Abstract

NATO’s enlargement policy has been a topic of heated discussions both within the academic scholarship and political circles of the member states. Particularly controversial has been its decade-long accession negotiations with Georgia, a nation whose NATO membership has been vehemently opposed by Russia. The disagreements over Georgia’s pro-Western foreign policies resulted in a five-day August War in 2008, or as referred to by Ronald Asmus “a little war that shook the world”. Given its significance, NATO-Georgia relations have been well researched within the academic. However, the overwhelming part of that scholarship focuses on the operational and historical aspects of their cooperation, neglecting the theoretical aspect. This thesis sets out to examine the concept of ‘NATO-Georgia relations’ within the theoretical framework of leading IR approaches in order to compare/contrast different perspectives and determine which explanation has the superior explanatory power. The research examines how Russia, the United States and Georgia (three main ‘pillars’ of NATO-Georgia relations) each perceive the Atlantic Alliance’s enlargement and concludes that these approaches are best theorized separately since all three nations “operate with different playbooks”. The thesis contributes an alternative theoretical explanation behind Georgia’s aspiration to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization – the one driven by identity and an idea, rather than security concept.