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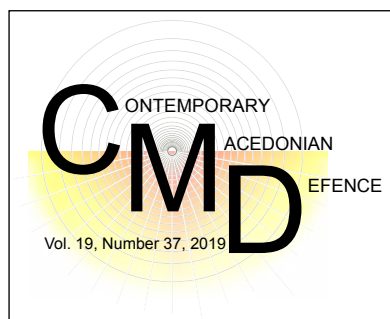
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CONTENTS:

OPERATIONAL TECHNOLOGY CYBERSECURITY: HOW VULNERABLE IS OUR CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE?

Giacomo ASSENZA,
Roberto SETOLA[1]

Abstract:
The employment of OT (Operational Technology) in Critical Infrastructure has largely increased in recent years due to several benefits related to the improvement of efficiency, quality of production, and cost reduction. Unfortunately, the use of these technologies exposes the plants to cyber threats. Indeed, a cyber-attack may cause not only a production interruption, but it could also manipulate the control process in order to induce catastrophic events. This article will provide background on industrial control systems, highlighting their architecture, the critical sectors in which they operate and what makes them so vulnerable, including a focus on the role of Firmware and its vulnerabilities. Also, it will discuss the new ICS business driven trends analysing their impact on security. Finally, it will review relevant features of some of the occurred cyberattacks that caused physical harm.

Key Words: *Cyber-security; Operational Technology; Cyber-Threat; Cyber-physical Systems;*

Introduction

In recent years, cyberattacks targeting OT have emerged as another possible initiator of malicious accident chains. Cyber security threats are becoming a growing concern for all those industrial areas in which automation is pervasive, which includes several sectors, such as the energetic, petrochemical, nuclear etc., that are crucial for the functioning of a modern society and in which the critical infrastructure of a state operates.

Recent business-driven trends such as the move to IT (Information Technology) standards and increasing connectivity have made OT extremely vulnerable and unsecure. The problem is that the OT has several peculiarities that make the implementation of the protection measures that are usually adopted for the IT systems difficult and problematic.

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These trends have also led to a transformation of the source and nature of the threat. If before the main risk concern were the internal attackers, today the majority of attacks originate externally. Also, as demonstrated by episodes like Stuxnet, Irongate, BlackEnergy 3, Crashoverride and Trisis, cyberattacks became liable to cause kinetic effects, thus able to induce failures and to bring the industrial processes to mechanical break points preventing the malicious manipulation from being noticed. For example, a sophisticated offensive team called the Equation Group, developed a module that allowed them to install malicious data in the firmware of hard disks, making it more difficult to detect and repair. This article will provide background on industrial control systems, highlighting their architecture, the critical sectors in which they operate and what makes them so vulnerable, including the role of firmware. Also, it will discuss the new ICS business driven trends analysing their impact on security. Finally, it will review the relevant features of some of the occurred cyberattacks that caused physical harm.

1.   Operational technology

Operational Technology (OT) is an integral part of industrial processes worldwide. OT are systems of interconnected assets, devices and subsystems which employs information and communication technologies (ICTs) to oversee, manage and automate industrial operations in a variety of structures such as electric grids, chemical production and refining infrastructure (Hayden, Assante, & Conway, 2014).

Broadly, there are two primary kinds of OT: Distributed Control Systems (DCS), used to administer processes concentrated in a specific area, and Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems, employed in geographically dispersed facilities. As an example, a gas plant would rely on DCS for the refining process and on a SCADA for managing distribution and monitoring pipelines (Drias, Serhrouchni, & Vogel, 2015). Although DCS and SCADA, as well as other ICS structures, are highly customized depending on the industrial process they oversee, they depend on similar key components that enable three essential tasks: data acquisition, control and supervision, and command execution (Stouffer & Al., 2015).

From the existing security standards (Goodwin, Graebe & Salgado, 2001; Knapp & Langill, 2014; Obregon, 2015; Drias, Serhrouchni, & Vogel, 2015; Stouffer & al., 2015) it is possible to draw a model of an OT system (fig.1). Geographically dispersed on the territory, there are the field devices, such as Programmable Logic Controllers (PLCs), Remote Terminal Units (RTUs) and Intelligent Electronic Devices (IEDs). These are sensors and actuators tasked with controlling process functions, gathering and transmitting data in real time and executing control logic. Sensors and Actuators are based on firmware that could become a serious threat since providers have demonstrated to be excessively slow in releasing patches and updates, which in turn leaves the firmware with critical vulnerabilities that attackers can potentially exploit. Field devices are connected to the control centre through wired or wireless communication links including line-based communication, cellular and radio, and satellite. The control
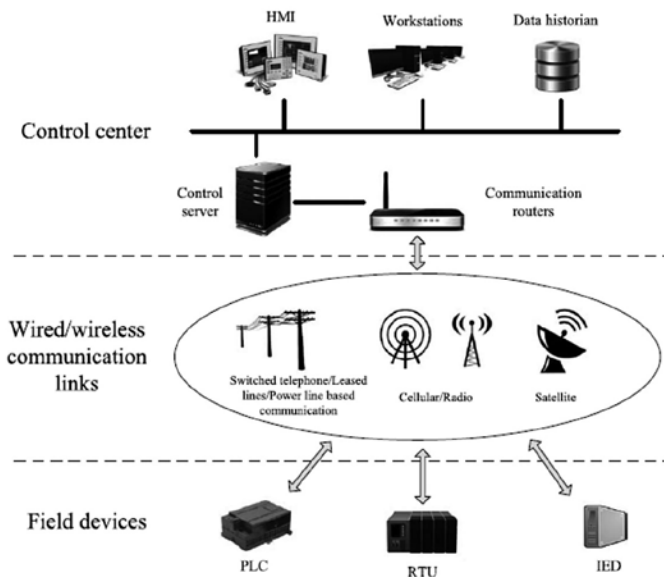
**Figure 1 General structure of an OT environment
(McLaughlin & Al., 2016)**

centre includes three main components: the control server, which is responsible for the configuration of field devices and which hosts all automated control and supervision functions; the data historian, a centralized database that stores and processes all data collected, both centrally and locally; and the Human Machine Interface (HMI), a software enabling the human agent to monitor the process and, if needed, to manually manage operations.

Today's industrial processes are increasingly dependent on OT, including subjects operating in sectors ranging from chemical and nuclear plants, electric grids, oil and gas, energy industry, water and waste management. These sectors are deemed by the majority of states as critical sectors and the assets operating in them are classified as Critical Infrastructure (CI) (Brunner & Suter, 2008). Although there is no common definition of CI, as their individuation reflects cultural, identity geographic or historical experiences (Setola, 2011), they can be characterised as all the systems and assets, whether physical or virtual, whose disruption or incorrect functioning, even if for a limited lapse of time, would have a detrimental impact on national security, economy, health and safety, with wide and unpredictable cascade effects able to compromise the stability of a state (EPCP, 2005; Brunner & Suter 2008). CI executes the essential functions of modern society and constitutes its pulsating heart. The reliability of industrial control systems is even more crucial for national security as they typically operate in sectors that are highly interdependent, interconnected and interactive (I3CIS). Critical

infrastructure is a system of complex relations and interdependencies where some assets are necessary for the operation of others (Zimmerman, 2004). In such a system, one malfunction could cause a disruption in a second area that in turn could provoke the breakdown of a third, and so on, initiating a domino effect of cascading and escalating events (Brunner & Suter, 2008; Tabansky, 2011). Anticipating and predicting the reflex effects of a critical asset disruption is a challenging task, as these are erratic and unpredictable by definition (Setola, 2011), but some theories (Rinaldi, Peerenboom & Kelly, 2001; Min& Al., 2007) and empirical studies (Luiijf & Al., 2008) show that some sectors seem to be more critical than others in terms of cross-infrastructure interactions and reverberation initiators. A study carried out on a dataset referring to 2650 critical infrastructure disruptions, with 1090 registered cascading outages, concludes that critical interconnections are found in a limited number of sectors, namely energy, telecommunication, transport, water, internet and industry. Not only are OT employed in at least three of these areas, but outages in the energy sector alone initiated 60% of the cascades studied (Luiijf & Al., 2008). For these reasons, attacks on critical infrastructure in general, and industrial control systems in particular, have the concrete potential for weakening and paralysing a society. Just as a heart must not stop beating, critical infrastructures must be constantly operating. However, OT systems are highly vulnerable to the cyber threat, and securing them, due to their real-time nature, is a challenging task.

OT, cybersecurity in real time-environments

Traditionally, cybersecurity for Information Technology (IT) is based on the CIA (confidentiality, integrity and availability) triad. On the other hand, in OT environments the triad is hierarchically organised to privilege availability and integrity over the confidentiality (AIC). In industrial processes, securing availability aims at preventing all offensive operations, such as Denial of Service (DoS) attacks, that deny access to communication or operations and interrupt the operators' control of the facility functions (Drias & Al. 2015). Integrity is a second essential aspect in industrial control systems and refers to the prevention of malicious data manipulations. In fact, a false data injection (FDI) in automated industrial process could trigger false actions with severe detrimental consequences, including physical effects. For example, if an attacker supplied altered figures telling the controller that a temperature is decreasing too fast, it will automatically increase heating in order to compensate, leading to an undetected overheating (McLaughlin & Al., 2016). Finally, confidentiality aims at protecting information such as passwords or sensitive data by preventing unauthorized actors from accessing them (Drias & Al., 2015).

Due to their real-time nature, computer-based systems controlling industrial processes are designed to focus primarily on availability to meet the need of being

constantly in control of data and industrial operations. This has led OT to be optimised for performance, effectiveness and safety, which makes introducing the classical tools of cyber security extremely complex and controversial (Setola & Al., 2019; Cook & Al., 2017). OT are characterized by the exchange of huge amounts of small pieces of information (packets of limited dimensions coming from a plethora of different sources) and by high levels of determinism. Hence, including elements such as encryptions, antivirus and firewalls means to incorporate control routines that might affect the smooth running of activities generating delays that, despite being quantitatively unimportant, make the control system less ready, preventing it to satisfy the "hard real-time" requirements it was designed for.

Another factor that undermines the implementation of security measures is that OT must operate continuously 24x365, which makes maintenance interventions extremely expensive and problematic. Upkeeping a system by introducing patches and updates requires downtime of the infrastructure (Cook & Al., 2017), implying that upgrading must be planned with large advance and cannot immediately follow industrial innovations. Also, patching is considered a risky task as any modification could produce unexpected effects. Preventing these would mean carrying out specific and focused testing, whose cost is often prohibitively high (McLaughlin & Al., 2016).

Hence, once installed and certified for safety, OT remain in operation up to twenty years with limited modifications, which leads to CI operating with out of date software and inadequate assets with built-in instability, critical points of failure and security flaws. For example, the vice president of the ICS security firm Bayshore Networks, Andres Andreu, argued that most equipment cannot handle sophisticated security, since 'PLCs with bytes of memory [are] unable to handle any more information, let alone updates' (Higgins & Jan, 2013). Similarly, as reported in (Bodenheim, 2014), only 10 percent of customers install patches and updates for programmable logic controllers (PLCs) which leaves the existing software with innate vulnerabilities, susceptible to attacks. In 2011, Symantec published a report pointing out 129 vulnerabilities affecting ICS products (Symantec, 2011), and in 2012, ICS-CERT cited 171 of these.

Connecting the unconnected

If cybersecurity measures results difficult to be adopted in OT environments, an allegedly solid protection that has been considered as a workable solution to secure the digital assets of industrial process has been the so-called "security through obscurity". Previously, control systems were based on customary systems that use proprietary networks, which were physically isolated with no external connectivity (Brunner & Suter, 2008; Galloway & Hancke, 2013). Also, OT employed proprietary protocols, unique to the industrial environment and tailored to the supervised industrial process. This means that in order to undermine the integrity of a system, a potential attacker required not only

physical access to the network, but also an extensive knowledge of both the software in use and the industrial process. Consequently, industrial systems were considered to be reasonably immune from external offensive cyberoperations and the main threat was perceived to be internal (Byres & Lowe, 2004), such as a 'disgruntled worker' seeking revenge (Galloway & Hancke, 2013). Indeed, up to 2010, the only cyber-attack targeting control systems took place in Maroochy Shire (Australia) where an attacker successfully hacked the water control system of the city and caused the spilling of 800,000 litres of raw sewage, with significant environmental and economic damages. Eventually, the perpetrator of the action was arrested by the police and turned out to be one of the developers of the system trying to set up extortion (Slay & Miller, 2007).

