, manipulating and communicating. However, it is clear that the informational act that took place between the fox and the crow in the famous fable cannot be called communication. Although it can be decomposed into all components of the analysis proposed by Lasswell. So, it is necessary to add the sixth question – "For what purpose?".

It is the teleological aspect that makes it possible to distinguish between the concepts of 'informing', 'manipulation' and 'communication'. Informing is intended only to transmit information from the transmitter to the receiver.

Manipulation is aimed at the transmitter receiving information of his own benefit, which is hidden from the receiver, through informational influence. The goal of communication is interaction. By the way, interaction according to Joseph Nye's theory is the highest form of 'soft power', which based on attraction, arising from the positive appeal of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies, and raises it to the level of 'smart power' [24, pp. 207–208]. This criterion makes it possible to distinguish it from the Russian 'sharp power'. The term 'sharp power' captures the malign and aggressive nature of the authoritarian projects, which bear little resemblance to the benign attraction of 'soft power',… and those affected are not so much audiences as victims. [35]. So, 'soft power' is a component of NATO StratCom, but 'sharp power' is unacceptable for it.

Since the goal of communication is interaction, it has not only a purely informational component. Therefore, NATO Strategic Communications are not only information about the history and activities of the alliance, but also various organizational activities, including military training. These forms of communication's interaction were constantly developed and improved.

But interaction is not the only criterion that determines communication. After all, interaction can be developed between authoritarian regimes. As between Russia, China and Iran (in the case of Russia's relations with Belarus, it is not about interaction, but about subjugation). But the informational influence of authoritarian states by their 'sharp power', aimed at both their own population and the outside world, is based on propaganda and manipulation.

However, to determine the meaning of communication, Lasswell's formula requires the addition of a seventh question – "On what values it based?". This question raises it already to the axiological level. For example, "through sharp power, the generally unattractive values of authoritarian systems – which encourage

a monopoly on power, top-down control, censorship, and coerced or purchased loyalty – are projected outward" [35].

Therefore, characterizing NATO's Strategic Communications should be based on a democratic value criterion. As Mark Laity – a founder of this institution – notes, NATO StratCom should be ethical and embody NATo's values. Yet it was not intended as an information service but rather to help NATO succeed [15, p. 32]. The founding principles of the Alliance proclaim that NATO's essential and enduring purpose is to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means. NATO strives to secure a lasting peace in Europe, based on common values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law [22]. So, NATO's Strategic Communications is defined by the fact that it is built on the basis that the communicators share the values of freedom and democracy. And the purpose of StratCom is to 'advance NATO's aims' [15, p. 30]. Thus, the organisation of interaction is the teleological characteristic of NATO Strategic Communications, and the promotion of the values of freedom and democracy is its axiological characteristic.

At the same time, it should be highlighted that the relationship between values and tools is dialectical in nature. Values without tools are useless, tools without values are meaningless and nonsensical. The formation of NATO Strategic Communicationi as an institution took place from 2007 to 2017. In 2017, the final approval of a military StratCom policy, MC0628, marked the key turning point, the culmination of a 10-year debate, where special interests, turf fights, principles, traditional thinking, old habits, and new challenges had clashed over what StratCom was, should be, how it should be done, and even whether it should exist [15, p. 22]. This document writes "the coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs, Military Public Affairs, Information Operations (IO) and Psychological Operations as appropriate in support of Alliance

policies, operations, and activities, and in order to advance NATO's aims' first agreed in 2009, emerges from an institutional sensitivity and remains a point around which NATO thinking continues to build consensus inside the Alliance" [21].

Laity points to four branches of StratCom's tools: Public Affairs; Plans, Training, and Education; Information Fusion; Engagement [15, p. 60]. It is important that Strategic Communications refer to the thoughtful integration of issues of stakeholder perception and response into policymaking, planning, and operation at every level [15, p. 39]. And, as Magnus Fredriksson and Josef Pallas emphasize, lack of Strategic Communication in areas besides foreign and defence policy is dangerous, especially under the pressure of current challenges in all fields of politics (starting with basic values of democracy, political participation, and decision-making). Strategic Communication goes far beyond one field; it is about nearly everything. [8, p. 147].

Based on the above, I propose the following definition: NATO Strategic Communications are a wide set of tools and organizational measures that ensure effective influence on the behavior of political actors – political leaders, elites, parties, authorities, and the population – with the aim of organizing interaction in the military-political sphere regarding the promotion and protection of democratic values. Strategic communications are conducted in the geopolitical area and have a long-term nature. These are its' spatial and temporal dimensions.

