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ФАКТОР НАТО У ЗОВНІШНІЙ ПОЛІТИЦІ КРАЇН ЗАХІДНИХ БАЛКАН НА ПОЧАТКУ XXI СТОРІЧЧЯ

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NATO FACTOR IN WESTERN BALKANS STATES' FOREIGN POLICY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE XXI CENTURY

The article considers the process of Western Balkans States' integration in NATO. It is systematized scientific work of researchers of various national schools, revealing the common causes of the NATO's integration process and its peculiarities in the Western Balkans. It analyzes the main reasons and purpose of Alliance's enlargement. The study shows the main challenges which the Balkan States face with in the process of their integration in Euro-Atlantic structure. Also it analyses the difference between the states of the region. It is studied main principles of cooperation between NATO and EU in the region. The article describes main principles of NATO's presence in Kosovo and in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and its role in the conflict settlement. The paper examines the position of NATO potential member states.

Key words: Serbia, Bosnia**,** Albania, Croatia, FYRM, Kosovo, Montenegro, NATO, EU, Western Balkans, KFOR, SFOR.

NATO's membership is very important for the Western Balkans states (WBS). After collapse of the bipolar system of international relations and the end of wars for independence in the region, WBS demonstrated a desire to join NATO, as it is considered as the basis of stability and security.

Bledar Feta, Jelena Radoman, the researchers of Hellenic Centre for European Studies underlined that Candidate status to NATO is considered as a reaffirmation of a country's international position. In most Western Balkan countries, NATO membership is viewed as a major strategic choice. Euro-Atlantic integration is seen as bringing stability and security through democratic and economic reforms[1].

Bosnian crisis has shown the weakness of the OSCE, confirmed the fact that NATO remains the most powerful military force in Europe and in the long run it is not visible alternatives[2]. Serbian researcher underlined that NATO membership for most of European countries was the first step towards EU membership. It is sort of an unofficial pre-condition for the EU membership[3].

Serbian researcher Jasminka Smic emphasized that relations between NATO and Serbia were complete. The fact that Serbia was bombed by NATO makes these relationships specific and different from others, especially because Serbian publicity is reluctant towards NATO. It will be difficult to explain to a part of the population why it is important to join an organization which bombed the country. For them NATO is still "a metaphor for unwanted American hegemony"[4]. Milana Nic and Jan Cingel (Central European Policy Institute) thought that Serbia in near future wouldn't consider possibility of NATO's membership. Belgrade's official declared goal is military neutrality.

The positions of Serbian political leaders according NATO's membership were different. The Serbian president Tadić, former minister of defence, supported the moving Serbia closer to NATO. At the same time, he was extremely careful and ambiguous about this issue in public, unwilling to challenge the

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official doctrine of military neutrality. In his press statement, president Nikolić hinted that Serbia is open to more cooperation but at the same time, it "would not like to choose sides" and prefers to keep political distance from the alliance[1].

The results of an opinion poll conducted in June 2011 which showed that 15.6% of Serbian citizens supported NATO membership (5% less than in 2010), whereas 66.3% were against. The reason for this can be attributed to NATO operation in Libya, which brought back painful memories of NATO bombing of Yugoslavia. There are several reasons why the membership in NATO can be accepted. 1. Membership in NATO guarantees the protection of a member state territory; perhaps not absolutely, but it guarantees its protection; 2. Joining NATO will mean joining the Western community of nations; 3. NATO membership facilitates modernization and restructuring of military forces, which Serbia has already carried out in accordance with NATO's standards, that is especially important in a country whose military forces have obsolete weapons and low level of material security of its military officers[2]. Another crucial factor is geography: all of Serbia's neighbours are either NATO members (Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia) or aspire to join the alliance in the nearest future (Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina)[3].

NATO's position regarding the future Alliance enlargement within the Western Balkan Area can be described by the NATO General Secretary Fogh Rasmussen's statement: Euro-Atlantic integration is the best guarantee for peace, progress and property[4].