Today, security through obscurity has become obsolete as modern processes largely employ off-the-shelf products and internet connection. Many equipment components have been integrated in the so-called 'industrial Internet of Things (IIoT)'. Cyber-Physical Systems (CPS), information devices controlling physical processes, which previously communicated through closed networks, are now connected not only to the corporate network but also to the internet (Sadeghi, Wachsmann & Waidner, 2015). These developments are business-driven and aim at fulfilling the increasing demands of CI operability. On the one hand, they have drastically reduced the costs of buying, installing and maintaining OT, as well as optimised performance and maximised system availability. On the other, they have opened new vulnerabilities and widened the spectrum of potential threats, with significant implications for cybersecurity.

For example, the electric grid modernization and the adoption of advanced IT technologies have opened up several opportunities to enhance better communication as well power system efficiency. Although the environment for smart grids provides vital reliability and economic benefits, it has also disclosed a wide range of issues with regard to cyber-attacks. The attacks have always been made embedded on devices that are microprocessor-based such as Stuxnet and have clearly shown that the control equipment firmware can be vulnerable towards breaches in security and create substantial damage to the given system (Konstantinou et al., 2016).

These trends have also made performing reconnaissance an easier task to attackers. Reconnaissance is an essential preparatory step in which attackers gather intelligence in order to discover the weaknesses they can exploit for targeting a system (Assante & Lee, 2015). Today, malicious actors can partly fulfil their information collection needs by employing open source intelligence (OSINT) tools such as Shodan.io. Shodan is a freely usable and cheap search engine specialized in identifying the services exposed by devices connected to the Internet, including OT devices. Furthermore, this engine allows specific searches to obtain a list of smart systems belonging to the vulnerable Internet of Things ecosystem Users can identify a specific industrial control system and, once identified, they can map the system in order to find exploitable vulnerabilities or entry points (Bodenheim, Butts, Dunlap & Mullins, 2014; Bodenheim, 2014).

Evolution of the cyber-threat landscape

These business-driven trends have radically changed the source and nature of the cyber-threat. In fact, if between 1982 and 2000 70% of attacks were internal, from 2000 to 2003 the amount of attacks originated externally increased to 70% (Byres & Lowe, 2004; Iversen, 2004). This progressive trend reversal is a direct consequence of the use of OT with classical IT solution and it is unlikely to decrease in the future.

The most critical aspect of cyber-attacks targeting OT concerns the potential harm that these can impose. Offensive operations might pursuit several goals. They could have a criminal nature, for example inflicting reputational damages or locking hardware and asking for ransom (Nicholson & Al., 2012). They could be business driven, with the aim of stealing valuable data or confidential information on production statistics, market strategies, drilling plans and pricing sheets (North America Oli and Gas Pipelines, 2013).

However, the most concerning aspect is that cyber-attacks could have not only an economic impact, but also a kinetic one. In fact, attackers could conveniently modify the functioning of process in order to bring it to a mechanical break point. This was, for example, the purpose of the AURORA project, where a red team of whiter simulated a cyber-attack targeting an industrial power generator. The red team successfully accessed the control network of the generator and ran a malware that caused the circuit breakers to rapidly open and close, which resulted in the physical destruction of the 17-ton power generator (Cárdenas, Amin & Sastry, 2008).

This experiment was seen with scepticism as its effects were considered to be achievable only in simulated scenarios where attackers had knowledge of the defender digital and physical environment. However, the appearance in 2010 of the Stuxnet worm radically changed the scenario and the perception of the cyber threat (Langner, 2011; 2013).

Stuxnet is still acknowledged as one of the most sophisticated attacks ever made and was reported to have caused the deterioration of around 1,000 turbines at the nuclear Natanz facility in Iran (Albright, Brannan, Walrond, 2011). The malware was programmed to manipulate the speed of the rotation of centrifuges by sending deceptive feedback to the PLCs. Stuxnet was able to lie unnoticed in the OT network without generating alarm for as long as it was necessary to inflict physical harm to the equipment (Lindsay, 2013).

Stuxnet is not an isolated case, but it marked the starting point of a series of OT based cyber-operations with physical effects (fig 2), namely: Irongate (2014), Black Energy 3 (2015), Crashoverride (2016) and Trisis/Triton (2017). In the Irongate attack of 2014, a German steel mill was targeted and successfully hacked. Malicious actors gained access to the plant network and by preventing a furnace from being properly shut down, were able to cause 'massive physical damages' to critical components, which eventually entailed the suspension of production as well as significant costs to restore operability (Lee & Al., 2014).
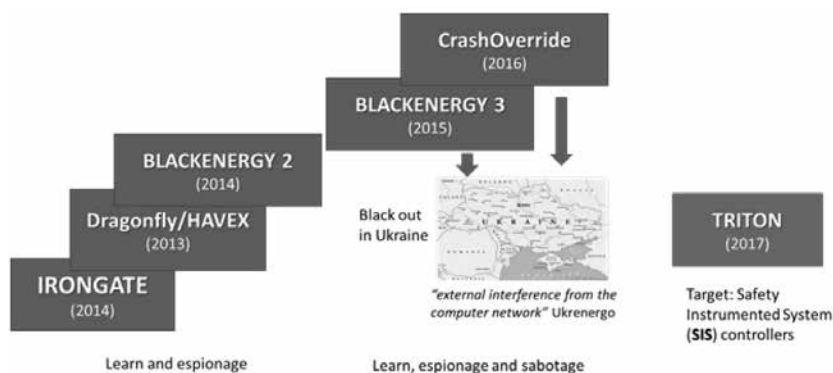
Figure 2 Evolution of cyber attacks against OT after Stuxnet

BlackEnergy 3 and Crashoverride are considered to have originated power outages in Ukraine. The first attack manifested itself on the 23rd of December 2015 and is the first known attack that successfully disrupted electric grid operations. It caused a loss of power for six hours that affected around 225,000 customers. The adversaries used BlackEnergy3 malware to pivot into the SCADA environment and take control of the operation. Once intruded, they leveraged the system to disconnect substations from the grid, which caused the blackout (Lee, 2017a; E-ISAC, 2016). Approximately one year later, CRASHOVERRIDE, known also as Industroyer, deprived power to a part of Kiev and its surroundings for over an hour (ESET, 2017). CRASHOVERRIDE allowed the attackers to take direct control of the substation breakers that were then opened, which eventually provoked a temporary loss of power (Lee, 2017a ESET, 2017).

Finally, in November 2017 Trisis (or Triton) was discovered. TRISIS was a sophisticated OT-tailored malware that hit at least one victim in the Middle East and it was designed to target a specific Safety Instrumented System (SIS) (Lee, 2017b; Johnson & Al., 2017). SISs are assets that supervise critical operations ensuring that the industrial process keeps a minimum level of safety. If the necessary threshold is not met, SIS controllers enter in safe-failed mode and stop the industrial operations (Higgins, 2018). Attackers gained access to the SIS of the plant and deployed the malware to reprogram its controller which involuntarily triggered the safe-failed status and shut down the industrial process. Targeting SIS systems is strategically relevant, in particular in relation to two main plausible scenarios. First, operations of these fashions can trigger a false-positive and shut down the plant. This entails reprogramming SIS logic so as it interprets a normal working condition as dangerous, thus making the OT entering in an unnecessary safe failed state. The second plausible entails the attackers reprogramming the safety system in order to prevent it from detecting unsafe conditions and at the same time manipulating the industrial process to create dangerous malfunctions

and disruptions. Such an operation could have a high-impact as the manipulation of the process would persist unnoticed with the potential of maximizing the amount of physical damage with strong likelihood to cause human causalities (Johnson & Al., 2017; Assante, 2018).

In relative terms, the impact of operations remained low, or in any case far from what the mock attackers achieved in the AURORA project. This is due to the significant structural, technical and organisational resources that are necessary to successfully perform offensive actions of this fashion. Nonetheless, they showed that targeting OT via cyber-space can lead to mechanical damage and that cyber-attacks involving kinetic consequences have become 'possible, available, significant and liable to disrupt the functioning of developed societies' (Tabansky, 2011).

Conclusion

Episodes like Stuxnet, Irongate, BlackEnergy 3, Crashoverride and Trisis, showed that it is possible for cyberattacks to manipulate OT in order to cause kinetic effects by inducing failures and by bringing industrial processes to mechanical break points. The majority of scholars consider the operations after Stuxnet as "proof of concept", i.e. like tests to verify the real potential and capacity of these cyber-weapons, but as stressed in the Global Risk Report 2018 (World Economic Forum, 2018) "the cyber-attack capabilities are developing even more faster than the ability to manage hostile events", highlighting how there can be increased potential risks especially in the industrial sector. In particular Stuxnet has clearly shown that the firmware control equipment can be vulnerable with the potential of creating substantial damage to a given system. This is particularly concerning since OT are characterised by a rigid real-time nature that makes integrating cybersecurity measures difficult and problematic. Hence, it is of paramount importance for critical infrastructure operators to start recognising this security issue in order to adequately manage the actual (and the future) level of threats.

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HYBRID THREATS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW: ECONOMY AND THE USE OF FORCE IN SPECIFIC CONTEXT

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Abstract: *Changes in the international environment and the use of political instruments of national power in a synchronized and nontraditional manner enabled some states to accomplish their political objectives via hybrid threats. Given the fact that the operational analyses of hybrid threats remain relevant as ever, the international legal context in which these threats defy the democratic world is of paramount interest. This article first explores how the security environment has changed and empowered hybrid threats. Then, it addresses the applicability of international law in the context of economic manipulation as part of a hybrid campaign and use of force under the law of armed conflict.*

Key words*: Hybrid threats, International law, economy, use of force, International law of armed conflict*

Introduction

Hybrid threats and hybrid warfare are central in the contemporary security forums, academic and expert community. The modern way of living, new relationships after the fall of the "walls" and the end of the Cold War in line with the technological advantage have significantly empowered some actors (state and non-state actors). By using the instruments of national power in a nontraditional manner organized in different contexts, these actors challenge international law as a political construct. In such conditions, some states can manipulate the interpretation of the law when it comes to their activities to achieve strategic ends. The use of instruments of national power (diplomacy, economy, military-use of force and information) with an intensity that straddles the boundary of legally defined peace and war conditions represents a hybrid challenge to democratic societies.

With a view to explore how states (ab)use the inert international legal system through a combination of instruments of national power in achieving strategic ends the article will address three theses. First, we will address the changing international environment to identify how this affects the states' power in acquiring political objectives. Precisely, we will determine how states act in a hybrid manner and represent serious security challenges. Considering that the focus of this small research will be on how international law is abused, we will address two instruments of national power and see how international law applies in such circumstances.

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First, we will address the changes in the international security environment. Then, the article will test the applicability of international law during economic manipulation as part of a hybrid campaign and the applicability of international law of armed conflict in the ad bellum context. Finally, we will provide concluding remarks.

International security is changed

Technological development, the process of intensified globalization and the so-called effect of a flattening world (Friedman, 2005) caused by the new constellation of international relations after the "fall of the walls" affected the power share in the international arena. The original actors in the political scene – states and the international organizations they have formed generally lost the domination of power. These changes reflect in terms of diplomacy, economy, use of force and information context.

From a political and diplomatic perspective, many argue that we live in the most dynamic and unpredictable time (Kissinger, 2014). Although western-based liberalism has dominated the former communist societies after the end of the Cold War, its acceptance in the original moral and value-based sense was not everywhere the same. Exploiting the new market constellation based on the idea of free movement of people, goods, services and capital, some regimes such as Russia and China uniquely challenged liberalism by questioning the whole liberal values (Helier, June 28, 2019). Instead, they spin the liberal market economy to serve their purposes with significant moral flexibility in the implementation of the western-based traditions and values (Jegisman and Cobus, July 13, 2019). Therefore, some have appropriately observed that not that only the world in a political sense has become multipolar, but also multi-conceptual. (Segar 2018). This settlement nihilates the assumption that norms and principles (the essential sources of international law) are established as a result of an agreement among states or by states practice that regulates states' behavior and responsibilities. This by itself creates risks and uncertainties translated in an increased possibility of conflict, tensions, economic and market-shattering and social discourses (such as the migrant crisis and the demographic challenges) – the result of the changing international environment and internal political conditions.