At the same time, it is necessary to accent that speaking on Strategic Communications analytics distinguish so-called 'Master plan' communication and Crisis communication [36, p. 109]. The Master plan communication serves for sustainable building and delivering of information on any long term process (including governmental). It is based on core values of organization, it is clearly operational and communicates the same message on all levels of ordination. The Master plan communication is characterized by consistency – which means that the

Master plan strategical communication is possible only if there is a clear strategy to deliver. Crisis management preparation is a crucial part of the Master plan communication (crisis communication without the Master plan communication background is impossible) [1, p. 85]. Simultaneously, for successful crisis management it is crucial to have a clear decision coordination and subordination chain (subordination here means not only decision-making within a state, but also inter-state political and defence structures). Any decisions should be based not only on the Master plan communication values, but also on decision makers' preparation for crisis and clear division of decision making roles in crisis situation. Nevertheless, informing the public, which is, logically, excluded from the decision making at the crisis moment, should be carried out as soon as possible, switching crisis management back to the Master plan Strategic Communication [5, p. 498].

Based on these theoretical positions, it is appropriate to explore the Ukrainian case of NATO Strategic Communications. At the same time, as it is true in the general sense, it should be understood that the NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications actually began long before NATO StratCom policy, MC0628, was approved.

NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications' Master plan (1991 – 2013)

NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications are based on understanding that a strong, independent Ukraine is vital for the stability of the Euro-Atlantic area. Strategic communications between NATO and Ukraine are aimed at promoting a mutual understanding of democratic values, advancing shared political and security interaction, and countering disinformation and propaganda. Strategic communication in the context of NATO-Ukraine relations refers to the exchange of information and messages between NATO and Ukraine with the aim of advancing specific political, security, and economic objectives. The primary goal of strategic

communication in this context is to promote stability and security in the region, as well as to support Ukraine's aspirations for closer ties with NATO.

NATO and Ukraine engage in a range of communication activities to promote their strategic interactions, including official statements, joint press events, public diplomacy campaigns, and media engagement. The Alliance also provides support to Ukraine in the areas of defense and security, including training and capacity building, and works with Ukrainian officials to address challenges such as disinformation and propaganda.

Strategic Communications are critical components of NATO-Ukraine relations, as they help to build trust and understanding between the two sides, promotes transparency and accountability, and advances shared goals and objectives. By effectively communicating its policies and actions, NATO can help to dispel myths and misunderstandings about its role in the region and demonstrate its commitment to supporting Ukraine's security and stability. Overall, Strategic Communications between NATO and Ukraine are critical to advancing their shared goals and to promoting stability and security in Europe.

To achieve these objectives, NATO and Ukraine engage in a range of communication activities, including:

1. Discussion and making strategic decisions at joint Summits of NATO and Ukrainian leaders, NATO-Ukraine Government and officials meetings, and during the work of committees and commissions on cooperation issues in various spheres. These institutions of Strategic Communications communicate their positions on important issues and demonstrate their commitment to interaction for the defence of sovereignty, freedom, and democracy and for the deterrence of Russian chauvinism.

2. Training and Capacity Building: NATO provides training and capacity-building support to Ukraine to help it enhance its defense and security

capabilities to withstand Russian aggression, including support in areas such as strategic communication, cyber defense, and counter-propaganda.

3. Public Diplomacy Campaigns. NATO and Ukraine engage in public diplomacy campaigns to educate the public about their interaction and to promote a greater understanding of their shared goals and objectives, especially regarding the just war for freedom and independence of Ukraine and its post-war reconstruction. They include the use of social media, video and audio content, and public events.

4. Media Engagement: NATO and Ukraine work with journalists and media outlets to ensure that their messages reach a broad audience and to counteract Кгіішфт disinformation and propaganda. This includes regular briefings and interviews, as well as efforts to promote balanced and accurate reporting on key issues.

In this paper, I focused on the first two directions of communication activity, and only touch on how they are covered by the media and influence public opinion. Because, as it was highlighted, really interaction is the most important criterion of Strategic Communications effectiveness.

In this connection, it should be noted that, interactivity relations between NATO and Ukraine date back to the early 1990ˢ and have since developed into one of the most substantial of NATO's partnerships. So, NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications have more than 30-year history.

NATO-Ukraine dialogue and cooperation were formally launched in 1991, when the newly independent country joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), a forum for dialogue and cooperation between NATO Allies and their former Warsaw Pact adversaries. A few years later, in 1994, Ukraine joined the Partnership for Peace (PfP), a programme of practical bilateral cooperation between individual partner countries and NATO. Participation in the PfP Planning and Review Process helped Ukraine set and achieve ambitious yet realistic objectives for defence and security reforms, transformation and capability development; for

improving the ability of its forces to operate alongside Allied and partner forces in crisis response and peace-support operations; and for enhancing Ukraine's ability to host Allied and partner forces for exercises and training. Ukraine became one of the founding members of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), which replaced the NACC in May 1997.

NATO-Ukraine relations were strengthened with the signing of the July 1997 Charter on a Distinctive Partnership. This Charter remains the basic foundation underpinning NATO-Ukraine relations. It established the NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC) to take Strategic communication forward. The NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC) directs cooperative activities and provides a forum for consultation between the Allies and Ukraine on security issues of common concern. The NUC can meet at various levels, including heads of state and government, ministers of foreign affairs or defence, ambassadors, and in various working-level formats. The signing of the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership became an important step toward the development of the institutional basis of Strategic Communications. It consists of the NATO Information and Documentation Centre (NIDC) and the NATO Liaison Office (NLO).

