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progress, determination, influence

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ANALYSIS

10 X IN FAVOR NATO

2014, August

1 The initial provision of the North-Atlantic Agreement defines the principles, conditions and standards that countries aspiring for membership need to achieve in order to become a NATO member. Among others things, prospective members are expected to be "determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual freedoms and rights, that they want to promote stability and prosperity in the north Atlantic area," and that they "contribute to the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions, by promoting a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded, stability and prosperity". NATO member states, as well as partners, undertake a number of far-reaching political commitments, such as: to protect the democratic character of society, to support and uphold the principles of international law, the fulfillment of the obligations under the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Helsinki Final Act and international agreements on disarmament and arms control. Furthermore, the state is obliged to: refrain from threats or use of force against other states, respect existing borders and settle disputes by peaceful means.

To be in a society of such states, and to act at the domestic and international plan by these principles, should be the main reason why Serbia should become a full-fledged member of NATO.

2 So far, NATO countries have not gone to war against each other. Historical experience offers us strong evidence that NATO membership, and its expansion, leads to historic reconciliation (France, Germany) stability and democratization of states (Spain, Greece, Portugal..). Participation in the NATO operation through a system of consultation encourages conflicted parties (Turkey, Greece, Hungary and Romania), to find a solution through peaceful means. In the terms of NATO expansion, defined after the Cold War, a new term was introduced – to have each country solve problems with its neighboring countries before becoming a member.

When a country becomes a member, mutual trust is achieved through transparency of military planning and adaptation of military forces for collective defense. Other membership standards have also been raised, such as the fight against corruption, organized crime, improving the judicial system, improving the efficiency of institutions, the ability to participate in NATO-led operations, transformation of the armed forces and the like. If we use historical analogies, rapid expansion of NATO in post-Yugoslav countries would significantly contribute to the long-term stabilization and expansion of democracy in this region.

Having in mind the heavy burden of the war-criminal heritage, economic sanctions, command economy, objectively and subjectively successful democracy, it is obvious that, in the case of Serbia, the process of European integration is necessary but insufficient to implement all the necessary reforms, especially those in the security system, personnel and organizational. This is, also, why it is necessary for Serbia to become a NATO member.

3 Many relevant comparative research unquestionably shows that, in the long-term, the countries with such an inner-political establishment are by rule of thumb the most stable, not only socially, but also economically, because independent institutions, division of powers and rule of law

and protection of human rights, give the best results for stable economic growth in the long-term. In all the lists of most developed world countries, NATO Member States, or their close partners from the rest of the world are at the very top, along with countries with vast natural resources, which the majority of NATO Member States do not have.

4 Through full-fledged NATO membership, a country becomes an integral part of the decision-making mechanism in NATO. It should be emphasized that all decisions in NATO are reached through consensus, which in practice means that without the consent of one of the Member States, it is not possible to make a NATO decision. This mechanism guarantees NATO Member States their independence; hence it prevents the imposition of someone else's will, if a country disagrees. This mechanism, at the same time, does not mean that the Member States can and should, without any reason, prevent, and be the constant reason preventing decision making in NATO. In the decision-making process what precedes is a very comprehensive process of consultation and confrontation of arguments, which in most cases results in the creation of decisions „made to measure“ all NATO Member States.

In addition to reaching consensus, there exists another form of support, and it is constructive abstention. This means that a Member States does not block reaching a decision in the decision-making process, but refrains from the execution of this decision once it is reached. One example is the NATO-led operation in Kosovo.

Serbia would, as a NATO member, be an equal subject in decision-making on many important geo-strategic and regional issues, and not just a consumer and implementer of those decisions. This would certainly have a positive effect on its overall foreign policy position.