Albania was strategically important to NATO for two major reasons. First, it offered NATO and the United States an important military outpost in the turbulent Southern Balkans. Second, NATO feared a southward spread of the Yugoslav conflict on Kosovo and on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – both of which have large ethnic Albanian population. They wanted Albanian government not to allow ethnic tensions' spread among Albanians who lived outside its borders[5].

David Greenwood (Centre for European Security Studies) said that potential members must meet key eligibility criteria of a politico-strategic nature, namely a functioning, law-governed democracy and market economy, a commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes (and no outstanding disagreements with neighbours), and a commitment to respect for minority rights (plus political freedoms and human rights generally). There is a presumption that aspirants are sovereign nation-states – consolidated political communities in which all citizens enjoy equal rights – under governments with unchallenged jurisdiction inside secure borders[6].

States of the region in different way have been prepared for NATO's membership. It depended on the level of countries' development, financial capacity and willingness to join the Alliance.

Political and military cooperation between NATO and Serbia have evolved with varying speed and intensity. Serbian defence reforms and modernization of its armed forces have been carried out with NATO's advices and assistance. The alliance has been active and visible in Serbia through several trust funds covering projects addressing several pressing military safety issues (such as liquidation of land mines and, most recently, surplus ammunition) and implemented several projects under the science for peace and security programs, and public diplomacy grants[7].

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The process of WBS's joining of NATO was very complex and diverse; countries of region have got a number of problems. First of all Russian researcher Sergei Romanenko noticed a number of common problems in all countries within the region. First, almost all the states of the region needed military reforms in accordance with the Brussels requirements. These reforms were aimed on creating a professional army. It has led to rising of social tensions because governments in these states did not have enough money to provide jobs for retired servicemen in period of unemployment. There was also the problem of standardization of armaments in accordance with the requirements of the Alliance. There were also some differences regarding the further development of the national armed forces. For example, Croatia sought to maintain its own quite strong Air Forces, while NATO, considering that the country was protected by "the common security umbrella" advocated conservation in Croatia of only a small number of aircrafts. Within the Western Balkans states it should be provided civilian control over the Armed Forces and security forces. The most important political issues were connected with ethno-territorial disputes[1].

Western Balkans suffered from instability, nationalistic rhetoric, recurring waves of inter-ethnic tensions, unresolved territorial and border issues, weak political institutions, and the absence of the rule of law. A series of bilateral and potentially multilateral disputes within the region remain unresolved, providing obstacles for of new members to join the Euro-Atlantic institutions. The largest of these obstacles is that the Western Balkans have not found yet full democratic consolidation. The compromise is the lack in political culture of these states, but at the same time, patronage, and ethnocentric thinking present in political life. If the perspective of NATO membership becomes unrealistic, Balkan politics can quickly revert to nationalism and radicalism to distract voters from the economic problems with which the region faces[2].

"Berlin plus" agreements serve as the basic principle for cooperation between the European Union and NATO. It was named after the meeting of NATO's member states' foreign affairs ministers, which took place in 1996 at Berlin. It was decided to create European security and defence component in order to ensure the EU access to NATO's assets. In practice, the agreements were aimed on avoiding duplication between the two organizations and structures, on ensuring their close cooperation[3].

NATO and the European Union were working together on prevention and settlement of crises and armed conflicts in Europe and beyond. They shared common strategic interests and cooperated in a spirit of complementarities and partnership. The decision to cooperate on security was made in January 24, 2001, when the NATO Secretary General and the EU Presidency exchanged letters, which dealt with the definition of areas of cooperation and consultation between two organizations[4].

The presence of NATO in BiH was kept even after European Union forces had come to the country. NATO remained a supporter of the long-term tasks in the country. The nature of NATO's activity has changed. In Bosnia and Herzegovina the Alliance maintained a military headquarters, but NATO broadened political activities, and also reduced operational military presence. The European Union was responsible for security; NATO has focused its activity on military reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of preparation for joining the Partnership for Peace. It also has implemented counter-terrorist activities, detained persons suspected in war crimes[5].

The model of EU-NATO cooperation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was developed in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In April 2003, NATO handed responsibility for peacekeeping in FYROM to the European Union, but it still retains its presence in the country, assisting the authorities in Skopje in defence reform and providing support to other NATO operations in the Balkans.

