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working
paper

Serbia and NATO:

From enemies to (almost) partners


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Executive summary

This paper explores the ambivalence of current Serbia - NATO relations. The relationship features alongside Serbia's 'exceptionality' in comparison to the relations of the other Western Balkan countries with the Alliance. In spite of this 'exceptionality' Serbia's security policies have been brought in line with the prevailing security discourse and concept of NATO. The main event that has shaped Serbia - NATO relations is the 1999 bombing campaign of which its consequences and impact on current Serbia - NATO relations are described and analysed here. The central argument is that despite the experience of NATO's hard power in 1999, Serbia's security policies have been socialised through the post-1999 engagement with the Alliance as well as the perceived convergence of NATO's and the European Union's security policies. This case study contributes to the literature on socialisation by analysing an exceptional case of socialisation which took place without Serbia either being a member of the EU or NATO, or any sort of declared ambition to join the Alliance. It stands in contrast to the already explored examples of socialisation of the Central and East European, Baltic and Balkans states whose security policies have been socialised due to these countries' open and undisputed ambitions to join both the EU and NATO and their following admittance into both of these organizations.

Introduction

Owing to NATO's 1999 intervention in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which led to the Yugoslav Armed Forces' withdrawal from Kosovo, Serbia today enjoys exceptionality in its relations with the Alliance that is being acknowledged by both Serbia and NATO. Exceptionality implies being the only Balkan state that has not either already achieved NATO membership, as is the case with Croatia and Albania, or declared that ambition, as Montenegro, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have done. This exceptionality is referred to almost every time NATO officials speak about its relations with Serbia.

After NATO has adopted its new Strategic Concept nothing seems to be changing radically in the Alliance's relations with Serbia--the biggest and, in terms of its relations with the Alliance, most distinctive Balkan state. For NATO this relationship does not seem to be of huge relevance since the Balkans is not seemingly in the spotlight any more when it comes to security issues. As was evident even before the official document of the Alliance's new Strategic Concept was adopted, the Balkans will not be high on the Alliance's agenda in the forthcoming period since NATO's resources and energy will be devoted to more troubled regions such as Afghanistan.¹ This was confirmed when the document was adopted at the Lisbon Summit in November 2010.²

Moreover, NATO's role in the region of the Balkans is unchallenged since not a single Balkan state opposes the Alliance's mission and credentials for the stabilization of this previously troubled region. While even Serbia avoids such confrontation, unlike its regional neighbours it has never declared any ambition to join the Alliance. What is puzzling is the fact that, despite having been on the receiving end of NATO's hard power only 13 years ago, Serbia's contemporary security policies have developed in accordance with the

1 Report of the expert group tasked with delivering the proposal of a new strategic concept under the guidance of Madeleine Albright NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement, May 2010, available at: <http://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/expertsreport.pdf>.

2 Active Engagement, Modern Defence, Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Adopted by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Lisbon 19-20 November 2010, available at: http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120214_strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf.

dominant security discourse most strongly promoted by the European Union and NATO, as well as by the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Although the same discourse is shared by all these political and security organizations, NATO and the EU are taken here as the most relevant security actors capable of promoting that discourse via a politics of conditionality and the EU accession process to which Serbia is subject. The main features of this discourse are the adoption of a broad understanding of a security and its referent objects and principle threats, cooperation amongst different actors that share common (democratic) values and norms, and a common understanding of security that engages them to belong to a security community. Serbia's acceptance of the prevailing security discourse are evident in a) its adopted strategic documents; b) the rhetoric employed by its current political and military establishment; and c) its policies of cooperation and participation in the global security agenda, such as regional security cooperation and participation in multinational operations.

There is developed literature on the Europeanization of national security policies under the auspices of either the EU or NATO which describes mechanisms through which socialisation of the national security policies takes place. However, all of the elaborated examples of such socialisation involve member states of one or the other organization (e.g. Norway, Sweden)³ or candidate states aspiring to join both the Alliance and the EU (e.g. Croatia, Macedonia)⁴. The Serbian case is exceptional because socialisation took place in spite of its turbulent past with the pillar organization of Euro - Atlantic security and without the conditions deemed necessary for the socialisation to take place—either membership in the organization or the ambition to join it which would set the politics of conditionality in motion, as shown in the cases of Central and East European states. The central argument used in this paper is that socialisation did take place in the case of Serbia despite the absence of those preconditions due to the convergence of the NATO and the EU security policies, as perceived by Serbian political decision-makers, as well as the strong discourse of inclusion promoted by both NATO and the EU since 1990s.⁵ The mechanism through which this socialisation took place is NATO engagement through the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme, the Defence Reform Group, and cooperation with the KFOR mission in Kosovo.