States as originate subjects of law (at least after the Peace of Westphalia) have always used the economy as an instrument of power. The economic aspects of how changes occur in international relations and how these changes have reflected on power projection have been widely addressed by the expert community. In their arguments, they have underlined the necessity of adjustment of the new constellation generally connected and influenced by geo-politics, the impact of technology and domination of some political traditions (liberalism, communism, etc.) in the tempo and dynamics of international relations. The fall of the walls and the promising domination of the liberal democracy resulted in all-new economic concepts related to peace and conflict

resolutions among states. The so-called Economic peace theory assumes that economic interdependence (for example, the West will have a benefit from the cheap labor and the accepting countries will benefit from foreign investments on the one side, and the opportunity to the developing economies to prosper from this on the other) will influence the peace resilience and will make war unlikely. (Copeland, 1996; or Wooten, May 2007) Nevertheless, in practice, these expectations are questionable. In their work entitled "The Sovereign Individual", written 20 years ago, James Dale Davidson and Lord William Rees identified how the power prerogative will shift. (Davidson & Rees, 1997). According to their analyses, states have lost their economic and political power. In the pyramid of power they have created, the greatest power relies not on states, but on the US federal reserves, then on the large banks and corporations, the media, international organizations, states and finally on people (which, in fact, contradicts the democratic constitutional theories about people's sovereignty- as the most powerful actor in society. These circumstances have allowed non-state actors to gain strategic power and thus defy states as the original subjects of international law.

Historically speaking, technology has always influenced international relations and the development of international law. (Krishna-Hensel, 2010) As an influencing factor to society's transformation, having or not a specific technology has always been a factor that determines the ability of the state to accomplish its national objectives even in the sense of ideological competition (the space competition between the USA and the USSSR is one such example). Even though scientists are divided over the technology's influence on international relations in the last 25 years or so, it is clear that technology has made a significant influence on power projection. This trend stimulates economic growth, increases development and improves well-being. At the same time, the velocity and the volume of information, people, capital and service flow challenge the legal regimes constructed to regulate internal and external (transnational) dynamics under different modes and tempo. The former shifts the power from top-down (state and state institutions) to horizontally (individuals and groups-corporations) based. Thus, although in the economic or innovation context, this power shift is positive, placed in a political context, it creates significant challenges to peace, security and safety.

All the above-discussed changes have unequivocally affected the concept of security. This change is evident in two directions (Brown 1994: 1-17). First, changes in an expanding direction (i.e. from pure military to non-military and non-traditional security challenges). Second, changes in deepening directions - i.e. greater focus on individuals and groups. At the same time, the organizations through which states practice this instrument of power (military and law enforcement) remained more or less the same. Such concepts reside on the conventionally based assumptions from the Cold War risk assessment matrixes. Using groups and individuals as state's proxies through coordinated and politically synchronized mode by some states and to some extent by organizations with political motives has changed the nature of the threats from conventional and asymmetric to hybrid-based threats.

Hybrid threats in a changing security environment

The debate over hybrid threats and hybrid warfare in the past years have significantly preoccupied the academic and expert community. From the previous discussion, it became clear how the changing security environment enabled non-state actors to use power asymmetrically, something which in the past was possible only by states. At the same time, in this changing security environment, some states have rebranded the so-called "law intensity" engagement. The accomplishment of these strategic efforts straddles the boundaries of international law defined by norms and standards that describe what constitutes peace and war status. Such scenarios represent a serious challenge to the rule of law and the standards that regulate the use of force for political objectives. The former U.S. Secretary of Defense Mattis, together with the Lieutenant-Colonel Hofman in 2005 underlined that in the future, actors will converge techniques of conventional and irregular warfighting which best can be prescribed as a hybrid way of warfare. (Mattis & Hoffman 2005:18,19) Others have tried to give their view on modern threats which more or less complies with the former. However, not all authors agree on the relevance of the term. Some authors believe that this term is confusing and that it leaves little space for a creative approach to the seriousness of the threat (Kofman & Pojansky, 2015: 5–12). In the operational sense, it seems they are right. For now, there is no official doctrine for hybrid war. The doctrines of the U.S. armed forces recognize that there are hybrid threats (describing them as threats that come from the use of regular and irregular forces, terrorists, criminals, or groups through synchronized actions to accomplish desired threat effect). (Department of the Army, 2016, :1-15) Similar views are expressed in the UK Ministry of Defense public documents in this regard. (UK Ministry of Defence, 2009: 1)

The danger from hybrid threats has been recognized by international organizations too. In the official Alliance doctrine, NATO also speaks about the hybrid threats (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Dec. 2010 :4). Following the conclusions from the Wells Summit, NATO adopted a strategy for hybrid threats. (NATO, Dec. 1, 2015) The need to address these threats jointly with the EU was clearly underlined by the NATO Secretary-General and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (NATO, Dec. 1, 2015 a). At the Riga base meeting, the EU Ministries of Defense recognized the necessity to adopt a Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats. (European External Action Service, Feb. 19, 2015)

Aside from just the operational aspect, the semantics and understanding of hybrid threats play an important role in the legal context as well. Discussing the relevance of this term, D-r Damien Van Puyvelde asserted that hybrid threats blend over the different forms of conflict and the use of force. (Van Puyvelde, 2015) From the legal aspect, the concept of hybrid warfare turned special attention due to the applicability of different standards and principles in time of peace and conflict, as well as during crisis. Thus, the conceptualization of the approach to hybrid threats from the legal perspective is

important for two reasons. First, in the context of the applicability of international law principles and standards in cases when hybrid threats blend between peace and war. Second, in terms of the legal challenges that stem from the conventional and unconventional employment of force by the state and non-state actors or their proxies. Giving the limited space for debate, we will present part of the research on the applicability of the principles and standards of international law and the challenges from hybrid threats. Specifically, we will focus on the legal challenges in the context of economic and market activities and in the context of the applicability of the law on armed conflict (ILOAC).

Applicability of legal principles and standards in economic manipulations as part of the hybrid campaign

The applicability of law and the coalition of the economic concepts "horizontally regulated" vs. "vertically regulated"

Economic development has always played an important role in national security. In simple terms, economic development determines the state's potential for warfighting. An instrument of national power, economy depends on foreign investments, capital, market regulations innovations, trade, human capital, etc. These factors are variables through which a state can be influenced and or can play a crucial role in practicing this instrument. Market-based economy or at least its different forms dominate the world. Related to capitalism, market-based economy is strongly related to democracy. Internally, the state has a limited role in market regulation. Supply and demands dictate the rules. At the same time, control and the market dynamics are determined by non-state actors' corporations that work under the market dynamics in terms of production, goods, and services (i.e. horizontally regulated economy). The idea to use this segment in the context of political influence in peacetime was developed by the protagonists of liberal democracy. The so-called "Track two diplomacy" or "Multi-track diplomacy", among other forms of influence, use economy as an avenue to enforce, establish and maintain peace. (Diamondn & McDonald, 1996) Nevertheless, not all states that practice democracy have a market-based economy with limited state involvement. Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea, for example, have used the opportunities of the open global market stimulated by liberal democracies, however with a different conceptualization. Unlike western democracies, where the private sector plays a dominant role and is the driving force of the economy, the political leadership of the abovementioned countries, acting in a centralized "vertical" (top-down) manner, managed to establish the so-called "corporate state". In practice, the global market that is predominantly regulated horizontally by non-state actors as the main players is challenged under the capitalist-based logic by the new concept that is vertically regulated and operates under a centralized regulated economy. In other words, Russia, China, N. Korea or

Iran have the so-called command economy during peacetime (something that western democracies are using in wartime). Synchronized and state-sponsored activities in the market competition can significantly weaken the economic competence of the victim state and thus directly undermine its political and defense capabilities. (Ravich, 2018)

From a legal perspective, this is problematic because acting on the threshold between peace and war, the above-mentioned states use war models of the economy in peacetime. The corporates that are an extended hand of the state, have an incomparable advantage compared to the western-based companies in market competition. The only thing that could be done from a legal perspective is to apply criminal, corporate or any similar law applicable in peacetime. (Armour, Hansmann and Kraakman, 2009). The applicability is limited because it will be hard to prove any wrongdoing, or even if there is evidence and the attribution is clear, the problem of jurisdiction is the next obstacle. Even if there is a court decision on the international level, there is no real executive power that can enforce the law i.e. the judgment. Hence, the company can significantly suffer from wrongdoing and economic manipulation. Here one could argue that thanks to the liberal market domination, the growing body of international law could apply economic criminal law (it will be addressed below).

Regardless of everything, acting cumulatively affects military and political power. Nevertheless, besides the indirect and unfair competition, the greatest threat comes from economic crime (cyber-crime) and espionage (cyber – espionage).

Applicability of law to economic espionage as a method of hybrid warfare

Economic espionage is a serious threat to national security to all western-based economies as a segment of the coordinated actions. (The U.S Government 2013: 3-4) The legal challenge from the state- coordinated economic espionage is two-folded. First, there is no legal norm, standard or principle that incriminates espionage at the international level. In fact, international law does not prohibit espionage at all. The incrimination of espionage is at the domestic level and falls under the respective national criminal law of the state (usually recognized as a significant crime). This applicability creates all the challenges, especially if the state is not willing to cooperate (prosecute the company or the individual) and/or extradite. Also, the suspect (individual or corporate's CEO(s)) are usually government agents or extended hand of the state agencies. For example, this was the case (although there are many other relevant examples) when a US-based corporate pointed that the Chinese armed forces are behind the industrial espionage, which was of course denied by the official Chinese authorities. (Zelonis & Others, 2018) The act of espionage is usually in favor of the domestic company after which there is a great possibility that the company that has gained access to the information stolen by espionage would be in advantage. Besides criminal law, one could argue that international trade law may have something to offer. Although international trade law is an option, its applicability to economic espionage is almost impossible.

In his article, D-r Russel Buchan made a comprehensive analysis of several potential scenarios over the applicability of international law in terms of economic espionage. (Buchan, January 16, 2019) One of the options that he analyses is the applicability of the so-called Paris Convention on Intellectual Property just to conclude that the applicability of this Convention is extremely hard due to the attribution challenge. (Paris Convention 1969) An additional issue in this contest is the distinction between individual responsibility and collective responsibility (the leadership of the company as a whole).

These methods of acquiring political and strategic ends pose serious pressure over western democracies and their allies. As a result, to protect public safety and national security these authorities are pushed to sacrifice democracy and democratic governance. This unequivocally urges the international community to find an appropriate solution to these emerging challenges. Similar challenges come from the applicability of the international law of armed conflict to counter hybrid-based threats.

Applicability of the international law of armed conflict against hybrid threats (the *ad bellum* threshold in context)

The international law of armed conflict (ILOAC), especially the part known as *ius ad bellum* (right to use force) is challenged by the hybrid-based threats for several reasons.

One of the main challenges from hybrid threats to the applicability of ILOAC comes from the nature of the threat (i.e. blend between peace and war). Thanks to modern technology and the open society models (see the debate above), the deregulation of the market and the increased power of non-state actors, which are not subject but, rather object of the law, the distinction between peace and wartime situation is blurred and is usually hard to determine. Historically, conflict resolution proves that states have always struggled for power and influence in international relations. In doing so, they have used different methods. Even when they pledge their promise on some issue with an international agreement, they very often use creative methods to avoid the pledged restraints, obligations and responsibilities to accomplish their objectives. Making precedents and accepting these precedents as a general practice and rule is how international law has been created. The list of such instances of state behavior in the past is long. This is especially true in terms of the use of force. For example, the Kosovo campaign, the operation Iraqi Freedom and the military operations in the so-called Global War on terror are relevant recent examples of such practice that have stretched the law between *lex latta* (the law as it is) and *lex ferenda* (as it should be).

Another reason why hybrid threats are a problem for the applicability of ILOAC stems from the fact that the standards and principles that regulate the use of force were created after the end of the Second World War. Article 2(4) of the UN Charter prohibits not just the use of force, but also the threat to use force. There are two exceptions to

this general prohibition. (The Charter of the United Nations 1945) The first exception is prescribed under Article 42 from the Charter (as an exclusive right of the UN Security Council – UNSC to authorize the use of force as the last resort or all means necessary to restore or maintain peace). The second exception is entrenched in Article 51 that allows member states to use force in self-defense individually or collectively. In this way, from a legal standpoint, war as a prolonged hand of politics is *ad acta*. The use of force (a term that is preferred in political-diplomatic language) and the armed conflict are determined with the formal norms that distinguish peace from an armed conflict situation. For example, war declaration in accordance with the Hague regulations; UNSC Resolution to use force under Article 42 of the Charter - an example is the First Gulf War, or launching the so-called ISAF mission in Afghanistan; or a declaration submitted to the UNSC for acting in self-defense (for example, the declaration that the US submitted to the UNSC that they will use force in self-defense against the Taliban Regime and Al Qaeda) (Beard, 2001). Practice, however, has proved that states use different rhetoric to circumvent the formal default - the framework to use force as a means to political ends, or in other words, to manipulate the formal threshold between *ad bellum* (the right to use force) and *in bello* (the law in war).