The NIDC was inaugurated in Kyiv in 1997 to support efforts to inform the Ukrainian public about NATO's activities and the benefits of NATO-Ukraine cooperation. The NIDC is part of the NATO Public Diplomacy Division and was the first information office established by NATO in a partner country and open to the general public. The Centre has three key pillars of work: increasing awareness and understanding of NATO in Ukraine; informing the Ukrainian public about key activities in NATO-Ukraine cooperation; and providing advice and support to Ukrainian institutions in the area of strategic communications capability development. In order to facilitate NATO's core mission and activities in Ukraine,

the NIDC supports various public diplomacy and communications projects, including round tables, seminars, conferences and multimedia projects.

The NLO was established in Kyiv in 1999 and plays a key role in facilitating NATO-Ukraine cooperation. Its key interlocutors include the Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs and Defence, the Presidential Office, the National Security and Defence Council, the Parliament, and several other Ukrainian agencies. Its main priorities include: strengthening Ukraine's implementation of broad Euro-Atlantic reforms; enhancing NATO-Ukraine political and practical dialogue; supporting the transformation and democratic governance of the security and defence sector; and building interoperability between Allied and Ukrainian forces to face common challenges [27].

Established in 1998 under the auspices of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, the NATO-Ukraine Joint Working Group on Defence Reform (JWGDR) pursues initiatives in the area of civil-military relations, democratic oversight and civilian management of the armed forces and other security sector agencies, defence planning, development of policy, strategy and national security concepts.

The Defence Education Enhancement Programme (DEEP) has helped to improve and restructure Ukraine's military education and professional training systems, focusing on eight defence higher education institutions and five training centres for Non-Commissioned Officers. Additionally, DEEP advises on management of the academies and universities, supporting faculty on how to teach and assisting in the development of courses on leadership and decision-making processes.

NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications developed effectively during joint military missions and exercises. Ukraine has contributed to the peace-support operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It has also contributed to the Kosovo Force (KFOR), including with a heavy engineering unit with counter-improvised explosive

devices capabilities. In support of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, Ukraine allowed over-flight clearance and the transit of supplies, and contributed medical personnel to support Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan and instructors to the NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan. Following the end of ISAF's mission in 2014, Ukraine supported the follow-on Resolute Support Mission (2015-2021) to train, advise and assist Afghan security forces. From March 2005, Ukraine contributed officers to the NATO Training Mission in Iraq, which terminated in December 2011. Ukraine deployed ships six times between 2007 and 2010 in support of Operation Active Endeavour, a counter-terrorist maritime surveillance operation in the Mediterranean Sea. In 2013, it also contributed to NATO's counter-piracy operation Ocean Shield. Since the launch of maritime operation Sea Guardian in 2016, Ukraine has provided information in support of NATO's maritime situational awareness in and around the Black Sea [27]. Participation in a wide range of military activities and exercises under the Military Committee with Ukraine Work Plan focuses on improving the interoperability and operational capabilities of Ukraine's armed forces, but also substantially contributes to ongoing security and defence reforms. So, it became an important component of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications. Undoubtedly, the main importance is the military exercises involving partners. But in the context of the development of strategic communication, training of political communication specialists – journalists and heads of press services – also occupies a special place. Back in the early 2000ˢ, I participated in such trainings, which were held in London, Sofia and Kyiv. These measures became an important component of Strategic Communications, which were designed to break the negative image of NATO, which was created by Soviet propaganda for 40 years (modern Russian propaganda has surpassed these traditions).

At that time, analysts noted that "Ukraine organized training for NATO troops, had a peacekeeping contingent in Kosovo and Iraq. In case of continuation of reforms and strengthening of democracy, Kyiv had a chance to become a member of the association in a few years". And Zbigniew Brzezinski confirmed this position in June 2004 [14]. These appeals demonstrated how the value essence of Strategic Communications manifested itself really.

But the process of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications experienced both ups and downs. 15 July 2004, the then President of Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, by his decree made changes to the provisions of the Military Doctrine of Ukraine, excluding the words that Ukraine's accession to NATO and the EU is the ultimate goal of the country's Euro-Atlantic integration policy. Kuchma's rejection of European integration and joining NATO is due to the failure of the Ukraine-NATO summit at the end of June in Istanbul, the main topic of which was the upcoming presidential elections. As journalist Martin Wojciechovsky wrote, "NATO diplomats have made it clear that if the elections are not democratic, Kyiv may not even dream of NATO" [14]. These appeals demonstrated how the value essence of Strategic Communications manifested itself really.

Besides, a pro-NATO campaign of broad public support involving non-political leaders of public opinion was not launched in Ukraine. Consequently, the results of a sociological survey, which was conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in December 2005, showed that in Ukraine as a whole, all respondents' answers were distributed as follows: 16% would vote for Ukraine's accession to NATO, 57% - against accession, 9% said that would not participate in the vote, and another 18% hesitated to give a certain answer [12, p. 7].