5 The first and most basic direct benefit of membership is enjoyment of the rights, as well as obligations, arising from Article 5 of the North-Atlantic Agreement which states that an attacked Member State will be defended by the entire Alliance. So far, Article 5 of the Agreement was used only once, immediately after the September 11 attack on the USA in 2001, when this country requested the activation of this mechanism. Allies responded by mobilizing certain military-technical capacities, hence verifying the unity in the Alliance, and proving that the mechanism contained in this Article is very much current and not just a "dead letter". Despite being used only once, it is important to emphasize that during each NATO Summit, the commitment contained in this Article is confirmed again. It is considered that it is precisely Article 5 of the Agreement that contributed to the maintenance of peace in Europe over the last 64 years, being one of the foundations of deterrence since the beginning of military conflict between two military blocs during the Cold War. By joining NATO, the sphere covered by Article 5 is extended to the territory of Serbia. Therefore, full-fledged membership in NATO guarantees the Member State mechanisms of collective protection and other forms of support that, for justified reasons, cannot be guaranteed even to countries close to NATO. Bearing in mind the ever-expanding and globalized spectrum of security challenges and threats with which individual countries, groups of countries and the entire planet are faced with, it is obvious that it is hard to adequately respond to them individually. NATO represents a functional framework for collective security in the Euro-Atlantic region which Serbia geographically belong to.

Serbia is a small country with insufficient natural and human resources to be able to respond to all challenges and threats independently. The policy of military neutrality, even when adequately grounded and internationally recognized – which is not the case of Serbia – lacks an adequate response to the needs for rapid reaction to the increasingly often asymmetric globalized security threats. Through NATO membership, Serbia would enable itself to be a strategic partner with other countries in its close geographic environment, with which it is only possible to adequately react to the great number of security threats and challenges, especially those caused by natural disasters or human factor.

6 According to Article 4 provisions of the North Atlantic Agreement, each state has a right to call for consultations whenever it considers necessary and when, according to its assessment, her territorial integrity, political independence or security of that NATO Member State is threatened. The last two such consultations were convened by Turkey regarding the risk of a spillover of the conflict in Syria to Turkish territory. Then, the Allies gave their unconditional support to Turkey, confirmed the unity of NATO and sent Syria, and the world, a clear message that an attack on one Member State is an attack on the entire Alliance.

Having in mind the Russian de-stabilization of Ukraine, as well as the tensions in the Western Balkans region, the decline in support for the basic European values in some EU Member States, the strengthening of identity politics within them, it is obvious that Serbia is still exposed to various types of security threats that are not being given adequate attention. On the other hand, Kosovo is still considered as the greatest security threat, even though Serbia entered the process of intensive normalization of relations with Kosovo. Experts also consider that the list of other threats and challenges states in the National Security Strategy is unrealistic. Kosovo is, by the way, dedicated by majority to become a NATO member. Serbia would, therefore, through NATO membership, via Article 4 mechanisms, be able to request support for potential security tensions that it cannot respond to independently on time, but also to improve its relations with Kosovo in the field of security. Bearing in mind that security is indivisible, this is of great importance.

7 NATO Member States have transparent defense budgets. They try to strategically plan these expenditure together, thus forming mechanisms of joint participation in procurement of equipment and other joint use of resources. Serbia is struggling with a vast budget deficit, also caused by extensive misuse of budget funds, as well as their abuses. Through NATO membership, this would be reduced. Serbia would, for the same amount of money allocated for security and defense, gain more security for fewer resources through NATO membership. This is often overlooked when, as a counter-argument for membership, the infamous provision on the obligation of allocating 2% of GDP for defense is mentioned.

8 In the North-Atlantic world, NATO has no alternative, as it is often argued in Serbia. There is no other military-political alliance with a clearly defined method of decision-making and a developed joint command structure. The Common Security and Defense Policy of the EU does not have this, not

to mention the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). This is another reason why Serbia should, along with the efforts it is already making to become a member of the EU, make an additional effort to also become a member of NATO. Just to mention, the majority of EU Member States are also members of NATO, and those that are not in NATO, still cooperate very closely. They have a significantly different historical context to Serbia, have succeeded in the process of democratizations, and therefore have larger budgets.