3 See for example: Pernille Rieker, 'Europeanization of Nordic Security, The European Union and the Changing Security Identities of the Nordic States', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 2004. Douglas Brommesson, 'Normative Europeanization: The case of Swedish foreign policy reorientation', *Cooperation and Conflict* June 1, 2010 45: 224-244.

4 Frank Schimmelfennig, 'The EU, NATO and the Integration of Europe - Rules and Rhetoric', Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003.

5 On security inclusion and the discourse of inclusion in: Mark Webber, 'Inclusion, Exclusion and the Governance of European Security', Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2007, pp 1-26.

The first section of this paper will present the theoretical framework of the analysis offered by the social-constructivist approach in the political sciences within which the process of socialisation has been explained. The theoretical section will also put forward its contribution as to how socialisation is taking place without direct conditionality or membership incentives being employed. The second section will go into empirical analysis of the Serbian security policies being adapted in line with the security thinking employed by NATO and the EU.

Theoretical framework

This paper uses the arguments and explanatory matrix developed within social-constructivism to explain how Serbia's security politics, in spite of the state's turbulent relations with NATO, came into accordance with the security concepts and discourse promoted by the Alliance since 1990s. For that purpose, the author will use the concept of socialisation as studied and explained by the constructivism in political studies. Socialisation is a process through which the state's actions, preferences and interests are shaped by its environment and interaction with other actors (other states, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, etc) so as to fit the norms of a given community/society. This phenomenon has been studied by the authors of realism and liberal-institutionalism. The former claim that socialisation takes place when states reconcile their actions and policies to the internationally accepted standards in order to achieve legitimization. The latter claim that socialisation has far more profound effects than simple adaptation of state behaviour to the established norms and values that they follow in their foreign affairs. Socialisation, they would claim, leads to norms being truly accepted and embodied into national policies, instead of those policies being simply adapted in the expectation of benefits and rewards for desirable behaviour. Social constructivism claims changes of the value system a state accepts and practises as a result of acceptance of internationally accepted norms and values. This approach allows for the explanation of individual states' preferences but it is also applicable to the certain cases of collective decision-making in situations where rationalisms would fail to provide the explanation why particular decisions were made. Frank Schimmelfennig used this approach to explain why the EU and NATO went for the eastern enlargements despite the absence of tangible material gains on their behalf.⁶ The eastern enlargement is not the only case when social constructivism provides explanation why something happened.

6 Frank Schimmelfennig, 'The EU, NATO and the Integration of Europe - Rules and Rhetoric', Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003.

NATO's decision both to enlarge towards the East and to intervene in the ex-Yugoslavia conflict is explainable by the Alliance's rhetorical attachment to liberal norms and values. Social constructivism claims that adherence to generally accepted norms and rules of behaviour impacts states' preference formulation and therefore explains why NATO went into an 'out-of-area' operation in the Balkans where the security of its member states was not at stake. Following this argument, the Alliance was able to achieve a high level of consensus and cooperation between the member states in spite of the absence of material and political incentives.⁷

The same theoretical matrix of social constructivism can explain how Serbia has adopted security policies which confirm the norms and values embodied in the Alliance's strategic documents.

The case of Serbia: Socialisation through engagement

When compared with the socialisation of the CEE countries, Serbia's socialisation is exceptional in three ways. Unlike the CEE, which claimed a 'return to Europe' to be the driving force behind their ambition to join the EU and NATO in the 1990s, Serbia was deprived of this argument since it was in an open conflict with NATO and had been under sanctions imposed by the EU. Serbia did, however, make such a claim after 2000, but only in relation to the EU since there is no officially declared ambition to join NATO. Secondly, Serbia, as just stated, does not claim NATO membership to be a goal in the foreseeable future, unlike most of the CEE elites who do not seem to have separated the two - NATO and EU membership. Their membership into those two organizations happened almost simultaneously with the NATO membership taking place before the EU entry. Thirdly, unlike CEE states, Serbia has officially proclaimed a politics of military neutrality while expressing an interest in contributing to regional and international security by cooperative regional politics and participation in multinational operations. In spite of these differences, the argument presented here is that Serbia's security policies were realigned with the EU and NATO security discourse through a) engagement with the Alliance from 2000 onwards and b) Serbian decision-makers' perception of the same values being promoted by both NATO and the EU.