In 2008, according to the third President of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko, Ukraine's move to join NATO failed because then German Chancellor Angela Merkel did not give her approval for Ukraine and Georgia to submit a Membership

Action Plan (MAP) at the summit in Bucharest. He stated that Merkel explained her position by the fact that only a third of Ukrainians in 2008 supported joining NATO [10]. Merkel's appeal to public opinion was also thought to have a democratic basis, but in fact this example revealed how geopolitical considerations and economic benefits can influence strategic communications at the expense of democratic values. Actually, many of NATO's European Allies saw Russia as a partner insisting on their long-term foreign policy goals towards Russia and advocating partnership and business which should create ties between the West and Russia with the aim of bringing Moscow closer to the West and making any confrontation less possible. This miscalculation also transferred to NATO strategies and policies [13, p. 56].

Bucharest failure of hopes reveals the core problem of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications: Ukrainian communicators insist that its goal is to join NATO as a full member, while NATO officials consider the prospect of Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration proclaimed by Strategic Communications more like a 'golden carrot', which stimulates the course of democratic reforms and the fight against corruption. Unfortunately, further tragic events in Georgia in the summer of 2008 and in Ukraine in 2014, and especially after February 24, 2022, confirmed that the rejection of NATO membership at the Bucharest summit 2008 was a big mistake, and it costs thousands of lives and terrible destruction in Georgia and Ukraine, as well as the collapse of the security system in Europe and in the world as a whole.

However, the refusal to provide the MAP did not mean the cessation of the development of the valuable content of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communication, nor the development of its tools. Since 2007, Ukraine participates in NATO's Building Integrity (BI) Initiative, which provides practical assistance and advice for strengthening integrity, accountability and transparency in the defence and security sector. In October 2019, nine institutions of Ukraine's defence and security sector completed the NATO BI Self-Assessment and Peer Review Process, which provided

a thorough assessment of institutional needs and vulnerabilities and offered a set of policy-level sectoral recommendations to improve good governance and pursue sustainable anti-corruption reforms in the defence and related security sectors. On this basis, a tailored programme of activities continues to provide two levels of capacity-building support – specific expertise to the institutions to enhance the good governance and management of defence resources (financial, human and materiel), and education and training activities to develop individual capacities and foster an organisational culture of integrity.

The Declaration to Complement the Charter, signed in 2009 as a follow-up to the decisions taken at the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest, gave the NATO-Ukraine Commission a central role in deepening political dialogue and cooperation to underpin Ukraine's reform efforts pertaining to its Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. The principal tool to support this process is the Annual National Programme (ANP), which reflects Ukraine's national reform objectives and annual implementation plans. The ANP is composed of five chapters focusing on: political and economic issues; defence and military issues; resources; security issues; and legal issues. This includes reforms related to good governance, the fight against corruption, the rule of law, human rights, and the security and defence sector, in accordance with Euro-Atlantic principles and standards. Allies assess progress under the ANP annually. The responsibility for its implementation falls primarily on Ukraine. The Commission for Coordination of Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, ensures the general coordination of its implementation by the state bodies. Cooperation has deepened over time and is mutually beneficial, with Ukraine actively contributing to NATO-led operations and missions. Strategic Communications' priority was given to support for comprehensive reform in the security and defence sector, which is vital for Ukraine's democratic development

and for strengthening its ability to defend itself [27]. Despite the fact that all these measures were essentially the continuation of an extensive method for the development of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications, but it was the base of communication interaction created over a quarter of a century that made it possible to quickly deploy support and cooperation between NATO and Ukraine in wartime.

NATO-Ukraine Crisis Strategic Communications (2014 – present time)

Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014 served as a wake-up call for NATO and its Allies really. It changed the entire architecture of NATO's Strategic Communications. In the wake of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, cooperation has been intensified in critical areas. Since Russia's seizure of Crimea and the instigation of the military conflict in Donbas by Moscow in 2014, NATO has adopted a firm position in full support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. The Allies strongly condemn and will not recognise Russia's illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea, and denounce its temporary occupation. But in the absence of obligations as a member state of the Alliance, provided by Article 5 of the Washington Treaty of 1949, NATO did not come forward to protect the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Nevertheless, NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications began to rise to a new level. Since 2014, regular consultations have taken place in the NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC) in view of the direct threats faced by Ukraine to its territorial integrity, political independence and security. The NUC met for extraordinary meetings in view of Russia's unjustified use of military force against Ukrainian ships near the Kerch Strait in November 2018 and Russia's threatening military build-up in April 2021. Other extraordinary meetings of the NUC took place at NATO Headquarters in January 2022, focused on Russia's military build-up. Since Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and destabilisation of eastern Ukraine in 2014, experts have provided advice on Ukraine's contingency plans and crisis management

measures to defend critical energy infrastructure and protect the civilian population. In 2019, a Resilience Advisory Support Team (RAST) drew up recommendations to Ukrainian institutions with regard to the enhancement of national resilience. At Ukraine's request, follow-up expert-level RAST consultations providing technical advice to support the country's long-term resilience and civil preparedness activities took place in early 2022, prior to Russia's full-scale invasion. Ukraine also participates regularly in activities organised by NATO's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre and has itself hosted multiple disaster response exercises.