9 Although it is hard to detect the exact proportion that only NATO membership brings in economic terms, all new Member States agree that they have experienced a so-called “NATO effect” after joining – starting with an increase in GDP. Security and stability directly affect the certainty that prevails in the business environment. Through NATO membership, the political risk of doing business is reduced, the country becomes more attractive for both domestic and foreign investment, which directly affects business decision-making for commencing a business cycle. In psychological terms, in a secure, stable and certain business environment, it is easier for subjects to make decisions on whether to enter into business risk. This leads to improvement of the investment climate, growth of employment, improvement in competitiveness, increase in exports, and growth of domestic consumption, all of which, in the end, leads to a rise in the living standard of citizens.

Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, which joined NATO in 1999, experienced GDP growth just before entering, following a slight fall until 2002, since when a constant growth rate in GDP is recorded. This corresponds to the rapprochement of EU membership, which followed, in 2004. For the Baltic states, it is slightly more difficult to assess the direct influence of NATO membership on GDP growth, as all three countries entered both NATO and the EU in the same year. Nevertheless, data shows that these countries recorded a steady growth of GDP, compared to previous years. Hence, for example, in the year of joining, the rate of GDP growth compared to 2003 was between 6% and 7% in Estonia, while Latvia recorded a GDP growth of 8%. This trend of strong GDP growth was also recorded in the following years. The case of Slovenia and Slovakia is the same, where a significant growth of GDP was recorded after joining NATO and the EU, as well as in Romania and Bulgaria, where the established trend of GDP growth following NATO membership continued to take place even after joining the EU.

All of them noticed that NATO membership also had an effect on the increase in foreign direct investment (FDI). Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, recorded a significant increase in foreign direct investment after joining NATO (for some even double). In the year of joining NATO, Bulgaria recorded an increase in FDI by 47,5%, and Romania by as much as 166,29%, compared to the years before. Estonia, even though it recorded a fall in FDI of 5,72% in the year of joining in 2004, recorded an increase of 190,84% already in 2005. Lithuania recorded an increase in FDI of 289,38% in the year of joining, and Latvia recorded an increase of 90,07%. The case is similar in Slovenia and Slovakia, who joined NATO in 2004, and were already recording high growth rates of FDI in the years before joining (In 2002, FDI in Slovakia rose by an impressive 317,96% compared to 2001, and by 148,7% in Slovenia), while in the year of joining, Slovakia recorded a fall in FDI of 39,89%, while in Slovenia this rate increased by 27,59%. It is important to note that in over the years that followed, these countries consistently experienced FDI growth.

The defense industry, referring to the production of almost all military equipment exported from Serbia, is considered as a major economic potential for Serbia. NATO membership is an exceptional opportunity for developing capacity of the defense industry, having it grow into a realistically strong industry, transparently led. Serbia's NATO membership would open a possibility to have domestic defense industry companies participate in NATO tenders and programs of weapons, material and military equipment delivery.

Serbia is in an extremely difficult economic situation. The current measures are coerced and are not strategic. The experience of neighboring countries and countries with similar recent history clearly shows the economic benefits that the political system a NATO Member States should have bring, as well as membership itself. Furthermore, the majority of NATO Member States integrate even further through negotiations on the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between USA and the EU. This integration, however complicated it may be, is certainly eased by membership in these institutions. Regionalization has, otherwise, imposed itself a long time ago as the most adequate response to globalization. It maximizes the positive effects of the same, and absorbs the majority of negative ones. NATO is a regional Euro-Atlantic organization, and it will be this, most likely, for a very long time. Serbia, unlike some other transition countries in the world, has a unique historical and geographical opportunity to be an integral part of this functional community. It would be irresponsible of the state not to take advantage of it.

10 Therefore – join NATO.



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