⁷ Frank Schimmelfennig, „Transatlantic relations, multilateralism and the transformation of NATO“, in Bourantonis, D, Ifantis, K. and Tsakonias, P. (eds) *Multilateralism and Security Institutions in an Era of Globalization*, Routledge 2008, pp. 183-202.

Post-1999 engagement with the Alliance and normalization of the relations between the two was most significantly highlighted in 2002 when then-Yugoslavia acquired observer status in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. In the same year, the agreement on air transit routes between the FRY and NATO was signed. In June 2003, the FRY officially asked for membership in NATO's Partnership for Peace, but this was not realised until December of 2006. Even after PfP membership was achieved, Serbia-NATO relations have not seen tremendous improvement as will be explained later in the text. However, in spite of Serbia's reluctance in its relations with NATO, that engagement has had a transformative impact on Serbia's security policy.

Unlike the controversy attached to Serbia-NATO relations and the Alliance's negative image in the Serbian public, Serbian integration in the EU enjoys strong public support and has been declared the country's top foreign policy goal. Surveys show steady popular support of at least 50 percent of Serbian citizens who would vote 'yes' when asked if Serbia should join the EU 28 percent of the respondents would respond negatively, according to the Serbian EU Integration Office poll from January 2012. This data, compared to the figures from 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 demonstrates a decrease in support toward EU membership while the support towards the EU in 2007 was even higher, ranging from 66 to 70 percent in several polls. Although there is trend of decreasing support, the breakthrough in Serbia relations with the EU which took place in March 2012 will solidify that support on the level of at least 50 percent. After many delays and uncertainties accompanying Serbia's path towards the EU, Serbia has been granted status of candidate country in March 2012. After that its future as the EU member state seems certain, no matter how long it might take for Serbia's entrance into the EU to take place. Accession to the EU is taken as the almost indisputable national priority number one, challenged by almost none of the most significant (in terms of the number of voters they claim) political actors. Even those smaller political groups expressing opposition towards the EU are rather challenging the form of the accession and the conditions being set in front of Serbia rather than EU accession as such,⁸ or they debate the attractiveness of the EU in the light of the ongoing economic crisis.

In spite of the fact that Serbia's foreign policy agenda takes differing stands towards NATO and the EU, Serbian decision-makers have recognized that both the EU and NATO communities declare the same set of common values and that their security policies have many common features. This recognition has helped the socialisation of Serbia's security policies in spite of the burden of the 1999 bombing campaign conducted by NATO.

⁸ Example of this is the Democratic Party of Serbia and their position towards Serbia's accession to the EU which this party is not opposing in principle, rather the conditions being set in front of Serbia and especially the fear that Serbia would have to recognize Kosovo independence as the main condition for the entry into the EU.

Although it has been argued that the EU and NATO could not be regarded as expressions of the same security community since their organizational principles, membership and geographical foci are different and there are different incentives behind an ambition to join one or the other,⁹ the case study of Serbia as presented here demonstrates that the perceived differences between the two are not of the utmost importance for non-members. Recognition of an “identical” set of values being promoted by both the EU and NATO and a common set of goals to be achieved by being a member of one or the other has been, in the Serbian case, rolled-up under the banner of ‘Europeanization’. This term entered Serbian public discourse only recently and has since been used by Serbian decision makers as a reference point mostly when referring to the process of accession to the EU.¹⁰ Still, this term is equally applicable for the process of Serbia’s alignment with NATO, especially when used by those political actors who claim that accession to the EU and NATO cannot be achieved separately and it is necessary and desirable to approach both simultaneously.¹¹ The argument here is that the silent placing of NATO in a package with the EU under the umbrella of ‘Europeanization’ is a deliberate strategy employed to overcome the extremely unpopular standing of NATO within the Serbian public. In other words, if taken together with the EU, NATO can be “sold” much more easily to the Serbian public. This strategy is exactly what certain opposition parties are accusing governmental parties of doing.¹²