The interaction, as a result of intensive Strategic Communications, climbed to a new level. This became noticeable by the fact that in parallel to its political support, NATO has significantly stepped up its practical assistance to Ukraine. Immediately following the illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, NATO Foreign Ministers agreed on measures to enhance Ukraine's ability to provide for its own security. They also decided to further develop their practical support to Ukraine, based on a significant enhancement of existing cooperation programmes as well as the development of substantial new programmes.

At the 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw, the Alliance's measures in support of Ukraine became part of the Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP), which is designed to support Ukraine's ability to provide for its own security and to implement wide-ranging reforms based on NATO standards, Euro-Atlantic principles and best practices.

Under the CAP, NATO has helped Ukraine transform its security and defence sector for many years, providing strategic-level advice via the NATO Representation to Ukraine and practical support through a range of capacity-building programmes and initiatives. Through these programmes and tailored advice, NATO has significantly strengthened the capacity and resilience of Ukraine's security and

defence sector, as well as its ability to counter hybrid threats. NATO and Allies have also provided extensive support to capability development, including through training and education and the provision of equipment.

Against the background of Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine – not just the illegal annexation of Crimea, but also the use of cyber-attacks, disinformation and other hybrid activities – the NATO-Ukraine Platform on Countering Hybrid Warfare was established at the NATO Summit in Warsaw in July 2016. It provides a mechanism to be better able to identify hybrid threats and to build capacity in identifying vulnerabilities and strengthening resilience of the state and society. Projects in support of research, training and expert consultations are ongoing, with a focus on lessons learned, countering disinformation and enhancing resilience.

From the side of Ukraine, NATO integration received significant attention in its strategic documents. In June 2017, the Ukrainian Parliament adopted legislation reinstating membership in NATO as a strategic foreign and security policy objective. On February 7, 2019, the Verkhovna Rada supported the decision to amend the Constitution in terms of Ukraine's foreign policy course on joining the EU and NATO. Changes were made to the preamble of the Basic Law, three articles and transitional provisions regarding Ukraine's strategic course for membership in the European Union and NATO. The law entered into force on February 21, 2019.

The dynamics of ensuring the legal framework for cooperation with NATO, and therefore the development of Strategic Communication, accelerated during the presidency of Volodymyr Zelenskyy. On September, 14 2020, President Zelenskyy approved Ukraine's new National Security Strategy. The interaction – the development of strategic relations with key foreign partners, primarily with the European Union and NATO and their member states – is one of the main principles on which the National Security Strategy of Ukraine is based. The Strategy declares

that the acquisition of full membership of Ukraine in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty [32]. On March 25, 2021, the Military Security Strategy of Ukraine was adopted. The strategy emphasizes that the achievement of joint defense capabilities is based on accelerating the reform of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other components of the defense forces through the implementation of NATO principles and standards [31]. On July 23, 2021, Zelenskyy, implemented the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine "On urgent measures to deepen the integration of Ukraine into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization", adopted at the meeting of the NSDC in June 2021. The document provides a set of practical measures, and obligates state bodies to agree within a three-month period with NATO on the development of practical cooperation with Ukraine as a NATO partner with enhanced capabilities [30] In this way, a lasting legal foundation for cooperation with NATO was created in Ukraine, the goal of which was clearly declared to be joining the Alliance.

Russia's unprovoked aggressive attack on Ukraine on February 24, 2022 became the irresistible argument that convinced Ukrainians of the need to join the North Atlantic Alliance. According to the survey of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), which was conducted in May 2022, the aspiration to join NATO is supported by the majority of respondents – 73 % at the national level (the majority is in all regions – East – 59%, South – 65%, Center/North – 79%, West – 82%) [25, P. 28]. These data finally knock out the ground from Frau Merkel's pseudo-argument, and therefore logically eliminate the obstacles to Ukraine's membership in NATO.

In general, since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022 new stage of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications has begun. The interaction has moved from consultations and joint exercises to real military, economic and financial assistance

for the defense of Ukraine, protection of freedom and democracy, and not only in Ukraine. As Francis Fukuyama proclaims:

> At this juncture, two very different futures present themselves. If Putin is successful in undermining Ukrainian independence and democracy, the world will return to an era of aggressive and intolerant nationalism reminiscent of the early twentieth century. On the other hand, if Putin leads Russia into a debacle of military and economic failure, the chance remains to relearn the liberal lesson that power unconstrained by law leads to national disaster and to revive the ideals of a free and democratic world [9].

That's why NATO and Allies have provided unprecedented levels of support, and not only political but military too, including lethal and hard weapons from 2023.

