NATO leaders will gather in Vilnius, Lithuania on 11-12 July 2023 for the Alliance’s annual summit, and Ukraine expects to receive specific proposals regarding security guarantees, the best of which is an invitation to NATO.

Ukrainian communities across NATO member states have for many years advocated for Ukraine’s accession into the Alliance. UCCA has publicly urged Ukraine’s full integration into Western structures since its 2008 call for a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) for Ukraine.
In 2023, 9 years will have passed since russia illegally annexed Ukraine’s Crimean peninsula, the first time since the end of the Second World War that a country in Europe tried to change borders by force. This gross violation of international law was followed by russia’s invasion of Eastern Ukraine, which has resulted in the largest wartime displacement in Europe since 1945.

The United States government has consistently supported Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence and the inviolability of its borders since russia’s invasion, declaring as official government policy to “assist the government of Ukraine in restoring its sovereignty and territorial integrity in order to deter the government of the russian Federation from further destabilizing and invading Ukraine and other independent countries.”
Since 1992, Ukraine’s Armed Forces have taken part in 26 international peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. Over 44,000 Ukrainian service-members in total have played important roles supporting NATO operations in Angola, Sierra-Leone, Liberia, Cote-d’Ivoire, Congo, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Kuwait, Afghanistan, and Georgia.

In contrast to its participation in UN-led operations, for decades Ukraine paid for its defense forces to participate in NATO operations from its own budget. In order to save money, Ukrainian forces generally deployed for 12 months, while their European partners rotated every 6 months. These lengthier deployments paid benefits by raising the Ukrainians professional expertise, which military leaders in Ukraine have recognized and appreciated.
Unlike some NATO member-states, Ukraine possesses a revived and rejuvenated military-industrial complex in addition to its powerful and large security forces numbering more than half a million. In terms of spending on defense, Ukraine outstrips most members of NATO.

Any cooperation between Ukraine and NATO is inherently a two-way street. Ukraine is the first country which has experienced the entire range of Russian hybrid warfare. NATO members have already benefited significantly from training and exercising with battle-tested Ukrainian forces, and have learned a lot from Ukraine’s experience as a target of Russian cyber-attacks, information operations, and other forms of hybrid warfare.
Marking 30 Years in 2024

Newly independent Ukraine joined the NATO-established the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) in December 1991, before going on to become the first former Soviet-occupied country to sign onto NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) program in 1994.
History – 1995-97

14 September 1995. Ukraine - represented by Foreign Minister Hennadiy Udovenko - and NATO issued a Joint Press Statement detailing their new relationship. In this document, the general principles of NATO-Ukraine relations, in Partnership for Peace and in other areas, were spelled out. An implementation paper was agreed in March 1996, and the first 16+1 consultation at the Political Committee-level took place one month later.

December 1995. Ukraine deployed 400 mechanized troops to NATO’s Bosnia Implementation Force (IFOR) and increased the number to 550 in the follow-on Stabilization Force (SFOR). From 1995 through December 1999, when they withdrew, more than 2,800 Ukrainian servicemen took part in this NATO mission.

April 1996. Secretary General Javier Solana visited Ukraine. On his second visit in May 1997, he inaugurated the NATO Information and Documentation Centre in Kyiv, the first of its kind in any partner country.
Marking 25 Years in 2022

The Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Ukraine was signed in July 1997. The Charter set out a wide range of areas for potential cooperation, including civil emergency planning, military training and environmental security. It established the NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC) where NATO Allies would regularly work with Ukraine to develop deeper cooperation. After signing the Charter, Ukraine was invited to participate in NATO-led exercises, and Ukraine contributed forces to the NATO-led missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo.
Marking 15 Years in 2024

On the second day of NATO’s 50th Anniversary Summit in Washington April 23-25, 1999, Ukraine and NATO held the first summit meeting of the commission that oversees the development of the “distinctive partnership” initiated in 1997. The meeting between President Leonid Kuchma and NATO leaders was the only “solo” meeting on the three-day NATO program, which also included a summit of the recently expanded 19-member NATO organization (Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland), and a summit of the more than 20 NATO “partner” countries, which included Ukraine.

NATO Deputy Secretary-General Sergio Balanzino, UA Foreign Affairs Minister Borys Tarasyuk, UA President Leonid Kuchma and NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana at the inaugural NATO-Ukraine Commission summit in Washington, D.C.
Operation Enduring Freedom

Marking 20 Years in 2022

Ukraine publicly declared their intention to join the NATO Alliance at the Reykjavik NATO-Ukraine Foreign Ministers meeting in May of 2002. There it was mutually decided to “give new impetus and substance to our partnership with Ukraine.” The NATO-Ukraine Commission subsequently adopted an Action Plan at the November 2002 Prague Summit that provided a framework for intensified consultations and cooperation and an eventual MAP.