As presented to the Serbian public, the benefits of ‘Europeanization’ for Serbia and its citizens are twofold-clear and expected economic benefits but also confirmation of a European identity and belonging to the European community. The language of ‘belonging’ and ‘relevance’ in regional and global terms, as well as the attraction of tangible benefits such as prospects for the development of a military industry are used by the Serbian political and military leadership when referring to Serbia-NATO relations. Apart from increased opportunities for the military industry, the ‘material benefits’ argument is more prominent and more often employed since the benefits of Serbia joining NATO are mostly explained in terms of increased chances for foreign direct investments—in the event of NATO membership a message would be sent to foreign investors that Serbia has a stable

9 Mark Webber, ‘Inclusion, Exclusion and the Governance of European Security’, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2007, pp. 5, 20.

10 Dragan Šutanovac, „Reforma sistema odbrane - evropeizacija Srbije“, *Danas*, 20 May 2011

11 Those are Liberal - Democratic Party and Serbian Renewal Movement. Liberal-Democratic Party, „Dogovor za preokret“, Izborna platforma, <http://www.ldp.rs/upload/documents/2011/Izborna%20platforma%20-%20DOGOVOR%20ZA%20PREOKRET.pdf>. Serbian Renewal Movement, Program, <http://www.spo.org.rs/action.php?objekat=Program&akcija=Pregled>.

12 Serbian Radical Party, „SRS protiv približavanja Srbije NATO paktu“, Radio Television Vojvodina, 14 April 2011, http://www.rtv.rs/sr_lat/politika/srs-protiv-priblizavanja-srbije-nato-paktu_249087.html

and predictable political and economic environment. Besides these arguments, material benefits are also explained as support for the military professionalization process. The top political and military officials, the Minister of Defence and Chief of the General Staff during 2010, make a clear connection between ‘the highest standards of military profession’ promoted by NATO and the process of military professionalization in Serbia.¹³ Besides these arguments which belong to the group of “material benefits” arguments there is second group of arguments which are employed by political leaders to persuade public and the opponents in benefits of Serbia belonging to the organization of collective security. This second group of arguments are referring to the benefits that Serbia’s image and reputation abroad would enjoy if the state demonstrates capacity and willingness to contribute to regional and global security. As the most direct example of how Serbia would demonstrate that is the participation in the multinational operations. By participating in multinational operations, the argument goes, Serbia would contribute to regional and global security, thereby proving its relevance and credibility but even more proving it thinks and behaves as other European states do when taking their share of responsibility in peace-keeping.¹⁴ Thus, both the expected tangible benefits and confirmation of European identity are employed in relation to both organizations, making it easier for NATO advocates to argue in favour of membership. That said, the weight of these arguments is still seriously tempered by memories of the 1999 bombing campaign.

What did Serbia learn from the 1999 campaign?

The NATO bombing campaign against the FRY in 1999 is certainly the most important event that has influenced Serbia’s relations with the Alliance from 1999 until today. It has influenced Serbia’s security politics in the short- and long-term. It influenced Serbia’s security policies in 1999/2000 in two ways. Firstly, it served as a demonstration of a changed global security agenda that Serbia had to take into account and to adjust to. Although the intervention took place 10 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War between two superpowers and their military alliances during which tremendous changes took place in Europe and around the world, Serbia had in 1999 still not adjusted

¹³ Chief of the General Staff, Miloje Miletić, ‘Stabilno, ali osetljivo’, Radio Television Serbia, 8 January 2010

¹⁴ Chief of the General Staff, Ljubiša Diković, „O vojsci i optužbama za ratovanje na Kosovu“, *Vreme*, 1100, 2 February 2012.

to those changes. The main reason for this is that Serbia was faced with the Yugoslav wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and afterwards with the crisis in Kosovo. While the ex Warsaw Pact members in Central and Eastern Europe had, immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact in 1989, readily embraced the agenda of the EU and NATO membership as their indisputable priorities, Yugoslavia was faced with wars linked to the issues of territory and national identities, preventing them from dealing with transitional issues such as democratisation, a new institutional set-up, and economic recovery. In other words, while the CEE states were dealing with issues of distribution such as economic competition and privatization, Serbia's political agenda consisted of issues of nationalism and national identity and wars connected to these issues.¹⁵ This led to Serbia's security discourse during the 1990s to be fashioned more in accordance with the 'hard security' discourse and traditional threats, with an accent on military power as the main asset and wars and armed aggression as the main threats to state security. Within this discourse there was no room for such concepts as human security or a security community strongly promoted by the EU and NATO after the Cold War.