In 2001, thought timely and concerted action in close cooperation with the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, NATO helped to prevent breaking civil war in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. At the request of the government in Skopje, NATO Secretary

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General Lord Robertson sent a group of crisis management to conclude a ceasefire agreement with so-called National Liberation Army (NLA), an armed group, which consisted of ethnic Albanians. Members of the group took control of large part of territory in the west. Taking into account key lessons learned from the experience of KFOR and SFOR, NATO closely cooperated with the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe at the political and local practical level. All three organizations followed unified international position to both conflicting parts. NATO managed the NLA to agree for cease-fire and supported the process of political negotiations, which ended on August 13 by signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. After signing the agreement, NATO launched Operation named "main harvest" and deployed contingent of 4 thousand soldiers for monitoring the disarmament of NLA. In early October NLA stopped its activity as an organized armed group. At Skopje's request at the end of the operation "main harvest" in the country remained NATO contingent numbering several hundred of soldiers, who must protect civilian observers. In April 2003, NATO handed responsibility for this operation to the European Union[1].

Despite improving conditions in Kosovo in recent years, some tensions still present in the province. Besides, there was real threat of an explosion of violence, as it was in March 2004. That's why NATO placed additional troops in Kosovo, and NATO-led peacekeepers had to use forces for maintaining order and protection of the Serb population, because violence was directed against them[2]. According to UN Security Council Resolution 1244 the right of all refugees and displaced persons for returning to their homes in safety was confirmed[3]. The status of Kosovo remained unresolved, so NATO's mandate in the province, which functioned under Security Council Resolution 1244 and the Military-Technical Agreement between NATO and Yugoslav Army remained was still valid. This mandate was wider than in any other operation, led by NATO. The first NATO mandate provided for the maintenance of Yugoslav and Serbian forces from restoring the threats and hostilities against Kosovo; creating a safe environment and ensure public safety and order; disarm the Kosovo Liberation Army; support international humanitarian efforts; coordination and support for international civilian organizations. Now the Alliance has sought to create a safe environment in which all citizens could live peacefully, regardless of ethnic origin, and by means of which the international community can start to develop democracy[4].

Kosovo was the key subject of the Serbia-NATO dialogue. Serbia's leaders have vowed that they would never recognize its independence. The NATO-led KFOR mission is responsible for Kosovo's security. On the basis of the UN Security Council resolution, KFOR is mandated to ensure a safe and secure environment, including freedom of movement for all people in Kosovo. In effect, it means that KFOR protects the ethnic Serbian minority and religious places in the enclaves to the south of the Ibar river. On that basis, Belgrade developed relations with constructive relations with KFOR, including simultaneous and coordinated patrols along the administrative border. On the other hand, Belgrade continues to view suspiciously on KFOR's assistance to development of the Kosovo security force (KSF)[5].

Membership Action Plan (MAP) is NATO's program for consultation, assistance and practical support according to the individual needs of states which wanted to join the Alliance. Among the countries of the Western Balkans MAP participants were the FYROM, which participated in the MAP since 1999, and Montenegro, which was invited in December 2009. NATO leaders agreed to invite the FYROM to join it when a mutually acceptable solution of the question upon country's name would be reached with Greece[6].

On April 2010 the Allies officially invited BiH to join the MAP under one important condition: the first Annual National Programme under the MAP would be accepted only when the issue of immovable

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military property had been solved[1].

On April 1999 Albania joined the MAP. It has played an important role in resolving the humanitarian tragedy in Kosovo and creating securing peace after the air campaign. The country allowed the Allies to establish a centre of logistics in Tirana to support peacekeeping operations in Kosovo. In 2002, NATO established a regional military headquarters in Tirana, which was included in the structure of the Kosovo Force (KFOR). Albania also supported the Allies in stabilization operations in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia from 2001 to 2003. Albania has made its contribution to the fight against terrorism within the framework of the Partnership for combating terrorism. The top priority for Albania was to provide support for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. After signing Albania Partnership Action Plan on building defence institutions, government supported activity patterns, thus contributing to effective judicial oversight, inviting the broader consultation. In Albania, it was possible to increase the effectiveness of disaster, thanks to cooperation with NATO and through participation in activities organized by the Euro-Atlantic Coordination Centre for responding to natural disasters (EADRCC). The country also participated in the work of the General Civil Emergency Planning Committee.