In June 2022, an extraordinary NATO summit was held in Madrid. The new Strategic Concept of the Alliance was adopted at the summit. This event became an important milestone for the development of NATO, for defining the goals of Strategic Communications in general and with Ukraine, in particular. The Concept 2020 states that the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine has shattered peace and gravely altered our security environment. Its brutal and unlawful invasion, repeated violations of international humanitarian law and heinous attacks and atrocities have caused unspeakable suffering and destruction. A strong, independent Ukraine is vital for the stability of the Euro-Atlantic area [18, p. 1]. The Concept sends a clear message to Ukraine and other states about the prospects for NATO membership:

> Our door remains open to all European democracies that share the values of our Alliance, which are willing and able to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership, and whose membership contributes to our common security. Decisions on membership are taken by NATO

Allies and no third party has a say in this process. The security of countries aspiring to become members of the Alliance is intertwined with our own. We strongly support their independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We reaffirm the decision we took at the 2008 Bucharest Summit and all subsequent decisions with respect to Georgia and Ukraine [18, pp. 9-10].

This document also defines the value principles and goals of Strategic communications and interactions with partners:

We will strengthen political dialogue and cooperation with those who aim to join the Alliance, help strengthen their resilience against malign interference, build their capabilities, and enhance our practical support to advance their Euro-Atlantic aspirations. Political dialogue and practical cooperation with partners, based on mutual respect and benefit, contribute to stability beyond our borders, enhance our security at home and support NATO's core tasks. Partnerships are crucial to protect the global commons, enhance our resilience and uphold the rules-based international order. We will strengthen our ties with partners that share the Alliance's values and interest in upholding the rules-based international order. We will enhance dialogue and cooperation to defend that order, uphold our values and protect the systems, standards and technologies on which they depend [18, p. 10].

Important signals were sounded at the Madrid summit, which demonstrated significant changes in the goals and content of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications. NATO Allies have agreed to step up and sustain their support for as long as necessary, so that Ukraine prevails. NATO stands with the people of Ukraine and its legitimate, democratically elected president, parliament and government. The Alliance will always maintain its unwavering support for Ukraine's

independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders extending to its territorial waters. In the longer term, the Alliance is exploring its options for supporting Ukraine's future efforts on its path of post-war reconstruction and reforms. Therefore, ensuring the victory of Ukraine in its just war of liberation against Russian aggression and establishing peace became the main goals of the NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications.

Immediately after the start of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, the US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin announced the creation of an International Contact Group on the Defence of Ukraine under the auspices of NATO, which will include more than 40 countries. The first meeting of the interstate association took place on April 26, 2022, in Rammstein (Germany). "The group will be a driving force for states of goodwill to intensify joint efforts, coordinate aid and focus on victory (of Ukraine) in the current confrontation (against Russia), as well as in the future struggle", – Austin said. This position was clearly demonstrated by the next Rammstein-meetings. The Rammstein-8 meeting, which took place on January 20, 2023, was the most resultative. Then, the defence ministers of almost 50 countries improved cooperation in the interaction with Ukraine to counter Russian aggression. The USA will provide 2.5 billion dollars, Germany 1 billion. Ukraine will also receive armored vehicles, artillery, and thousands of shells. Several countries helped with air defence systems. In particular, Latvia will provide Ukraine with helicopters, MANPADS Stinger, and other equipment. [19]. On February 14, 2023, another meeting of the Contact Group on Defense of Ukraine ('Ramstein-9') was held in Brussels. The heads of defence departments of 54 countries took part in it. The main issues on the agenda: protection of the Ukrainian sky, including through the involvement of an aviation platform; development of the "tank coalition"; formation of safety margin for ammunition; training programs for Ukrainian soldiers; stability of support – logistics, maintenance, repair, practical implementation of 'Military

Schengen'. According to the results of the meeting, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the USA, Mark Milley, noted that the partners in the 'Ramstein' format were able to accumulate a lot of aid for Ukraine [28]. So, the 'Rammstein' became a powerful instrument of high-effective strategic communications and interactions.

NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications for the purpose of the interaction are also carried out on other platforms. On 14 February 2023, at the panel of NATO Defence Ministers' meeting Allies discussed the situation on the ground and Ukraine's most urgent military needs with Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov. NATO is stepping up support for Ukraine, while further strengthening deterrence and defence and increasing stockpiles, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said on 15 February 2023 following a meeting of NATO Defence Ministers. Highlighting Ukraine's window of opportunity to tip the balance of the war, Mr Stoltenberg welcomed the pledges of support made by NATO Allies to Ukraine, including more heavy weapons and military training [20].