Unlike the security discourse dominant in Serbia in the 1990s, NATO's 1999 operation was rationalised by the logic of humanitarian intervention which belongs to a completely different security discourse and which acknowledges a different set of security objectives and threats. The logic of humanitarian intervention implies that the mass violations of human rights perpetrated by one state could be grounds for a foreign intervention aimed at preventing further violations, even within the realm of a sovereign state. This is in accordance with the human security concept which, unlike the narrow security approach that assumes state territory and its sovereignty as indisputable, acknowledges humans and their rights as valid objects of security. It is also in accordance with the broad security agenda that has been incorporated in the EU Security Strategy from 2003, as well as in all NATO's post-Cold War Strategic Concepts. This agenda, unlike the traditional one prevalent during the Cold War, recognizes 'soft' security threats, such as organized crime, corruption, state fragility and human rights violations as valid threats to human, national and global security and tries to address them through a modified set of security policies compared to those that were employed during the Cold War. NATO's 1999 intervention against the FRY was a strong demonstration of the Alliance acting in accordance with this broad agenda, which found its place in the Alliance's 1999 Strategic Concept adopted in April 1999. It was also a strong demonstration to Serbian elites of the limits of the concept of sovereignty and territorial integrity which this intervention bypassed by acting in accordance with the logic of humanitarian interventionism.

15 D. Pavlović, S. AntoniĆ, *Konsolidacija demokratskih ustanova u Srbiji*, Službeni glasnik, 2007, pp. 229 - 236.

Secondly, the 1999 intervention indirectly influenced changes in Serbian foreign and security politics by becoming an issue relevant for the 2000 elections which Milosevic lost and which subsequently led to the democratic changes of October 2000 in Serbia. NATO intervention temporarily ended the dominance of the 'Kosovo issue' in Serbian political discourse and reinforced a new agenda for the 2000 elections. Results from opinion polls conducted two months after the intervention showed that Serbian citizens did not claim Kosovo to be the most important issue anymore. This trend of decreasing the importance of Kosovo on the political agenda as the September 2000 elections approached was even more evident. This meant that the election would be lost by the political forces that tried to gain voters' support by reinforcing nationalistic sentiments, a strategy Milosevic took and which led to him losing the elections.¹⁶

In the long-term, the 1999 intervention has influenced Serbia's security policies in three ways. Firstly, it marked the peak of the isolation that Serbia and the FRY faced in the 1990s, during which the FRY was exposed to economic sanctions, expelled from international organizations, and had broken diplomatic relations with most EU and NATO member states. The military action NATO conducted against the FRY was certainly the highest level of isolation Serbia had experienced in recent history leading to its label as 'pariah' state. Serbia's 'exclusion' was that much worse because it happened in the context of the 1990s when both the EU and NATO had embraced the agenda of abandoning Cold-War division and were engaging with former adversaries from the CEE. Secondly, the 1999 bombing also marked the defeat of the FRY's Armed Forces against a vastly superior enemy which led to the Kumanovo agreement, according to which the FRY's Armed Forces withdrew from the territory, leaving room for international peace keeping forces and a UN Security Council mandate to govern the province according to Resolution 1244. Consequently, NATO troops were installed in the region and remain until today as the supreme guarantor of peace and stability in the province. By the 1999 intervention and following its military presence in the province, the Alliance acted as an external factor in Western Balkan regional security dynamics that all regional actors took into account. The Kosovo Force (KFOR) presence in Kosovo and their mandate to safeguard peace and stability in the province is a fact that both the National Security and the Defence Strategy adopted by the Serbian Parliament in October 2009 refer to as a factor that has to be taken into account when drafting security and defence policies.