At the same time, one has to consider the fact that international law is a result of political agreement. For the legal standards to be accepted, the states, as the subject of law, must reach an agreement. The UN Charter itself is a result of a political agreement, which means that states have shown political will for this agreement to come into force. As with any agreement, there are interpretations that more or less are determined by the states' interests, the international power they have, their moral responsibilities, the respect that they want to have in the international environment, and last but not least, the diplomatic support they can have for such an interpretation. Hence, besides the formal distinction between peace and war, not all states' activities comply with the states' behavior within these boundaries.

For example, during the Crimea intervention and de facto annexation from Russia, the legal justification that Russian officials provided was that the Russian forces have the right to be there under the Agreement for the Black Sea fleet. RFE/RL, (June 10, 2019) Accordingly, the Russian forces claimed they did not break the law in accordance with the Agreement, i.e., there was no attack that took place nor any forward movement of the forces in accordance with Article 51 from the Charter which would trigger the right to self-defense against an illegal attack. What is legally questionable here are the activities that the Russian soldiers conducted, rather than their status in Crimea as the Russian authorities claimed. Such interpretation and removal of the gravity of the legal argumentation are problems related to hybrid threats in the context of ILOAC.

Using conventional and unconventional activities, regular and irregular forces openly and covertly, directly or indirectly to accomplish military and political objectives on the one side and the power and ability to manipulate with the legal interpretation of such activities on the other create a serious challenge that we are going to face in the future.

Conclusion

Changes in the international environment in the context of diplomacy, information technologies, economy and the use of force as instruments of national power have changed the security environment. At the same time, the state institutions responsible for practicing these instruments of power maintained the same concept of functioning and governance without any adjustment to the contemporary changes in the international environment. Under these circumstances, some states have developed strategies and doctrines accordingly to accomplish their objectives through groups and individuals. These activities are synchronized in a mode to support the state policy through different proxies. Thus, the nature of the threats has changed from conventional and asymmetric to hybrid-based threats. The danger of these threats has been recognized by the international community. NATO and the EU have even developed strategic documents addressing these threats. However, although the operational framework to counter these threats is as important as ever, the legal framework plays an essential role in maintaining the legitimacy in this encounter.

The applicability of law to economic manipulations as part of a hybrid campaign showed that one of the main reasons why these campaigns may give result is the different concept of the market and economy regulation. Unlike liberal democracies, where in peacetime, the state's role in market and economy regulation is minor, some states that produce hybrid-based threats employ state control over its market and economy. From a legal standpoint, this is problematic, since states like Russia, China, North Korea, or Iran are using a military model of economy in peacetime. Economic espionage as a specific form of gaining economic advantage is thus used with the state support to inhibit the economic potential under the non-loyal competition via non-military means and manipulations in cyberspace. Hence, economic espionage is a national threat. Scarifying democracy in such circumstances is thus just a response to the threat. That imposes the need for the international community to launch an initiative that will create critical conditions toward better regulation of these trends.

The situation is similar in the context of the use of force as an instrument of political power. States usually shift the focus of argumentation (as we showed in the case of the Russian annexation of Crimea) to hide their military campaigns under the blurred lines between the legal status of peace and war. Knowing that the use of force as an instrument of power by western democracies is a very sensitive subject, the term hybrid threats resonates loudly for the use of manipulation in operational and legal context.

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IMPORTANCE OF EURO-ATLANTIC VALUES IN REDEFINING THE SECURITY AGENDA IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

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Abstract: *The new challenges and threats that are constantly emerging in the security environment of Southeast Europe redefine the security agenda of the region. The process of attaining Euro-Atlantic integrations, i.e. the European and NATO perspective, remain the main drive for a positive change in the region of Western Balkans. In that process it is unavoidable for the countries to have good regional cooperation, good neighbourly relations and to continue working on reconciliation - reconciliation within and between the societies in the region, while building a future based on common Euro-Atlantic values. Countries in the region share security challenges, including fight against terrorism, radicalisation, cyber attacks, organized crime and hybrid threats. Along with the challenges, countries share the same vision for the Euro-Atlantic perspective, which means importing Euro-Atlantic values so as to be able to attain their full-fledged membership to NATO and EU. Initially, this paper aims to provide a general overview of the special characteristics of regional cooperation, followed by focusing on viewing regional cooperation as an incentive to addressing many security issues, showing importance of values. Both EU and NATO, during their enlargement processes, promote regional cooperation as a value for a safer neighbourhood and region. Therefore, readiness to cooperate in the region shows the level of country's development, in political and economic sense, and shows the country's dedication towards resolving many disputes that still exist today.*

Key words*: Southeast Europe, Western Balkans, NATO, EU, security challenges, regional cooperation*

Introduction

Unpredictable and fast-changing world order restructures security agendas and poses new threats and challenges, which makes countries focus on adapting to better keep safety and security. Countries in Southeast Europe, especially the Western Balkan region, find the process of approximating NATO and the European Union as a common purpose in avoiding past conflicts and keeping peace and stability in the region. This process implies the adoption of common fundamental Euro-Atlantic values. The European Union mentions them in Article 2 of the Treaty of Lisbon[2] which clearly indicates that the Union's aim is to promote peace, its values

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[1] The Author, PhD, is president of the Atlantic Council of Croatia

[2] Treaty of Lisbon, Amending the Treaty on the European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, European Union 2007 (Section 5 of Article 2 relates to the common values: In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute

and the well-being of its peoples. NATO, while striving to secure lasting peace in Europe[3], is based on common values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It additionally embodies the transatlantic link by which the security of North America is tied to the security of Europe, and this sense of shared security among member states contributes to stability in the Euro-Atlantic area.

The international system of today is changing towards a multi-ordered system that requires multinational institutions and organizations to accept the diversity in power and principle, while global power is shifting as new powers rise, and 'old' ones (like Russia) reassert themselves in the international arena. While these major changes are taking place, states, and especially small states as are in the Western Balkans, are under pressure of diversity in power. Therefore, small states, that are not able to participate in sharing the power in the international arena, are still focusing on achieving their interests and objectives, and there is a causal reaction of their behaviour in the international relations, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Causal reaction of international order

State interest Peace Security Stability Regional safety	➔ ⬅	**Mechanisms in world order** Interests of great powers Pursuit of common interests International organizations Domestic politics	➔ ⬅	**International order** Alliances – global (NATO); regional cooperation– treaties, agreements, etc.

States use all mechanisms they can possibly use to achieve their interests and objectives, so international order is formed accordingly. Mechanisms are used for achieving common interests which they would be less likely to achieve efficiently alone. So, the experience of looking at international order shows that states form different kind of treaties or are joining or trying to join global alliance(s). After 70 years

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to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.)

[3] One of the main purpose of NATO's existence after the end of the Cold War relates to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty that refers to keeping safety and security of its member states; more in: Vukadinović, Radovan, Čehulić Vukadinović, Lidija, 2011, *Politika europskih integracija*, Zagreb, Ljevak

of its existence, the NATO Alliance has shown its historic achievements globally, while uniting countries whose collective strength are the shared values[4], as the Washington Treaty clearly states. NATO's ability to grow and to have an enlargement process still open for countries that want to join has made it stronger and, in addition to Article 5, as bedrock of the collective defence, able to promote Article 2 of the Washington Treaty, which is to defend free institutions and promote peace and stability. It acts as a consequence of states' interests in the international order, in which challenges make the cooperation among members more important than before.

The goal of this paper is to establish how the NATO accession process is more a normative process of political-military conditions and a process of approaching the European Union is more based on political and social norms. Both processes are based on setting up clear values, Euro-Atlantic values, as the basis for the new member countries approaching these integrations and advancing the cooperation among member states, so values therefore shape the security agenda.

NATO and EU enlargement process as promotor of stability

The rationale behind the NATO and EU enlargement process in the Western Balkans is constantly changing and multi-polarity in the international arena shows the role of other great powers competing for their influence in this strategically and geopolitically very important region. The accession of Montenegro into NATO demonstrated a commitment by NATO to integrate other Western Balkan countries that satisfy accession standards. On the other side, the recent case of Albania and North Macedonia that were stopped in the negotiating process with the EU, even after North Macedonia ended its decades-long dispute with Greece agreeing to change its name, shed a new light on the bright prospect and vision of Western Balkans approaching the West. Namely, French President Macron's decision to put a veto and block the start of the EU accession negotiations of Albania and North Macedonia puts a question mark in the efforts of the international community trying to make countries continue importing values and principles during the negotiation process. The very logic of negotiations during the accession process is based on the hard work of candidate countries to reform and meet requested criteria, and reforms are primarily in the interest of their own people. It is, therefore, a very powerful tool for both EU and NATO to make countries

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4   NATO, North Atlantic Treaty, signed in Washington on 4 April 1949, Preamble: *Parties to this Treaty reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments. They are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area. They are resolved to unite their efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security.*

improve the lives and prospects of their citizens.

The rationale behind the EU and NATO enlargement policies has been changing during the past decade, and it contributed to rising a myth that Western Balkans is shifting away from the Euro-Atlantic orientation, since both EU and NATO, as was perceived in the media, do not show enough commitment towards the enlargement policy. However, Euro-Atlantic integrations renewed their interest for this region. At the Summit in Warsaw in 2016, NATO reaffirmed its commitment to the 'Open Door' Policy, stressing in the Warsaw Summit Communiqué[5] the importance of democratic values, reform, and respect for the rule of law, as foundation of the freedom and prosperity of societies of member countries. The Communiqué was clear that NATO's door is open to all European democracies which share the values of the Alliance, stating that the enlargement enhanced the security of the entire Euro-Atlantic region. When describing NATO's vision about the Western Balkans, the Communiqués says: '*The Western Balkans is a region of strategic importance, as demonstrated by our long history of cooperation and operations in the region. We remain fully committed to the stability and security of the Western Balkans, as well as to supporting the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of countries in the region. Democratic values, rule of law, domestic reforms, and good neighbourly relations are vital for regional cooperation and for the Euro-Atlantic integration process. We welcome recent progress on border demarcation in the region. The Alliance will continue to work closely with the Western Balkans to maintain and promote regional and international peace and security.*'

The last accession of Montenegro into NATO demonstrated a commitment by NATO to integrate Western Balkans and to promote security and stability in the region.

Two years after the NATO Warsaw Summit, the European Union decided to show its commitment to this region. The European Union, as a peace project, is aware that in order to stabilize this part of Europe, it needs to motivate the governments of the countries in the region to rebuild, reform and democratize their societies, while uniting around a common goal of reconciliation and joining Euro-Atlantic integrations. The European Commission published a new enlargement strategy document to show its interests and to reinvigorate the enlargement process, qualifying Western Balkans as a '*geostrategic investment*' in a stable, strong and united Europe based on common values, confirming European future of the region.[6] The Strategy clearly spells out that the EU door is open to further accessions only when the individual countries have met the criteria, underlining the priorities in which the European Commission would significantly enhance the support to the transformation process that includes six flagship initiatives targeting specific areas of interest for both EU and the Western Balkan

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[5] NATO, Warsaw Summit Communiqué, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016

[6] European Commission, *A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Strasbourg, 6.2.2018

countries, such as strengthening the rule of law, reinforcing engagement on security and migration, supporting reconciliation, good neighbourly relations. The Strategy also foresees that the European Union must be stronger and more solid, before it can be bigger, stressing that being a member of the EU means accepting and promoting its values. The Strategy is clear about the importance of the Euro-Atlantic values: *'Core issues such as the rule of law, fundamental rights, strengthening democratic institutions, public administration reform, as well as economic development and competitiveness remain key priorities in the enlargement process. They form the basis for any aspiring Member State to ensure it has the necessary administrative and judicial capacity in place to properly apply EU rules and standards not only in law but in practice.'*

The President of the European Commission Juncker, in his 2017 State of the Union address, also confirmed the European future of the Western Balkan countries: *'If we want more stability in our neighbourhood, then we must also maintain a credible enlargement perspective for the Western Balkans.'* The Enlargement Strategy is, therefore, very clear about the Western Balkans as part of Europe, in which it says that ever since the Thessaloniki European Council in 2003[7], the EU has supported the future of the region as an integral part of the EU, referring to the framework for relations between the EU and countries in the region - Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP)[8]. It was stressed that the peoples of the EU and the region have a common heritage and history and a future defined by shared opportunities and challenges. The European Union realizes that the Western Balkans is a geostrategic investment in a stable, strong and united Europe based on common values, therefore promoting democracy, the rule of law and the respect for fundamental rights. *'A credible accession perspective is the key driver of transformation in the region and thus enhances our collective integration, security, prosperity and social wellbeing. It remains essential for fostering reconciliation and stability'*, as pointed out in the Strategy.