Croatia joined the MAP in 2002. The main directions of reforms were political, military and security sectors. Achieving the democratic standards, reducing corruption, the fight against organized crimes, judicial reforms, improving governance, development of good neighbourly relations and ensuring sufficient public support for joining NATO were important priorities of that state. Croatia also cooperated with NATO and its partners in a number of other areas within the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership (EAP). Croatia took part in NATO's operations in Kosovo and Afghanistan. The fight against terrorism was held within the framework of the partnership against terrorism[2].

BiH has long made it clear that it wants to join NATO but did not become a member of the PfP until December 2006. It was one of the last Western Balkan countries to do so and was a sign of how slowly the process has moved as a result of internal disputes[3].

J.Simic has noticed that the first stage for NATO's membership was joining to PfP[4]. In such way Belgrade gained access to a number of NATO committees as well as to its programs, and became eligible to get support from the range of NATO's funds. It has also joined the planning and review process (parp), which is the basic tool within the PfP through which the partners can reform their armed forces, adopt NATO's standards and achieve higher interoperability[5].

In June 2003 Belgrade submitted a formal application to join the NATO program Partnership for Peace. Since that time, military officers and civilians involved in NATO orientation courses. Students receive basic information about the Alliance, as well as information on crisis management, peace support operations and civil-military cooperation. During his visit to the United States in July 2003 Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Zhivkovich announced that the armed forces of Serbia and Montenegro were ready to participate in ongoing peacekeeping missions, such as NATO operations in Afghanistan. Relations between NATO, Serbia and Montenegro have improved so much that in November 2003, NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson was able to visit Belgrade during his farewell tour of the former Yugoslavia[6].

M.Nic and J. Cingel noticed that Serbia has joined individual partnership action plan (IPAP). According to IPAP, more political consultations and practical cooperation were held[7].

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Serbia and Montenegro's joining to the Partnership for Peace have other significant benefits to NATO and the international community, because without constructive partnership relations with Belgrade would be difficult in the long term to restore security and stability in the region. Like Serbia and Montenegro, in the recent past, Bosnia and Herzegovina has also achieved great success in military reform. In 1995 the country's power structure consisted of three competing armies, and this couldn't be the key to long-term stability. As a result, NATO and other international organizations have been working over reforms of defence structures in Bosnia together with the authorities of the state. In 2003, this work received concrete results - the Department of Defence has been created. As the tasks of NATO in Bosnia and Herzegovina will change in the coming months and years, the Alliance will continue to cooperate with Bosnian authorities to maintain the rhythm of reforms. In implementation of the program of military reform for accession to the Partnership for Peace, Bosnia and Herzegovina must also demonstrate that it fully cooperates with the ICTY scale, including at least providing of information on Radovan Karadzic and aid in his arrest. Despite many unresolved issues in the Balkans, now it is clear that NATO's decision to use military force and means to stop the fighting in former Yugoslavia were courageous, principled and farsighted. NATO also provided the necessary conditions for the development of civil society[1].

Accession to NATO is certainly priority for the region, because in addition to stabilizing function, Alliance's membership is viewed as an intermediate stage for EU accession. The EU and NATO have combined their efforts to maintain peace and stability in the region. NATO provides different kind of support. BiH receives assistance in resolving of its internal problems, reforming the army. Macedonia avoided the deepening of civil conflict between the Macedonian and Albanian populations. MAP can be seen as an additional incentive in the process of normalization of relations between neighbouring states and thus in prevention of new conflicts in the region. Last NATO's expanding to countries of the region showed that the countries with different backgrounds can become member of alliance. Croatia was the most prepared for entering. Albania was not quite ready to join NATO, but it could be assumed that the country adapts quickly, if it is a NATO's member. The accession of these countries to the Alliance reduces the possibility of new armed conflicts appearance.

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