The third long-term consequence of the 1999 intervention is that it has defined the Serbian public's perception of the Alliance ever since. Available public opinion polls from 2003 until today have shown that the bombing NATO launched against the FRY is the most stable factor influencing public sentiment towards the Alliance and towards the possibility

16 Dušan Pavlović, *Akteri i modeli: ogled o politici u Srbiji pod Miloševićem*, Samizdat B92, 2001, p. 223.

of Serbia's future application for membership. The prevailing negative image the Alliance experiences amongst Serbs—and not only Serbs living in the Republic of Serbia, but also those living in Republic Srpska and Montenegro, is explained primarily by the 1995 and 1999 interventions in the region.¹⁷ The consistent ratio of more than fifty percent of the Serbian population who would say 'no' in a referendum on Serbian membership in the Alliance, and less than 30 percent who would say 'yes' , is one of the factors Serbian decision makers take into serious account when discussing Serbian politics towards the Alliance. The prevailing negative image of NATO among the Serbian public has frequently served as an excuse for the state leadership to artificially remove the possibility of joining NATO from the agenda and to choose not to speak clearly on the issue. Public opinion polls are indeed a limiting maneuver for the Serbian establishment since they indicate that any establishment willing to promote the idea of Serbian membership in the Alliance would risk negative voter response during elections.

The current state of affairs between Serbia and NATO and the security discourse in Serbia

Today Serbia remains the Western Balkan country least interested in joining NATO, despite recent improvements in relations with the Alliance. Unlike its regional neighbors, Serbia never declared an interest in membership despite participating in the PfP program since December 2006. The opening of the Serbian mission at NATO headquarters in Brussels in September 2010 came after two years of deadlock during which Serbian leaders constantly declared the opening of the mission as a priority in relations with NATO but were failing to open the office. The Serbian political leadership lacks a clear message as to whether Serbia should strive for NATO membership at all or if it has chosen alternative security projects. The 'Resolution on the Protection of Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity and Constitutional Order of the Republic of Serbia' adopted by the Serbian Parliament in December 2007, attempted to remove the issue of NATO membership from the Serbian political discourse for a longer period of time. This Resolution introduced the strategy

¹⁷ This is of course the strongest but not the only source of the negative image the Alliance experiences amongst its opponents in the region. There are other negative perceptions of the Alliance. Find more in: 'NATO and the Western Balkans: New Strategic Concept, Old Challenges', EKEM, Athens Working Group: Transforming the Balkans, February 2010, available at: <http://www.ekemprogram.org/awg/images/stories/staff/nato-balkans.pdf>.

of military neutrality by stipulating that Serbia will not engage with any existing military alliance until differently decided during a referendum. Although not explicitly referring to NATO, a simple reading of this document indicates that it was introduced precisely with the intention to remove the issue of possible application to NATO membership in the foreseeable future. Indeed, whenever confronted with the question of whether they are considering possible NATO membership, the Serbian political and military leadership refer to this Resolution as a document introduced by the Parliament which prevents such a possibility. However, the politics of military neutrality in relation to existing military alliances introduced by the Resolution has neither been clearly defined by the Resolution nor by any subsequent document. The National Security Strategy and the Defence Strategy have neglected to clarify both Serbia's ambition towards the Alliance and its concept of military neutrality, according to which Serbia's security policy will be fashioned. Therefore, the adoption of these documents has not helped to clarify or clearly define Serbia's strategic orientation and modus vivendi of cooperation with today's most prominent political-military organization.

In spite of this ambivalence in Serbia-NATO relations, Serbia shares with the Alliance a security discourse dominated by the rhetoric of 'inclusion'. Serbia's security policies as articulated by its political and military leaders are in accordance with the NATO discourse. The umbrella document which is supposed to reveal the security concepts Serbian decision-makers have adopted is the National Security Strategy the Serbian Parliament adopted in October 2009. This is the first strategic document Serbia adopted as a sovereign state in which its leadership declared the values which should be protected, the threats jeopardizing those values and the security policies that would be employed in order to protect its values and fight the threats. Since it is an umbrella document that outlines the security policies of the state, it is taken here as a referent to the security concept the Republic of Serbia officially adopts.