European Union and NATO are the most important factors for the future of the Western Balkan region, and their openness in accepting new members plays a key role in keeping the peace and stability in Southeast Europe. However, both EU and NATO are currently going through crisis – EU having issues such as Brexit, migration, instability in the neighbourhood, start of the new European Commission, and NATO dealing mostly with disagreements between the European and Atlantic partners[9]. So, it

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[7] The 2003 European Council in Thessaloniki reaffirmed that all SAP countries were potential candidates for EU membership. See more at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_03_1681

[8] SAP was launched in 1999, together with the Stability Pact, a broader initiative involving all key international players. The Stability Pact was replaced by the Regional Cooperation Council in 2008.

[9] After American President Donald Trump had negative statements on the European partners in NATO, stating that the US is far outstriping the spending of any other European member country, French President Emanuel Macron stated that America is turning its back to the European project, saying that his claim that NATO was 'brain-dead' was a necessary wake-up call before the summit in London

could be said that there is an enlargement fatigue concerning accepting new members. At the same time, there are still lots of issues to be solved in the region, such as: better regional cooperation, unresolved political and ethnic issues, economic crisis, while also new global challenges and threats keep emerging – like the Ukraine crisis, illegal migrations, radicalization of Islam, energy supply... Steps towards resolving the problematic situation are not moving fast, so in the European Parliament report from 2015, it was stated that there is no date on the horizon for future enlargement in the region: '…*twelve years after the Thessaloniki promise that the future of the Balkans is within the European Union, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, fYRoM[10], Montenegro, and Serbia remain excluded with no foreseeable accession date in sight*'.[11] This Report had its consequences in the region, so enlargement fatigue was replaced by, so called, 'patience fatigue' among Western Balkan countries. Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama confirmed the reality of the e*nlargement fatigue, saying that 'patience fatigue is threatening the Balkans'.[12] It is therefore important for* the enlargement process to remain as an ongoing process to make Western Balkan countries strive towards equalizing standards, enhancing social development through consolidating Euro-Atlantic values in their societies.

The official justification for the French veto on Albania and North Macedonia's EU accession talks was that the EU also needs to reform itself and that the methodology of the enlargement process needs to be changed. During that process, the international community should not forget about this geopolitically important region, as this veto has undermined the pro-EU strategy in the Western Balkan countries, but it has also made EU policy over relations with its eastern neighbours rather unclear, which can make countries turn their heads towards other great powers that want to take their influential positions in this region.

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to urge members of the alliance to take a greater interest in its southern flank, including fight against terrorism, additionaly thinking more on common strategic goals. More in: The Economist, *'Emanuel Macron warns Europe: NATO is becoming brain-dead'*, 7 November 2019, https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead and: The Guardian, Wintour Patrick and McKernan Bethan, *'Macron defends brain-dead NATO remarks as summit approaches'*, 28 November 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/28/macron-defends-brain-dead-nato-remarks-as-summit-approaches

[10] Today: Republic of North Macedonia

[11] European Parliament, *The Western Balkans and EU Enlargement: Lessons learned, ways forward and prospects ahead*, 2015, Directorate-General for External Policies, Policy Department

[12] Robinson Matt, *Kosovo comes between Serbian, Albanian leaders at historic meeting*, Reuters, 10 November 2014, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-serbia-albania-kosovo/kosovo-comes-between-serbian-albanian-leaders-at-historic-meeting-idUSKCN0IU16W20141110

Regional cooperation as an Euro-Atlantic value and effective tool for stability

Former NATO Secretary General Rasmussen stated "*the best security is shared security*"[13]. Both NATO and EU, during the time of austerity after the economic crisis in 2008, when governments started to apply budgetary restrictions, at the same time the security environment became more diverse and unpredictable, initiated common defence project to create equitable sharing of defence burden. NATO started the Smart Defence[14], which is a concept that encourages allies to cooperate in developing, acquiring and maintaining military capabilities to meet security problems. Therefore, NATO's Smart Defence means pooling and sharing capabilities (specialisation), setting priorities and coordinating joint efforts better (cooperation). European Union's similar concept is 'Pooling & Sharing'[15], which refers to member states-led initiatives and projects to increase collaboration on military capabilities. The European Defence Agency works closely with NATO in order to avoid unnecessary duplication in this context. However, these concepts didn't show big results, as they ask certain principles, such as political will and commitment, and there was a problem with lack of trust among member countries.

Western Balkan countries share same or similar security threats and challenges, so regional cooperation would exercise their willingness to show trust in each other's intentions, while they share common capabilities and resources. Security cooperation among Western Balkan countries could be considered the most relevant indicator of the stabilization in the region, as the key obstacle in fostering cooperation in the field of security is the lack of trust among countries that have shared a conflicted past. Regional initiatives are considered the most successful and effective if they involve joint work, and after the '90s Western Balkan countries have preferred to cooperate on a bilateral level, and all of them were and still are reluctant to cooperate in multilateral schemes, since they perceive them as a kind of a threat to their independence, afraid that the international community is trying to re-establish some kind of 'Yugoslavia'.

Understanding how important it is to have peace and stability in this region, with the aim to step up regional cooperation in the Western Balkans, the European Union leaders, with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, initiated the Berlin process[16] with the first goal of resolving bilateral and internal issues of the countries in the region, achieving reconciliation and enhancing regional cooperation. As a high-level political

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[13] NATO Secretary General Rasmussen, Speech at the European Policy Centre in Brussels, 30 September 2011

[14] NATO, Smart Defence, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_84268.htm

[15] European Defence Agency, EDA, Fact Sheet, https://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/eda-factsheets/final-p-s_30012013_factsheet_cs5_gris

[16] Berlin Process involves Western Balkan countries in addition to Germany, France, Austria, Italy, Slovenia and Croatia, as well as the European Commission and international financial institutions. More in: https://berlinprocess.info/

initiative, the Berlin process is a way for European leaders to show their understanding of the importance of the Western Balkan region, and to tackle some of the core structural problems in the region. However, in addition to its diplomatic importance, the Berlin process showed no concrete results so far, and it set no milestones for countries to achieve in a certain period of time. If that would happen, this framework could serve as an assistance to countries of the region in fulfilling the Copenhagen accession criteria and empowering countries to start implementing Euro-Atlantic values in their policies, while strengthening their abilities to take on the obligations of future membership.

Realising their goal of becoming members of Euro-Atlantic integrations is not that close, some Western Balkan countries, showing good will for regional cooperation, met in Ohrid in November 2019 and agreed to create their own free transit area that they called 'mini-Schengen'[17]. Proposals were made of achieving 'four freedoms', which would contribute to better trade relations among countries. Time will show how the so called mini-Schengen would work, since Kosovo doesn't want to join this initiative, explaining that it is not recognized by Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and concerns are highlighted by Montenegro showing no interest in joining.

Improving the regional cooperation is a key factor for establishing political stability, security and economic prosperity. However, interethnic relations, as the cause of instabilities in the past, are still present in the countries, and that is a major obstacle for stability, security and democracy in the region. One of the initiatives that promotes cooperation in the region and the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of South East Europe is the Regional Cooperation Council[18], which in the South East Europe (SEE) 2020 Strategy[19] puts back the focus on good neighbourly relations as prerogative for improving living conditions and bringing competitiveness and development. As many sceptics were thinking, this regional approach does not exclude the individual approach, and it is fully consistent with the development of regional cooperation, so it could be seen as an impediment to good neighbourly relations.

It is a fact that stronger regional cooperation increases the prospects for a more rapid integration of the region into the EU and NATO. In order to avoid potential future bilateral conflicts, both European Union and NATO are continuously emphasizing regional cooperation and good-neighbourly relations in their approaches to the Western Balkans. Although it is still not on the wanted level, regional cooperation makes significant differences, especially in:

-reducing tensions and strengthening regional stability, which is a precondition for sustainable development and

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[17] Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia signed 'mini-Schengen' agreement

[18] Regional Cooperation Council serves regional cooperation and European and Euro-Atlantic integration of South East Europe in order to spark development in the region to the benefit of its people. More in: https://www.rcc.int/home

[19] South East Europe 2020, Regional Cooperation Council, November 2013

-increasing intra-regional flow of goods and services, but also other exchanges, and enhancing competitiveness of small national economies.

Together with the Euro-Atlantic integrations, regional cooperation is one of the two main pillars of stability in the region, which still has many challenges, such as border disputes and unresolved statehood to domestic ethnic conflicts and demands for minority rights. Therefore, through better relations among countries in the region, the Euro-Atlantic values, as prerogatives of the countries' development, would be more enhanced. Regional cooperation serves as practicing and learning ground for individual states about the models of behaviour they will be expected to practice once they become EU or NATO members. Regional security cooperation became the norm for further strengthening of stability and jointly tackling issues, such as organized crime, fight against violent extremism that could lead to terrorism etc. which affects stability and prosperity of the whole EU and beyond. Close regional cooperation through dialogue and other forms of cooperation proves an effective response to contemporary security challenges and gradually paves the way to building trust among the countries.

Threats to the stability and security in the Western Balkans could influence broad geopolitical development shaping the European Union's neighbourhood. The set of political and other recommendations would ensure that values and reforms are deeply rooted into the country's system, which would be then irreversible once the country joins the EU and/or NATO. NATO also supports regional cooperation as a common value, as well as good neighbourly relations, that are crucial to overcome the legacy of the past, especially as there are many open issues in South-East European countries. NATO still stands to its core task of striving to secure a lasting peace in Europe, with collective defence being at the heart of the Alliance, creating a spirit of solidarity and cohesion among its members and partner countries.

Looking from the security perspective, NATO, through crisis management, plays an important and active role in the Western Balkans. Except for Kosovo, all countries in the region are members of the Partnership for Peace program, while NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg strongly supports the 'Open door' policy. "*NATO's Open Door and the enlargement of the European Union have helped spread freedom, democracy and human rights. And we must continue to work hard every day to uphold those values*," said the Secretary General[20]. The accession of Montenegro contributed to the stability of the Western Balkan region and it showed that NATO's door is open. *In that way it shows the willingness to stay united in defending core values* of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, freedom of speech in every country and region. Crisis management is more effective when countries cooperate. There are three objectives defined as the most important in NATO's Strategic Concept[21]: a

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[20] NATO, Secretary General praises NATO's Open Door policy at enlargement anniversary event, 18 March 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_164661.htm

[21] NATO Strategic Concept 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_82705.htm

continuing commitment to collective defence; the ability to prevent and manage crises beyond its shores whose effects risk undermining members' security; and deepening security cooperation with neighbours and more distant partners on challenges of common concern. This specifically shows how cooperation among member countries with neighbouring countries is important for both NATO and the EU, as the emergence of a more dangerous world in the second decade of the 21st century poses a historic test for the governments of the transatlantic community.

The membership in NATO and EU implies both privileges and obligations, and every member country should constantly reassess its security environment and capabilities to respond to challenges and threats. Since size matters in international relations, small states[22], such as Western Balkan states, have their specific vulnerabilities, different needs and are in a position that is not favourable for achieving goals in their foreign policies. That is the reason small states are showing interest in multilateral organizations and alliances, compensating in that way the limitations of their size. Small states pursue a wide range of security policies and they can either stay neutral or join alliances, as well as bandwagon or balance[23]. The behaviour of small states in today's contested environment has to be understood by taking into consideration their historical relations in the region, and the gains they get by joining the alliance and what they put at stake. Small states differ from greater powers in many aspects which influence their security policy decisions. Western Balkan countries are not powerful enough to navigate their security landscape independently, so their freedom of action depends mostly on geographic and geopolitical settings, which puts them in positions to very seriously think on how to improve their regional cooperation, import Euro-Atlantic values in their regular policies and join NATO and the EU.

Small countries in the Western Balkans don't have a decisive role in countering global threats, but can provide a substantial contribution to Euro-Atlantic peace and security by stabilising their environment and by playing a constructive role in multinational structures.

Conclusion

Small states are exposed to a whole set of security challenges and influences, so the conclusion here in relation to small states of the Western Balkan is that they need to belong to a multinational organization or alliance to pursue with their reconciliation policies, improving in that way regional cooperation and importing Euro-Atlantic values for the benefit of their citizens. All Western Balkan countries share problems, challenges and threats and a desire to implement Euro-Atlantic values, through reforms related with the rule of law, reform of public administration, judiciary reforms, fight against corruption and organized crime, having better economic development and more sincere regional cooperation. These are actually common fundamental values: democracy, individual freedom, rule of law, market economy, peaceful

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[22] More in: Reiter, Erich, Gärtner Heinz, 2001, *Small States and Alliances*, Heidelberg, New York: Physica-Verlag

[23] More on states' behaviour in: Waltz, Walt and Schweller

settlement of conflicts, openness and transparency (fight against corruption), but also regional and international cooperation, and they are promoted by the Euro-Atlantic community being as the ultimate condition during the accession process.