Anatoliy Zlenko, Foreign Minister of Ukraine, and NATO Secretary General, Lord George Robertson, at the May 2002 meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission
In 2003, Ukraine sent 1,650 troops to Operation Iraqi Freedom with the joint Ukrainian-Polish battalion as part of the Polish-led Multinational Division Central-South. Ukrainians served as the third-largest Coalition forces contingent. After 30 months and the loss of 18 lives, Ukraine withdrew from Iraq in December 2005. From March 2005, Ukraine contributed officers to the NATO Training Mission in Iraq, which terminated in December 2011.
In June 2004, Ukraine and NATO agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Airlift. Beginning in 2006, Ukraine’s Antonov Airlines provided two An-124s on hand at Leipzig-Halle Airport for immediate use by consortium members, with additional AN-124-100 planes available on request.

President Leonid Kuchma replaced Ukraine’s 1993 Military Doctrine with one that portrayed NATO as the basis for the European security system and pledged to pursue Euro-Atlantic integration. At NATO’s June 2004 Istanbul Summit, Defense Minister Yevhen Marchuk presented the new doctrine as well as Ukraine’s Strategic Defense Bulletin, which stressed that “future membership in NATO and the EU continued to be the main priorities of Ukraine’s foreign policy.
In 2005, President Yushchenko reaffirmed Ukraine’s interest in joining the EU and NATO in the country’s Military Doctrine. On that basis, NATO and Ukraine launched an “intensified dialogue” on membership in April 2005, and military activities proliferated.

The NATO-Ukraine 2006 Action Plan established a special National System of Coordination and Cooperation with NATO.

In 2007 Ukraine deployed a detachment of the 143rd De-mining Center of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to Afghanistan.
Ukraine deployed ships in the Mediterranean Sea six times between 2007 and 2010 in support of Operation Active Endeavour, the practical phase of NATO’s counter-terrorist maritime surveillance operation which began on 6 October 2001. The aim of the operation is to prevent smuggling of weapons and drugs, to deter terrorist activity and human trafficking as well as to monitor shipping.
President Victor Yushchenko publicly declared as a high priority for Ukraine securing a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) in the Summer of 2006.

This was re-iterated on January 16, 2008, in a joint letter to NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer signed by Ukraine’s President Viktor Yushchenko, Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, and Parliament Chairman Arseniy Yatsenyuk, declaring Ukraine’s readiness to advance to a Membership Action Plan (MAP) with NATO and requesting a decision to that end by the Alliance at its Bucharest summit in early April.
At the April 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest, Alliance leaders declared 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. Both nations have made valuable contributions to Alliance operations”.

Before the summit, US President Bush on Tuesday flew to Kyiv where he vowed full support for Ukraine and Georgia’s NATO aspirations, saying Russia would have no veto over their membership bids.
NATO and Ukraine took their relationship to a higher level with the signing of the “Declaration to Complement the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between NATO and Ukraine” on 21 August 2009.

This Declaration followed up on an agreement reached by foreign ministers in December 2008 to amend the NATO-Ukraine Charter in order to reflect the decisions taken at NATO’s Summit in April 2008 in Bucharest. The partnership enhanced regular political dialogue and cooperation between NATO and Ukraine at all appropriate levels, and underpinned Ukraine's efforts towards its political, economic, and defence-related reforms pertaining to its Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO.
Marking 10 Years in 2024

The NATO Alliance’s 28 leaders met at the Wales Summit in September 2014 and “condemned in the strongest terms Russia’s escalating and illegal military intervention in Ukraine and demand that Russia stop and withdraw its forces from inside Ukraine and along the Ukrainian border.” The leaders collectively underscored that they “do not and will not recognize Russia's illegal and illegitimate ‘annexation’ of Crimea.” In the framework of the long-standing Distinctive Partnership, all 28 Allies pledged to enhance their support so that Ukraine can better provide for its own security. Strategic consultations in the NATO-Ukraine Commission were to be increased and the development of greater interoperability between Ukrainian and NATO forces would continue, including through regular Ukrainian participation in NATO exercises.
In December 2015, NATO and Ukraine agreed on a Roadmap for NATO-Ukraine Defense-Technical Co-operation. The Roadmap sets out key activities to implement the priorities listed in a Declaration of Intent signed in September 2015. Those priorities include improvement of the capabilities of the Armed Forces; co-operation in standardization and codification; transformation of Ukraine’s defense industry; Ukraine’s participation in NATO’s Smart Defense initiative; deepening co-operation between NATO and Ukraine in defense science and technology; and professional development of the Ukrainian staff involved in defense-technical co-operation with the Alliance.