A lot of criticism has been addressed toward the Ministry of Defence which, as the leading actor in the process of drafting the strategy, and on account of the inconsistency of the document, failed to offer a coherent list of security threats or to clarify Serbia's future relations with NATO. In spite of all of this, however, the Strategy recognize a confluence of security threats which, besides direct military aggression or war, supervene from state weakens, economic, social and demographic backgrounds. The Strategy also recognizes the inability of a single state to handle this heterogeneous list of security threats on its own and thus a common security approach and cooperation with other security actors on the regional and global level is essential.¹⁸ Instead of being in accordance with the concept of neutrality introduced at the end of 2007, the Strategy stressed the

18 National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, pp. 3-5.

need to cooperate in the field of security since Serbia alone is not able to cope with security threats on a regional and global level, such as terrorism, organized crime and human trafficking. The only departure from this broad understanding of security is listing 'separatism' which threatens to violate state territorial integrity as a primary security threat, while the self-proclaimed Kosovo independence has been stipulated as a main factor in the destabilization in the region of the Western Balkans. Still, the 'Kosovo factor' had not brought in the state-centric and militaristic approach into the Strategy since it was written with a strong emphasis on security cooperation and a broad list of security threats, other than separatism.

These security concepts are not only employed in the country's core strategic documents that confirm that Serbia's security discourse is in accordance with the security concepts and discourse strongly promoted by NATO and the EU. They are also employed in the rhetoric of the state's political and military leadership. An example of the logic of security cooperation and common security building is regional security politics and its accompanying rhetoric. Regional security cooperation is marked as one of the most important elements of the Serbian Government's security policy, according to the provisions of the state's strategic documents. More narrowly, regional defence cooperation has been ranked highly on the MoD's agenda according to the activities of the Ministry of Defence in 2009 - 2012 period and accompanying statements given by the MoD's top officials.¹⁹ International military cooperation has been nominated as a foreign policy tool in order to promote Serbia's foreign policy image as a powerful contributor to international peace and security. The high attention given by the MoD's political and military establishment to the Ministry's regional activities, both in multilateral and bilateral frameworks, is not surprising if we know that the military's engagement abroad has been considered a tool of the state's foreign policy. Not only Minister of Defence, but also the President himself has repeated more than once that the military and especially its foreign engagement could help verify Serbia's positive representation abroad and its huge contribution to regional peace and stability.²⁰ Besides participation in multinational operations, this includes military cooperation with regional states, thus proving the contribution that defence cooperation gives to confidence-building as a path towards reparation of previously shaken relations.

¹⁹ Regional defence cooperation has been nominated as one of the top priorities, together with the professionalization, housing and modernization of equipment in the Ministry's work for 2009 and 2010 (Dragan Šutanovac, „Novi sistem vrednosti”, *Odbrana*, No 92, July 2009). Indeed, activities and successes achieved in that area have been given prominent place in all the Minister's evaluations of the Ministry's work. It also receives significant coverage in the MoD's official publication “*Odbrana*”. It has been reported that among the main successes of the MoD's work in 2009 is the fact that the Minister had met almost all the Ministers of Defence from the region and especially that the Third Conference of the Chiefs of the Staff from the region had been held in Belgrade in June 2009.

²⁰ Boris Tadić, “U stroju snaga mira”, *Odbrana*, No 116, July 2010.
Boris Tadić, „Vojska garant bezbednosti”, *Odbrana*, No 106, February 2010.

Serbia, according to the President's and Minister's public statements, is even ready to go beyond participation and membership in the existing frameworks of cooperation by claiming leadership in regional cooperation and being a vital player in regional security.²¹ The Republic of Serbia is a member of all the regional initiatives dealing with defence matters under the Regional Cooperation Council umbrella, which is the successor to the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe, as well as a few initiatives initiated by the U.S. or NATO. The exception is the Adriatic Charter where it holds the status of observer due to the initiative's mission to prepare participating states for NATO membership. It is only in the realm of multilateral defence cooperation that Serbia recognizes the limits of distancing itself from NATO. In bilateral cooperation, however, this limitation is not present. Serbia enjoys intensive military cooperation particularly with Greece and Turkey, which have been NATO members for decades. This limitation is also not applicable when it comes to the military cooperation with neighbours who are already or would, in the foreseeable future be NATO member states. Moreover, the MoD officials insist that the status of neutrality must not leave Serbia isolated and therefore cooperation, especially with the neighbours, is strongly emphasized as one of the MoD's priorities.²²

The other example of a security policy that is derived from accepted concepts of common security and the broad security agenda is Serbia's officially proclaimed readiness to contribute to international peacekeeping operations. Members of the Serbian Armed Forces are currently engaged in 5 multinational operations under the UN flag and one EU peacekeeping mission. A newly adopted law which regulates the engagement of Serbian Armed Forces in multinational operations, unlike the previous one, has not recognized a restriction that members of the Serbian Armed Forces could only be sent into missions under UN mandate.²³ In other words, it leaves open the possibility of engagement within peacekeeping missions under NATO or, under the EU flag where the Serbian MoD has announced more prominent participation starting from 2012.