Regional cooperation calls for constant reassessment of the security environment and the capabilities to respond to the challenges. The main points that could be taken on the importance of the regional cooperation in the Western Balkans still are:

- *regional cooperation is needed as a crucial ingredient of stability;*
- *regional cooperation is a catalyst for reconciliation, good-neighborliness and good political relations;*
- *regional cooperation is about helping overcome nationalism and intolerance and promoting mutual understanding and political dialogue in the region.*'[24]

The international community, together with the locally driven initiatives, should stipulate creating policies within the wider framework of integration into EU and NATO, which will strengthen bonds between the countries. It is also in the interest of the European Union and NATO to exert more openly their willingness to incorporate countries form this region, since other great powers are showing their interests in this part of Europe. There is Russia with historically good relations with Serbia, Montenegro, but also North Macedonia, China that acts mainly as an investor in the region, Turkey with its biggest influence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also Kosovo and Albania. So, concerns about the increase of external actors' activities in the Western Balkans are not unfounded.

Both the European Union and NATO, during their enlargement processes, promote regional cooperation as a value for safer neighbourhood and region. Therefore, readiness to cooperate in the region shows the level of the country's development, in political and economic sense, and shows the country's dedication towards resolving many bilateral issues.

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THE MILITARIZATION OF THE EU'S APPROACH TOWARDS MIGRATION

Jovan MANASIJEVSKI[1]

Abstract. *The paper aims to explore the processes of the growing militarization of the EU's approach towards migration. Migration has been increasingly addressed as a security challenge that should be tackled beyond the EU borders and the Union has shaped its response to migration through its securitization and externalization, as well as through growing militarization. The paper identifies two main avenues of expanding militarization - through the increasing role of the Common Security and Defence Policy's missions and operations in the EU's migration management and through progressive militarization of the overall border management process. The paper analyzes the main features of the militarization of the EU's approach towards migration and its twofold nature. On the one hand, militarization can be understood as an extension of already established and widespread securitization discourses and practices, and on the other, as an answer to the rising weaponization of the migration by different state and non-state actors.*

Key words*: Migration Management, Militarization, Securitization, Externalization, Weaponization*

The migratory challenge is seriously jeopardizing the fundamental pillars of European integration, such as integrity of the Schengen area and solidarity among the Member States (MS). Since migration flows and pressures continue to grow and diversify, migration management emerged as an important part of the EU's external policy. The recognition of migration as a key challenge for European societies has generated the need for mainstreaming migration into the Common Foreign and Security Policy (Manasijevski, 2018). In that direction, we are witnessing emerging utilization of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) as a significant tool of the external dimension of the EU migration policy as well.

The role of the CSDP missions and operations in migration management

The EU has already deployed CSDP missions and operations to complement its other efforts to address irregular migration, in particular in the Mediterranean and

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the Sahel. In a number of CSDP missions and operations, migration is implicitly or explicitly mentioned in their mandates. CSDP mainly focuses on the security aspects of the EU's support to third countries in managing migratory flows at their borders.

The legal treaty provisions on CSDP and the EU's external action provide a basis for action during the migrant crisis as a humanitarian crisis in the European neighborhood, involving security threats in both the internal and external dimensions of the EU. CSDP missions and operations work alongside the Frontex to enhance border protection and maritime security to fight cross-border crime and disrupt smuggling networks. Tasks include supporting host countries by providing training and advice for military and security forces and building capacities for law enforcement. In that direction we are witnessing reinforcement of the missions with migration instruments as in the cases of: the capacity-building (EUCAP) Sahel mission in Mali; the capacity-building (EUCAP) Sahel mission in Niger; the military EU Training Mission (EUTM) in Mali; the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) in Libya. These CSDP missions are already engaging in a concerted effort to respond to challenges of irregular migration and aim to support countries in the Sahel to control their territory.

Amid the migrant crisis, the EU launched the CSDP operation in the south-central Mediterranean EUNAVFOR Med 'Sophia' to manage and reduce the migratory flows, by disrupting the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks and elevating the risk factor for the smugglers. Operation Sophia has been launched as a military component of the EU's response with a mandate to "identify, capture and dispose of vessels as well as enabling assets used or suspected of being used by migrant smugglers or traffickers" (Council of the EU, 2015:Art.1(1)). The mandate initially set out several phases through which human trafficking and smuggling were intended to be tackled: detection and monitoring of migration networks through information gathering and patrolling on the high seas; conducting boarding, search, seizure, and diversion of vessels suspected of being used in human smuggling activities in international waters; performing same activities as in the second phase in the Libyan territorial waters; taking all necessary operational measures against vessels and related assets, including operating on Libyan territory (Council of the EU, 2015:Art.2(2)). The mandate was adapted over the years and additional tasks have been added: from 2016 it has included the training of the Libyan coast guard and navy and contributing to the implementation of the arms embargo on the high seas off the coast of Libya; and from 2017 surveillance activities to uphold the embargo on oil exports from Libya (EUNAVFOR Med Operation Sophia, 2018). These additional tasks represent a move forward in EU military involvement in addressing the migration challenge, an evolution in the military domain's contribution, shifting from short-term operational tasks to mid-term essential ones as well as an acknowledgment of the wide range of tasks the military can perform. "While retaining the focus on the core mandates of the current CSDP missions and operations in the Sahel region, work can be continued on how they can contribute to increasing overall stability and security and to enhancing border management capabilities in the

region. Further options in the context of migration challenges should be considered including on capacity building, strengthening border management, sharing information and fighting terrorism and organized crime." (Council of the EU, 2016:Annex:para.11)

Although operation Sophia represented a new kind of engagement for CSDP missions, there was a lot of criticism: Johansen has evaluated actions taken through Operation Sophia as a symbolic rather than a strategic response to human trafficking (Johansen, 2017:16), and Himmrich has concluded that "using military deployment against the hybrid threat of trafficking and smuggling was not effective and the institutional and legal limitations of the mission restricted the extent to which the operation was able to fulfill its original mandate" (Himmrich, 2018:15).

Reinforcement of the EU's border management

Besides the growing role of the CSDP, there is an emerging trend of militarization of the EU's internal instruments. The enforcement of migration law refers to two main issues: controlling the EU's external borders and the management of unauthorized non-EU citizens found on the territory of an EU MS's. Coordination between EU MS's regarding border controls has increased significantly over the last decade and numerous initiatives and measures have been launched to reinforce the management of European borders. The most noteworthy development concerns the creating and upgrading of the Frontex Agency.

Frontex has been created with the main aim of supporting operational cooperation amongst MS's concerning the management of the external borders (Council of the EU, 2004) and since its operational start in 2005, it has been given a key role in implementing the concept of integrated border management. Integrated border management includes the following key elements: border controls and border surveillance; search and rescue operations; inter-agency cooperation and coordination of the MS' and EU's activities; conduct of risk analysis; cooperation with neighboring and third countries; return of third-country nationals. Frontex border security operations - 'Triton' in the Mediterranean, and 'Poseidon' in the Aegean Sea - had a mixed mandate of strengthening border control and surveillance, and search and rescue operations. Furthermore, recently Frontex has been transformed into a semi-military European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG). EBCG has an extended scope of activities, enhanced resources, and enlarged competences, among which: developing the hotspot areas approach; coordinating operational cooperation with third neighbouring countries; initiating return operations and supporting MS' in returns; and providing technical and operational assistance to MS and third countries in the support of search and rescue operations for persons in distress at sea (European Parliament and Council, 2016:Art.8).

Through CSDP missions and operations, crisis management and border management have become increasingly intertwined. For example, military operation 'Sophia'

combines both internal and external security domains. The operation has established a connection between both internal and external security issues in the sense that internal security and the societal challenge is partly handled - in terms of prevention and mitigation - through an action that takes place outside of the EU (Tardy, 2015). The tasks of the operation are carried out outside of EU borders, though motives are derived from the prevention and reduction of internal challenges. Upgrading Frontex into the EBCG was also intended as greater integration of civilian and military actors, because, among the Member States, the authorities involved in coast guards include civilian, para-military and military actors. We witness the blurred boundaries between internal and external security "with the convergence of objectives, mandates, and operations pursued by EU actors hitherto confined to either internal or external security, whereas their legal bases, decision-making procedures, budgetary modalities, and staffing arrangements remain distinct" (Blockmans, 2016:15).

Militarization as an extended securitization

Migration issues had converted in many countries from a matter of low politics to high politics, involving a shift in the definition of national security threats and the practice of security policy. Migration has increasingly been framed as a security threat that should be tackled beyond the EU borders. The securitization of migration is a by-product of EU integration. Securitization emerged as a consequence of the deeper cooperation, economic liberalization and integration process of the Single Market. The Schengen agreement creates a new common external border separating the territories of the signatory countries from the outer world. The absence of internal borders in the Schengen zone requires trustworthy management of the movement of persons across the external borders. This is a prerequisite to ensure a high level of internal security and the free movement of persons within that area. In this framework, migration is treated for the first time as a security matter, similarly to crime and terrorism.

The securitization process occurs both at the level of political discourse and political practice. Migration is securitized by being continually connected to criminal activities and cross-border crimes such as trafficking of humans, drugs and arms, corruption and terrorism which motivates increased border control and surveillance. Illegal migrants were thus explicitly linked with organized crime and terrorism.

Speaking in more general terms, migration has been outlined and defined as troublesome and threatening to European society. In the last decades political and public discourses have depicted migration as a threat to jobs, the welfare state, the cultural compositions of the nation and cohesiveness, as well as for the protection of public order and the maintenance of domestic stability. Migration has been turned into a security problem by mobilizing specific institutions and expectations and thereby helping to legitimize practices in migration control that were originally used for emergencies.

The orientation towards the securitization of migration was reinforced after 9/11 - migration has been linked to terrorism and subsequently interpreted as a non-traditional security threat. The continuing influx of migrants has led to the adoption of a wide array of restrictive measures that have strengthened the linkages between migration governance and security.

Securitization also emerges and is sustained through increasing use of new technologies that have widened the scope of observation and improved techniques of surveillance and opportunities to gather or cross-check information. "There seems to be a pattern whereby databases that were originally introduced to manage movements across borders are increasingly being used in criminal matters and as an integral part of security policy" (Takle, 2012:294). Each of the existing EU's information systems for border management and internal security has its objectives, legal bases, and institutional users. However, together they provide a complex pattern of relevant databases. The Schengen Information System (SIS), the Visa Information System (VIS), the European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database (Eurodac) and the European Border Surveillance System (Eurosur) are complementary systems primarily targeted at third-country nationals, but they also support national authorities in fighting crime and terrorism. In other words, after 9/11, we are witnessing a significant convergence of migration and security instruments.

As migration policy has shifted the emphasis towards securitization, and migration has been established as part of the security domain, migration management has become part of operations working on security issues such as terrorism and inter-state armed conflict. This includes mobilization of the military, too. The EU utilizes the military as a tool, first to enhance deterrence measures through military presence. The role assigned to the military has been primarily about deterrence, together with support for surveillance, reconnaissance, and returns. In this sense, the militarization of migration comes "as an extension of securitization already taking place within EU institutions and policies" (Himmrich, 2018:8). Military deployments are led by MS through the CSDP, NATO, or unilateral state decisions. Their mandates specifically address issues of migration or crimes related to migration, often support existing Frontex or national coast guard operations. Also, we are witnessing the utilization of the already existing regional defense cooperation frameworks for addressing migration management, notably in the case of the Central European Defence Cooperation (Nemeth, 2018).

Militarization as a companion to externalization

Referred to as the external dimension of the EU asylum and migration policy, externalization of migration management has been explained as a process in which EU's MS push their borders further away and shift the protection responsibility on to third states (Lavenex, 2004). Through this extra-territorialization of migration, the

EU seeks to remove potential security threats through cooperation with third countries (Rijpma and Cremona, 2007).

Mainly, we have witnessed externalization of the traditional tools of migration control through the engagement of sending and transit countries in strengthening border controls; combating migrant smuggling and trafficking; and readmitting migrants (Boswell, 2003).