But individual member-states of the Alliance looked at the ways of achieving these goals in different ways and at their own discretion placed emphasis on their priority. Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Poland most strongly and unanimously supported Ukraine. From the first days of the Russian aggression, these states carried out constant communication not only at the highest governance level, but also at the level of civil society. The result of this communication was the provision of not only military equipment, but also weapons to Ukraine, as well as the acceptance of thousands of refugees and volunteer assistance. Communication with the USA and Great Britain became the most effective. These countries provided Ukraine with powerful material, technical and financial assistance. As early as April 2022, the United States began supplying Ukraine with HIMARS multiple-launch rocket systems and communicating with other NATO allies so that Ukraine would receive more rocket systems. Canada also provides strong support to Ukraine. As for France

and Germany, the leadership of these countries in the spring of 2022 took a wait-and-see position, although they condemned the Russian invasion. Communicating with the President of Ukraine, Macron and Scholz emphasized the need for peaceful negotiations with Russia. These countries provided the most significant humanitarian aid to Ukrainians, but delayed the adoption of a final decision on the supply of heavy weapons to Ukraine until the summer of 2022. An even more cautious position was taken by Italy, where the supporters of Russia, led by Berlusconi, occupy a rather influential position. Although Italy provides Ukraine with some types of weapons. including air defense. As always, Turkey has taken a peculiar position. After the start of the war, Erdogan continues to communicate with both Zelenskyy and Putin. This has certain positive results, in particular regarding the achievements of the 'grain agreement', which ensured the export of Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea. In addition, it must not be forgotten that even before the start of the full-scale invasion of Russia, Turkey concluded an agreement to supply Ukraine with Bayraktar UAVs, which turned out to be one of the most effective types of Armed Forces of Ukraine armament from the first days of the war. Hungary takes the most pro-Russian position among NATO member states. Prime Minister Orbán, referring to the oppression of the Hungarian minority, which seems to be taking place in Ukraine, tries not only to block the movement of Ukraine to NATO but also to put obstacles in the way of the deployment of military assistance. Thus, even under the conditions of war NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications are not unanimous within the Alliance, which was certainly not in the case of NATO-Latvia Strategic Communications.

At this stage, the outstanding question of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications regarding Ukraine's membership in the Alliance appeared in a new dimension. Ukrainian compatibility with NATO and compliance with its standards are confirmed daily on the battlefield. But as Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine's foreign

minister, emphasized, "some very good friends of Ukraine are more afraid of a positive reply to Ukraine's bid for membership in NATO than of providing Ukraine with the most sophisticated weapons". In the December 2022 *Politico* commented this a contradictory situation that is characteristic of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications: "Ukraine's leadership has argued that for all intents and purposes, it is already a member of the Western military alliance – and thus deserves a quick path to formal NATO membership. "We are de facto allies", – Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy declared in September 2022, when announcing his country's bid to join NATO "under an accelerated procedure". "De facto, we have already completed our path to NATO. De facto, we have already proven interoperability with the alliance's standards," – he added. – Ukraine is applying to make it de jure". The Ukrainian leader's statement caught many of Kyiv's closest partners by surprise – and left several grumbling" [2].

The overture threatened to derail a plan the alliance's most influential capitals had essentially settled on: Weapons now, membership talk later. It was an approach, they felt, that would deprive Moscow of a pretext to pull NATO directly into the conflict. It's an issue so potentially combustible that many NATO allies try to avoid even talking about it. When Ukraine in September 2022 requested an accelerated process to join the military alliance, NATO publicly reiterated its open-door policy but didn't give a concrete response. And, of course, a polite person will not enter the door without an invitation, even if it is open.

Be that as it may, today it should be stated that there is a fundamental teleological difference in NATO's Strategic Communications with Latvia and with Ukraine. The aim of interaction within the framework of strategic communication in Latvia was defined as the country's membership in the Alliance from the beginning. The purpose of cooperation in Ukraine has so far been vague – "deepened partnership". This is explained by the fears of Germany and France to "irritate the

Russian bear". This inertia persisted even after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian aggressor on February 24, 2022.

But the situation changes very quickly and the Alliance is able to quickly change its approaches, as demonstrated by the 'tank coalition' reached in January 2023 literally in a few days as a result of active communication between the United States, NATO member countries and partners. And, as Lily Bayers notes, a Ukrainian victory, of course, could shift the calculus. Max Bergmann, director of the Europe program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, argued his forecast: "If Ukraine is stuck in a stalemate, then NATO membership isn't gonna happen. But if it retakes its territory and accepts its borders – whatever those borders may be, whether it includes Crimea or does not, because that's the fundamental question for Ukraine – then I think things can move very quickly" [2].

In December 2022, when NATO foreign ministers met, their final statement simply pointed to a vague 2008 pledge that Ukraine would someday join the club. And in February 2023 Zelenskyy reminded that Ukraine needs security guarantees, and the best guarantee for Ukraine will be NATO membership. The President of Ukraine said: "We believe that we will be in NATO before all the leaders decide that our package of security guarantees is the right one. Because they make decisions slowly, it's bureaucracy... And I believe that after victory we will be in NATO" [2].

On February 10, 2023, during a meeting at the University of Latvia, when I asked Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy of NATO Baiba Braže what she guess about the place of Ukraine in evolving NATO – near to the Alliance as a partner or within the Alliance as a member, she answered that this issue will be on the agenda after the peace settlement will be reached. At a briefing on February 15, 2023, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated more clearly: "Ukraine will become a member of the Alliance, but now the focus should be on ensuring

Ukraine's victory in the war. For this, the Alliance should help Ukraine protect its sovereignty" [33].