Patrick Auroy, NATO assistant secretary general for defense investment, and Oleg Gladkovski, first deputy secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, sign the agreement on Dec. 16, 2015.
At the July 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw, the Alliance decided to deploy a multinational battalion in the frontline states of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Lithuania in order to deter further Russian aggression. The Allies further endorsed a Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine, to make Ukraine’s defense and security institutions more effective, efficient and accountable. This Package includes strategic advice and assistance. New projects on countering hybrid warfare were announced and Ukraine would receive access to a recently launched Trust Fund on dealing with improvised explosive devices and unexploded munitions.
In June 2017, the Ukrainian Parliament adopted legislation reinstating membership in NATO as a strategic foreign and security policy objective. The new laws hereby enact Ukraine’s commitment to achieve NATO membership strategically by having made it legally binding," the parliament said in a statement on June 8. Passed by a majority of 276 MPs out of the 450 elected lawmakers, the bill is expected to stimulate increased military cooperation between Ukraine and NATO allies. It is also likely to foster procurements of Western-made weapons and military equipment to the Ukrainian Armed Forces, and spur partnerships between Ukraine's defense industry and foreign players. In 2019, a corresponding amendment to Ukraine's Constitution entered into force.
At the July 2018 NATO Summit in Brussels, NATO Heads of State and Government met with the President of Ukraine to reaffirm their joint commitment to further develop their Distinctive Partnership. Allies and Ukraine condemned the human rights abuses and discrimination practices by the russian authorities against the residents of the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula, and called on russia to release Ukrainian prisoners and hostages detained in russia, Crimea and the areas of eastern Ukraine controlled by russia. The leaders of NATO nations and Ukraine also expressed their concern about the use of torture and the transfer of Ukrainian citizens to prisons in russia. Leaders condemned russia’s construction and partial opening of the Kerch Strait bridge between russia and the illegally annexed Crimea, which represents another violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, including the infringement of its navigational rights in its territorial waters.
In February 2019, Ukraine’s Parliament overwhelmingly approved an amendment to the constitution that fixed membership in the European Union and NATO as strategic goals for Ukraine.

Newly elected President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited Brussels on 4-5 June 2019, where he met with the leadership of the European Union and NATO and reaffirmed Ukraine’s goal of integrating into both.

The NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC) met in Kyiv in October 2019 in the presence of President Zelenskyy and members of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Allies pledged to continue to support Ukraine’s efforts to strengthen its resilience against hybrid threats, including through intensifying activities under the NATO-Ukraine Platform on Countering Hybrid Warfare.
In June 2020, NATO recognized Ukraine as an Enhanced Opportunities Partner (EOP). This status is part of NATO’s Partnership Interoperability Initiative, which aims to maintain and deepen cooperation between Allies and partners that have made significant contributions to NATO-led operations and missions.

According to NATO, Ukraine is the only non-NATO partner nation to have contributed actively to all NATO-led operations and missions for the past 2 decades.

At the end of 2020, the Minister of Defense of Ukraine, Andriy Taran, stated that Ukraine has ambitions to receive the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) at the next Alliance Summit in 2021.
Sea Breeze 20

From July 20-26, 2020, standing NATO Maritime Group Two (SNMG2) took part in the multinational exercise Sea Breeze in the Black Sea. The annual exercise was co-hosted by the United States and Ukraine, to strengthen maritime security in the Black Sea region.

In 2020, ships, aircraft and over 2,000 personnel from Bulgaria, Georgia, Norway, Romania, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine and the United States participated. The exercise tested maritime interdiction operations, air defense, anti-submarine warfare, damage control, and search and rescue. It is also a demonstration of NATO's commitment to work with partner navies.
More than 4,000 troops from nine participating countries participated in the U.S. Army Europe-led Exercise Rapid Trident 20 which took place Sept. 16-25, 2020, at the International Peacekeeping Security Centre near Yavoriv, Ukraine. This year’s exercise had hundreds more troops in total than the 3,700 that conducted Rapid Trident 19, and included a brigade-level command post exercise and limited platoon-level tactical training.

Approximately 175 U.S. Army military and civilian personnel supported Rapid Trident 20, including 160 Illinois National Guard soldiers from the Task Force Illini, 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Task Force Illini are currently deployed to western Ukraine to support the Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine (JMTG-U), providing observer coach/trainer services to Ukrainians and assisting with operations planning before returning to Illinois in spring 2021.
History - 2021

On 18 March 2021, Ukraine joined the NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba visited NATO Headquarters on 13 April 2021 for a meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission following “Russia’s considerable military build-up” around Ukraine. Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg referred to it as “unjustified, unexplained, and deeply concerning.”

One of the main messages of the final Communiqué of the NATO Summit 2021 (14 June 2021, Brussels) is the confirmation by the Allies of the right of Ukraine to become a member of the Alliance with the MAP as an integral part of this process. The Communiqués made after the 2014, 2016, and 2018 NATO summits did not mention a MAP for Ukraine.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba visited NATO Headquarters on 15 November 2021 to discuss the “large and unusual concentrations of Russian forces close to Ukraine’s borders.”
NATO Leaders hosted an extraordinary summit virtually on 25 February 2022 to unanimously condemn Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and reiterated their support to Ukraine.

NATO Leaders met on 24 March 2022 in Brussels to address the consequences of Russia’s unprovoked war on Ukraine. Allied Leaders reaffirmed the unity and resolve to aid the government and people of Ukraine.

NATO Heads of State and Government held a Summit in Madrid on 29 June 2022 where they officially invited Finland and Sweden to join NATO. They welcomed President Zelenskyy’s participation virtually, and endorsed a new Strategic Concept which will accelerate the delivery of non-lethal defense equipment, improve Ukraine’s cyber defenses and resilience, and support modernizing its defense sector in its transition to strengthen long-term interoperability.