Militarized responses to migration are considered as one policy on a spectrum of options available to EU's external policy: ranging from political, trade, and economic policies to military solutions. As such, militarization is a part of the EU's comprehensive approach towards migration. The EU's migration management approach assembles its development policy, trade policy, humanitarian aid, crisis management as well as its neighborhood policy, combining their toolkits in different ways, in order to deliver an effective response to the migration challenge. It mobilizes and uses all available policies and instruments, resulting from the laborious process of linking up EU's policies on migration, security, trade, development, and defense under the common foreign policy umbrella. CSDP missions and operations as well as Frontex operations and activities have been launched among a number of other measures of the EU's external action, such as: increased partnership with the countries of origin and transit, African regional organizations and other relevant partners; promoting visa facilitation and readmission agreements; upgrading trade preferences; enhancing development and humanitarian aid; improvement of the security situation in countries of origin and transit; advancement of the socio-economic conditions in countries of origin; improvement of the human rights situation in countries of origin; support for development and reinforcement of regional cooperation frameworks; increased support to border management in the affected regions; cooperation with transit countries in controlling the flows; building capacities in countries of origin and transit to enable local authorities to tackle the issue more effectively.

It is worth to underline that this trend of militarisation is not limited only to migration. It is more generally associated with the growing presence of the military in managing otherwise-civilian policy areas when governments frame civilian issues of law enforcement as a threat and deploy the military to resolve issues in which civilian means have failed or there is public pressure to act in a more rapid manner. There is widespread use of militarized responses to different forms of criminal activity such as drug trafficking, maritime piracy, illegal wildlife trade and migrant smuggling (Reitano et al., 2017).

Militarization as an answer to the growing weaponization of migrations

A number of authors argue that a key reason for more extensive military involvement is the perception of hybrid threats associated with migration, particularly the

weaponization of migrants, human smuggling and trafficking, and terrorist infiltration (Greenhill, 2010, 2016; Tardy, 2015; Himmrich, 2018). Such an attitude becomes accepted in all EU institutions. In its briefing, European Parliament acknowledges hybrid threats as "a useful concept that embraces the interconnected nature of challenges (i.e. ethnic conflict, terrorism, migration, and weak institutions), the multiplicity of actors involved (i.e. regular and irregular forces, criminal groups); and the diversity of conventional and unconventional means used (i.e. military, diplomatic, technological)" (European Parliament, 2017:2). In his address, Council's President Tusk alerted: "There are forces around us however, for whom the wave of refugees is just dirty business or a political bargaining chip. We are slowly becoming witnesses to the birth of a new form of political pressure, and some even call it a kind of a new hybrid war, in which migratory waves have become a tool, a weapon against neighbours" (European Council, 2015). And European Commission in its communication "Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats" intends to further intensify cooperation with third countries in its Eastern and Southern neighborhood "to help combat organized crime, terrorism, irregular migration and trafficking of small arms" (European Commission, 2016:14).

The weaponization of migration is most evident in the coercive engineered migration. "Coercion-driven migrations or coercive engineered migration are those real or threatened cross-border population movements that are deliberately created or manipulated as instruments of deterrence in order to prevent or induce changes in political behavior, or to extract political, military, and economic concessions from a target state or states" (Greenhill, 2016:33). In that case target state or states may launch military action - or threaten to do so - to hamper or stop outflows at the source.

Coercive engineered migrations are generally used as a means to achieve objectives in other policy arenas. They are often embedded within mass migrations strategically engineered for dispossession, exporting, or militarized reasons. Greenhill identified that coercive engineered migration has been attempted at least seventy-five times since the advent of the 1951 Refugee Convention alone - almost one per year on average. Moreover, when attempted, coercive engineered migration has succeeded at least in part almost three-quarters of the time, most often against liberal democracies. Liberal democracies are particularly vulnerable due to their commitments and legal obligations to human rights and refugee protection, which, on the other hand, constrain the ability of states to control their borders effectively. "Codified commitments to protect human rights and pluralistic politics can interact in such a way as to offer would-be coercers powerful bargaining leverage via exploitation of what liberal targets rightly view as their virtues and, in effect, transform liberal democratic virtues into international bargaining vices" (Greenhill, 2010:138).

Concluding remarks

The EU has shaped its response to migration through its securitization and externalization as well as through growing militarization. The militarization has been detected as a significant trend in the external dimension of the EU migration policy. This militarization of migration has twofold nature: the increasing role of the CSDP missions and operations in the EU's migration management; and progressive militarization of the overall border management process.

CSDP emerged as an important tool of the external dimension of the EU migration policy. Furthermore, in the near future, we can expect a growing role of the CSDP in the migration management and further mainstreaming of the migration in the mandate of existing and future CSDP missions and operations. However, it must be clear that they are a crisis management instrument and not a long-term solution. CSDP missions and operations should be developed further to be able to respond quickly and with a range of capabilities, particularly by: reinforcing existing training and capacity-building activities; enhancing security sector reform in countries of origin and transit; and broadening permanent regional presence to gain a better overview on migration developments.

Besides the growing role of the CSDP, there is an emerging trend of militarization of the EU's internal instruments and internal policies too. Most notably, upgrading Frontex into the EBCG through its transformation into a semi-military structure with an extended scope of activities and enlarged competences. EU institutions and Member States have in practice given priority to security-driven and military concerns. The focus on border controls, return and re-admission, and combating smuggling and trafficking have by and large prevailed.

The EU has responded to the migration challenge in a comprehensive manner. The Union mobilizes and uses all available policies and instruments. Therefore, the military instrument could not be absent and definitely should be part of the overall answer. The migration flows towards the EU call on all actors to act comprehensively. The EU should further use effectively its network of Delegations, EBCG and all CSDP instruments. All EU and Member States' existing security, foreign and development policy instruments should be strategically combined to maintain a permanent European law enforcement presence in a wide region of origin and transit countries.

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COMPARISON OF ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND THE LEVANT AND AL-QAEDA

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Abstract: *The rise of religious fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism in the last few decades resembles a phenomenon which is not exclusive only for the countries of the Middle East and Northern Africa. Nonetheless, this phenomenon represents great danger and threat globally. Moreover, the upsurge of rampant terrorist acts against civilians committed by violent Islamists who claim a religious motivation are a complex consequence of numerous circumstances, such as economic instability, social and political discontent, lack of knowledge and proper education and great cultural gaps. At this stage it is evident that those factors, regardless of their background, have indeed emerged previously in the world at a certain stage of evolution of the community along with their approach that terrorism is the most effective way for achieving political aims, and they are emerging again in a form of an omen of an oncoming causal change, or even collapse of the international security system and liberal world order. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate the essential differences between Daesh (Islamic State of Iraq and Levant, ISIL, ISIS, further use IS) and al-Qaeda and their similarities in a context of non-state, paramilitary actors operating at regional and international level as two most notorious and widespread extremist organizations.*

Keywords*: terrorism, religious terrorism, IS, al-Qaeda, caliphate*

Introduction

1. The forerunner of modern international terrorism 1968/79

The colonial era, the failed post-colonial attempts at state formation, and the creation of Israel initiated a series of Marxist and Anti-Western transformations and movements in the Arab and Islamic world. The rise of these nationalist and revolutionary movements, along with their view that terrorism is the most effective way of achieving political goals, is the generator of the so-called first phase of modern international terrorism (or the fourth stage in the development of terrorist movements historically).

In the late 1960s, Palestinian secular movements such as Al Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) began targeting civilians outside the

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immediate arena of conflict. Following Israel's 1967 defeat of Arab forces, Palestinian leaders realized that the Arab world was unable to conventionally confront Israel. At the same time, lessons drawn from revolutionary movements in Latin America, North Africa, Southeast Asia as well as during the Jewish struggle against Britain in Palestine, saw the Palestinians move away from standard guerrilla warfare (which took place in rural areas mostly) toward urban terrorism. Radical Palestinians took advantage of modern communication and transportation systems to internationalize their struggle. They launched a series of hijackings, kidnappings, bombings, and shootings, culminating in the kidnapping and subsequent deaths of Israeli athletes during the 1972 Munich Olympic games. (Eppie Briggs, 2011, p. 68-69)

Precisely these are the Palestinian groups that have become a model for many secular militants, and have offered a kind of background for the development of further ethnic and religious movements. The Palestinians have created an extensive transnational extremist network, affiliated with certain sponsoring states such as the Soviet Union, certain Arab states and some criminal organizations. By the end of the 1970s, the Palestinian network became a major conduit for the spread of terrorist practice globally.[3]

2. The beginnings of al-Qaeda and Islamic State (Daesh), their ideology and roots

The roots of the currently most widespread Islamist terrorist groups can be traced back to the formation of revolutionary fundamentalist movements as early as the first half of the 20th century. The original movement whose doctrines and ideology lay behind many modern terrorist organizations was founded in 1928 known as the Muslim Brotherhood.

This movement is based on the ideology of Sunni-Islam, Pan-Islamism and Neo-Ottomanism. Religious fundamentalism is the driving doctrine of their propaganda. The brotherhood leader Hassan al-Bana has made clear that the movement's goal is to resurrect the caliphate and establish Islamic law, initially in Muslim countries and then around the world. He defends his statement with the phrase "In the very nature of Islam is to dominate, not to be subdued, Islam seeks to impose its law on all nations and to extend its power throughout the planet". The Brotherhood first declares the United States (along with the Zionist movement) as Islam's biggest enemies and declares jihad to them. Such brutal and ruthless attitudes that are widespread today in almost the same fundamentalist factions and terrorist movements are due to the corrupt interpretation of the Qur'anic verses, as well as some so-called hadiths by the Prophet

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[3] John Moore ; The Evolution of Islamic terrorism, an overview ; The author is a former political-military analyst with the U.S. Department of Defense and terrorism analyst with the State Department. He is currently a security consultant, focusing on the mitigation of post-Cold War patterns of terrorism and political violence.

Muhammad, views of the so-called Day of Judgment, with emphasis on Islam as the last true religion and the Prophet Muhammad as the last prophet sent by God.[4]

Given the afore-stated, it is evident that the rise of violent terrorist groups which claim religious motivation have indeed mixed origins and backgrounds which are not specifically incited nor exclusively connected to their personal (or collective) religious orientation.

Some scholars even argue and dispute the use of the term "Islamic Terrorism" seeing it as a conviction against billions of believers that indeed have no connection to any terrorist fraction whatsoever.

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate the essential differences between Islamic State and al-Qaeda, their similarities in the context of non-state paramilitary actors operating at the regional and international levels as the two most notorious and widespread extremist organizations.

The formation of IS took place in 1999 under the name al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and initially acted as an al-Qaeda faction. The founder and leader of al-Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden, along with the founder of what we now know as IS, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi were fighting on the same side as rebels (mujahedeen) in the Soviet-Afghan war earlier.

Following the 9/11 attacks and the US declaration of War on Terror dramatically weakened al-Qaeda. This offered a ground for al-Qaeda to loosen the ties with many of its sister branches and withdraw in rural areas. After the death of Osama Bin Laden and the onset of the Arab Spring many of these terrorist factions began to rise. At the beginning, the IS was not seen as a serious threat by the West, but only as one of the many militant groups that are constantly operating in this troubled Middle Eastern region. With the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War, al-Qaeda in Iraq neglected the headquarters commands which provided space to al -Nusra Front group to take the leading role in the fight against the Assad regime, which caused complete secession of the previous group, and created an opportunity for the new group to start operating independently.

3. Creation of the Islamic State and its modus operandi, differences with al-Qaeda

The simplicity of the puzzle as to how this terrorist organization was formed is rather confusing. The real answer is much more complicated for the general perception in the Western world. The New York Times published confidential comments by Major General Michael K. Nagata, the Special Operations commander for the United States in the Middle East, admitting that he had hardly begun figuring out the Islamic State's appeal. "We have not defeated the idea," he said. "We do not even understand the idea."[5]

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[4] Quintan Wiktorowicz; A Genealogy of Radical Islam; Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 28, 2005 - Issue 2

[5] Graeme Wood; What ISIS Really Wants; https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/; March 2015

These comments lead to the conclusion that the Western view of this terrorist organization is that of merely a branch or backing of al-Qaeda and lack knowledge of its more essential attributes, which contributed to strategic errors of a dire significance.

I.
The Black Standard as used by various Islamist organizations (since the late 1990s) consists of a white-on-black Shahada

II.
The variation of the "Black Standard" with the "seal of Muhammad" design , used as "flag of IS"

The Black Standard is considered as one of the flags flown by the prophet Muhammad, later used in Abbasid Revolution and therefore associated with Abbasid Caliphate. The Black Standard is also a symbol in Islamic eschatology.[6] (picture I)

The variation of the Black Standard has been made as the official flag of the IS (picture II). The difference between the both can be easily determined even in the eyes of people who have no connection with Islam, Islamic studies and Arabic language. The Black Standard used by the IS has been configured with the use of very primitive way of Arabic calligraphy. The shahada written above the seal of the prophet indicates returning to the roots, simplicity and the age when Islam emerged as a religion (Picture II). In contrast, the Black Standard used by other terrorist groups (Picture I) uses more contemporary calligraphy which implies a rather modern vision.