The current content of interaction between NATO and Ukraine shows that in 2023, NATO's Strategic Communications' nature undergo changes. Now their slogan can be formulated as follows: "NATO should not be afraid to irritate Russia, NATO is irritated by Russia and will make it afraid". These changes open a perspective for solving the main problem of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications – its clear orientation towards Ukraine's membership in the Alliance, which should be achieved as soon as possible. As it has been defined that interaction is an indicator of the effectiveness of communication, the positive results of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications can best be confirmed by the words from the speech of US President Joe Biden on his stunning visit to Kyiv on February 20, 2023:

> We have assembled a coalition of nations from the Atlantic to the Pacific region. NATO. Japan. The number of nations is more than 50, which are helping Ukraine to defend itself with unprecedented economic, military and humanitarian support. The world's strongest economies have gathered to block the lifeblood of the Russian economy. Together, we have gathered 700 tanks and thousands of armored vehicles, a thousand artillery systems and more than 2 million artillery ammunition, more than 50 missile systems, air defense equipment. Ukraine gives a worthy rebuff to the aggressor, and the civilized world helps it in its struggle [34].

Conclusions

Strategic communications are determined by their spatial and temporal characteristics: they are conducted in the geopolitical area and have a long-term nature.

Communications, unlike information and manipulation, aim to organize interaction between parties to achieve a certain result. The effectiveness of communication is determined by the identical understanding of the goal and common orientation to the final result of all

communication process participants. It is a teleological criterion of communication.

A necessary prerequisite for communication is the presence of a certain value compatibility between communicators. The level of value compatibility determines the level of trust, and the level of trust in turn affects the effectiveness of cooperation. So, common values are the ground on which communication is built. Qualitative characteristics of the valuable ground are an axiological criterion of communication. NATO's Strategic Communications are built on the values of democracy, freedom and the rule of law.

Ukraine choses these values as guidelines for social and political development after the restoration of independence. So, since 1991 NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications have begun.

These Communications use such tools: regular dialogue between as NATO and Latvian, as NATO and Ukrainian officials, public diplomacy activities, media engagement, and information sharing, as well as joint peace-making and peace-keeping missions, military training and capacity building.

But the effectiveness of these tools to promote stability and security in the region, as well as to support Ukraine's aspirations for closer ties with NATO turned out to be insufficient. It is caused by the fact that the goal of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications is still vague – 'deepened partnership'. This uncertainty can be explained by the fears of Germany, France and Italy to "irritate the Russian bear". As a result of these concerns, in 2008 NATO refused Ukraine to join the MAP. As subsequent events showed, this refusal was a strategic mistake of the Alliance. It actually freed Russia's hands first for a hybrid, and later for a full-scale hot war against Ukraine.

By the time, the process of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications experienced both ups and downs. The main problem lies in the teleological differences. NATO considers Strategic Communications with Ukraine as a stimulus for Ukrainian reforms, a means of developing partnership and preventing Ukraine

from returning to Russia's sphere of influence. While Ukraine aims to use them as an effective means to gain full membership in the Alliance. This contradiction persisted even after the annexation of Crimea by Russia and its incitement of the conflict in the Donbas in 2014.

But precisely since 2014, drastic changes have been taking place in the content of NATO Strategic Communications in general and NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications, in particular, and therefore also in the content of NATO-Ukraine political and military interaction. These changes were caused by the need to resist Russian aggression. Since then, the development of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications has been divided into two stages – pre-war and wartime. The parties improved the crisis communication's mechanisms of dialogue and consultations, as well as raised the level of crisis communication both between officials in the process of negotiations and between the military in the process of exercises, which became more frequent and took on a larger and more specific nature. The Ukrainian authorities have created a powerful legal framework for interaction and communication with NATO. But a pro-NATO campaign of broad public support involving non-political leaders of public opinion was not launched in Ukraine. Nevertheless, since 2014, the vast majority of the Ukrainian population has supported the country's join to NATO. In 2022, the level of this support reached 73%.

After the start of full-scale Russian aggression NATO Strategic Communications entered a new phase. The new Strategic Concept of the Alliance was adopted at extraordinary NATO summit was held in Madrid in June 2022. NATO Allies have agreed to step up and sustain their support for as long as necessary, so that Ukraine prevails. New Strategic Communications tools were created to ensure interaction. An International Contact Group on the Defence of

Ukraine ('Rammstein') was formed under the auspices of the Alliance and unprecedented assistance was deployed.

But in the process of deployment of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications, it became clear that the ordinary 'open door' policy should be replaced by the extraordinary 'guaranteed accelerated membership' policy after the victory of Ukraine and the peace settlement. Only such a perspective can solve the essential problem of NATO-Ukraine Strategic Communications and ensure the victory and sustainable development of the values of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law in Europe and in the whole world.

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