The 1999 intervention between Serbia and NATO has been the strongest and most direct cause for Serbia's current exceptional status in terms of its relations with the Alliance. As explained above, unlike all of its regional neighbours, Serbia is not officially declaring any ambition to join the Alliance.

21 Dragan Šutanovac, "Čast je nasa imovina", *Obrana*, No 109, April 2010.

22 Tanja Mišćević, „Podrška od Brazila do Indonezije“, *Obrana*, No 157, April 2012.

23 Ministarstvo odbrane (2009) Zakon o učešću Vojske Srbije i drugih snaga odbrane u multinacionalnim operacijama van granica Republike Srbije, Beograd, Sl. glasnik 88/2009 (MoD (2009) The Law on the Participation of Serbian Military and Other Defence Forces in the Multinational Operations Outside Serbian Borders, Belgrade, Official Gazette 88/2009).

In spite of this, the Serbian political establishment is not denying NATO's role as the main global security actor nor does it deny NATO's supremacy in terms of capacity. Although not officially aspiring for membership, the Serbian military leadership is referring to NATO as a referent to the best military standards according to which military reform in Serbia could also be conducted. Also, the Serbian political establishment has declared the NATO military presence in Kosovo in the form of KFOR as a guarantee of Kosovo Serbs' protection and safety. Serbia has not yet discussed the possibility of participating in NATO-led peace operations although formulation from the recently-adopted law regulating the involvement of Serbian Armed Forces in multinational operations allows that possibility. Serbian regional politics does not oppose the ambitions of other Balkan states to join the Alliance which is claimed to be the legitimate choice of its neighbours. With this in mind, Serbian 'exceptionality' is not denying NATO's attractiveness to the rest of the Balkans, nor does it create incentives for other regional states to follow any of alternative or competitive security arrangements such as military neutrality or the creation of other security organizations. The fact that the state which experienced first-hand NATO's military might is not denying NATO's role for regional stability speaks to the benefit of the Alliance's reputation as a cornerstone organization of regional and Euro-Atlantic security. Serbian 'exceptionality' has also not diminished NATO's 'power of attraction', both among Central and East European states since there has been no record of diminished enthusiasm for NATO membership after the 1999 campaign. NATO's second eastern enlargement round in 2004 proves this. The Alliance's attractiveness also has not diminished to Western Balkan states which have all stipulated NATO membership among priority foreign policy goals.

Conclusion

In spite of having a turbulent past with the Alliance and having experienced the Alliance's hard power during the bombing campaign in 1999, Serbia's security policies are tailored in accordance with the security concepts and discourse present in the Alliance's strategic concepts from the end of the Cold War onwards. The argument presented here is that Serbia was socialised through engagement with the Alliance after democratic changes took place in 2000 and due to the Serbian elites' perception of the convergent security policies of the Alliance and the EU. In spite of the official politics of military neutrality and non-aspiration to NATO membership, Serbia has adopted strategic documents which are in line with the common security concept and a broad security agenda most strongly promoted by the both NATO and the EU after 1989. The strong incentive to join the EU, as well as steady popular support for accession, has galvanized the socialisation process of Serbia's security community in accordance with the dominant security discourse. This case study fits into existing literature on the socialisation of security policies but contributes to it offering an exceptional case of socialisation without either membership (in the EU and NATO) or declared ambition to join the Alliance, which would introduce into the equation the politics of conditionality.

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Belgrade Centre for Security Policy

The Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP) is an independent think-tank which is publicly advocating human, national, regional and international security based on democracy and respect for human rights. The Centre works towards consolidation of security sector reform (SSR) and security integration of Western Balkan states into Euro-Atlantic community by creating an inclusive and knowledge-based security policy environment. It achieves these goals through research, public advocacy, education, publications and creation of networking opportunities for relevant stakeholders.