The Islamic State took over control of Mosul, Iraq in June 2014 and by 2018 took control over a territory as large as the United Kingdom. In comparison with al-Qaeda, the IS is aimed at creating an Islamic caliphate. The leader of al-Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden was ideologically prone to the ideas of forming an Islamic caliphate, but he never anticipated that such thing could even happen during his lifetime or in the near future. The idea of creating a Caliphate was adopted by the IS and has its origins in a narrative allegedly described in "The hadith of the Twelve Successors or Twelve Caliphs" (this hadith is a subject of speculations among the scholars of Islamic studies, and for some it is not even authentic).

According to the prophecy described in that hadith, twelve caliphs will reign — presumably the first being crowned upon Muhammad's death—after which the caliphate would cease to exist and mark the beginning of the judgment day or Armageddon. It is stated that all twelve caliphs will be from the tribe of Quraysh (the tribe of the prophet Muhammad). The interpretation of the hadith varies widely among Sunni scholars; some have openly claimed that they do not know the meaning.[7]

Consequently, the late leader of the IS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who proclaimed himself to be a Caliph of the IS on 5 June 2014, put himself in a position as the forth caliph, direct successor of the Quraysh tribe, the tribe in which prophet Muhammad was born. That said, he created the main reason on which this terrorist organization nourishes itself - acceleration of the process of welcoming the Judgment Day which is widely perceived by Islamic fundamentalists, Wahhabis and Salafists as a blessing.[89]

While al-Qaeda's goals were largely retaliatory to the West, especially the US, the scenarios created by the IS were directed at creating their own state governed by their corrupt interpretation of the Quran, Sharia law and creating world domination

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[6] David Cook; Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic. Darwin Press page. 197 Majlisi; 2002

[7] "Beliefs: Twelve Successors". Al-Islam.org. Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project

[8] "Eschatology - Oxford Islamic Studies Online". Oxfordislamicstudies.com. 6 May 2008. Retrieved 3 July 2017.

[9] David Aikman, The Great Revival: Understanding Religious Fundamentalism, https://archive. nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/cfr/international/20030724faessayv82n4_aikman.html?ex; June, 2003

that would annihilate all infidels, kaffirs (a term used to describe not only members of other religions or atheists, but also the branches of Islam itself that have gone astray from the authentic postulates known for this religion) to "purify" the planet and create a solid foundation for the Judgment Day.

This is essentially different from al-Qaeda's main goals:

- Exterminating Americans and eradicating Western influence from all Muslim countries (especially Saudi Arabia)
- The destruction of Israel as a state
- The overthrow of the pro-Western dictatorships in the Middle East

Al-Qaeda had its culmination in the 9/11 attack, after which it has grown into the most notorious modern terrorist organization.[10]

al-Qaeda

Focus on terrorism and militant activities

Weapon fabrication

Israel/Palestine

Defensive jihad

Dar al-Harb v.s Dar al-Islam

Obligation to jihad

Western agression against Muslims

Apostate regimes in MENA

Lone wolf attacks

IS

Return dignity to Sunni Muslims

Appeal to professionals

Social services and governance

Appeal of violence

Return of medieval punishments and rituals

III.
Competing narratives in *Inspire* and *Dabiq* magazines[11]

After the 9/11 attacks, followed the attacks in Madrid (2004) and London (2005), but the message al-Qaeda was sending was directed to the Spanish and British authorities who actively participated in US-led attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan, with the aim of completely withdrawing their forces from the Middle East. From this, it

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[10] Daniel L. Byman. Comparing Al Qaeda and ISIS: Different goals, different targets; https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/comparing-al-qaeda-and-isis-different-goals-different-targets/; April 2015.

[11] Nauren Chowdhury Fink and Benjamin Sugg; A Tale of Two Jihads: Comparing the al-Qaeda and ISIS Narratives; https://theglobalobservatory.org/2015/02/jihad-al-qaeda-isis-counternarrative/; February 2015

can be concluded that the target of this terrorist organization is the United States and Israel, and that the attacks would be there or in the countries that actively support their agenda (Picture III). In addition, al-Qaeda advocates the establishment of Islamic law and sharia in most Muslim countries, a complete eradication of any Western propaganda and the destruction of everything that is "anti-Islamic" (the destruction of ancient books, manuscripts, icons, etc.). The latest terrorist attack that rocked France and the West in 2015 aimed at Charlie Hebdo's editorial was primarily motivated by the prophet Muhammad's desecration in their magazine. [12]

What is important to note about the attacks orchestrated by al-Qaeda is their strategy, structure and tactics.
Al Qaeda unlike the IS is:

1. Decentralized. After bin Laden's death, the leadership was taken over by his adviser, Ayman Zawahiri, and none of them were called Caliphs. The members of the group referred to bin Laden as a Sheikh[13](Picture V). The difference between these two terms is enormous, as sheikh in translation means an Arab leader, head of an Arab tribe, family or village. In contrast to this, Caliph is a term that contains a strong religious background, means an Islamic leader, both civil and religious, designated as Muhammad's successor. According to radical Islamic followers, at the moment when a person is proclaimed a caliph, all believers are obliged to follow, without a doubt, all his commands, teachings, sermons and requests.[14] The IS declared itself Caliphate in June 2014, and the entity recognizes no political boundaries.[15] (Picture IV) By declaring the caliphate, they are doing something that has never been seen in modern world. The implications for this in the minds of traditional Salafists are enormous. Accordingly, they have a religious obligation to surrender their

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[12] Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahmaan al-Barraak, Majallat al-Da'wah, Islam QA Fatwa 14305: It is essential to respond to those who defame the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) retrieved 12 February 2015 | If we leave the kuffaar and atheists to say whatever they want without denouncing it or punishing them, great mischief will result, which is something that these kuffaar love....Whoever hears the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) being insulted and does not feel any protective jealousy or get angry is not a true believer – we seek refuge with Allaah from humility, kufr and obeying the Shaytaan

[13] OALD; Sheikh, noun; https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/sheikh

[14] Verse 55 of An-Nūr , the 24th chapter of the Qur'an: "God has promised those of you who have attained to faith and do righteous deeds that, of a certainty, He will make them *Khulifa* on earth, even as He caused [some of] those who lived before them to become *Khulifa*; and that, of a certainty, He will firmly establish for them the religion which He has been pleased to bestow on them; and that, of a certainty, He will cause their erstwhile state of fear to be replaced by a sense of security [seeing that] they worship Me [alone], not ascribing divine powers to aught beside Me. But all who, after [having understood] this, choose to deny the truth – it is they, they who are truly iniquitous!"

[15] Withnall, Adam "Iraq crisis: Isis changes name and declares its territories a new Islamic state with 'restoration of caliphate' in Middle East". The Independent. London (29 June 2014).

loyalty to the Caliphate and respond to any Caliph's request. While not all Salafists would do so in a straight line, even if 1% of them do, they are already tens of thousands of people around the world whose actions are determined by the words of one man.

2. Widespread in factions. Al Qaeda's expansion is partly due to the absorption of Sunni extremist organizations around the world over a long period of time. In contrast, the IS has been around for a relatively short time and is, according to some analysts, a by-product of the weakened al-Qaeda leadership after bin Laden's death. There is a quiet war between the two organizations today, initiated by the current al-Qaeda leader who in a video vehemently attacked the IS and al-Baghdadi as guilty of insurgency within the al-Qaeda ranks, and his aspirations and rule as too violent and brutal.[16]

3. Methods of recruitment. The peak of al-Qaeda's actions ended after the attacks on 9/11 that subsequently led to activating Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty in support of the USA declaration of War on Terror. At that time, the recruitment methods were mostly clandestine and aimed at individuals and groups which had similar destructive views on USA global hegemony, Israel as a state and Zionism in particular. The rise of the IS was happening in times when the main actors could successfully abuse the spread of social media, the internet, instant messaging. Many westerners were being recruited throughout a powerful online media campaign. They were using very sophisticated jihadi propaganda in which westerners and many of the converts to Islam appeared in high quality videos online giving encouraging speeches to others to join their cause and even showing the 'fun' part of the caliphate. The IS propaganda ued drones and even go-pro footages which seemed appealing to western viewers.

4. Understanding the tactics of operation of both terrorist groups

In order to understand in greater detail the differences between al-Qaeda's actions and the motives of the IS, we will cite examples of several attacks recently carried out by the two organizations separately.

An attack involving hostages in a hotel with foreign nationals in Mali on 20 November, 2015, carried out by a terrorist group, al-Qaeda affiliate, ended up with 27 casualties, including 5 assailants, but the action freed 30 hostages who proved to be Muslims reciting the shahada.[17]

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[16] Audrey Kurth Cronin: ISIS is not a Terrorist Group-Why counterterrorism Won't stop the Latest Jihadist Threat; https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2015-02-18/isis-not-terrorist-group,March/April 2015

[17] Searcey, Dionne; Nossiternov, Adam; "Deadly Siege Ends After Assault on Hotel in Mali"; International New York Times.; November 2015.
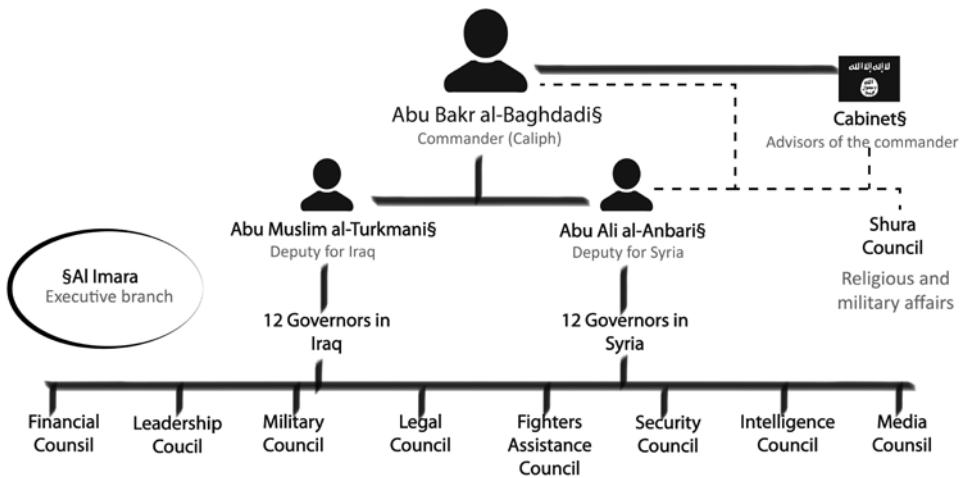
**IV.
Organizational structure of IS**[18]
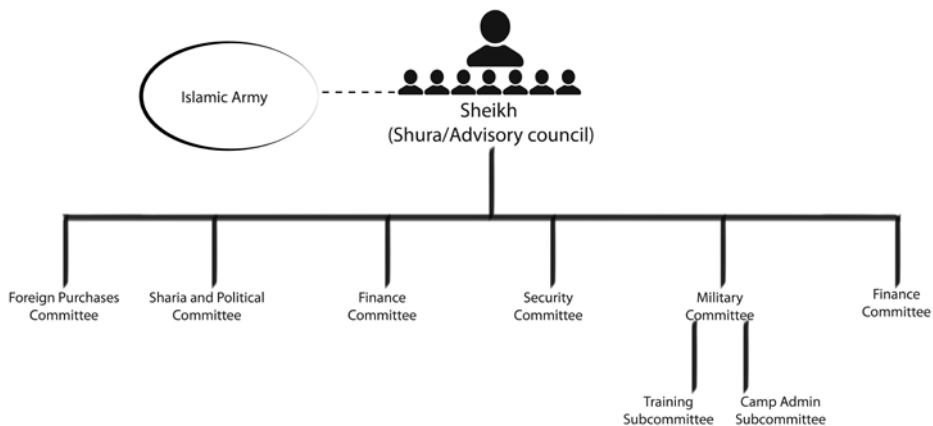
**V.
Organizational structure of al-Qaeda**[19]

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[18]   The picture was created by the authors based on various sources; CNN, Reuters 2014;
[19]   The picture was created by the authors based on the chart available at https://www.globalse-curity.org/military/world/para/al-qaida-structure.htm

What is important to emphasize as a motive for this terrorist act is first and foremost the need for these al-Qaeda branches to emerge after a long shadowy existence and remind the West that their "fight against terror" with this group is not over. The message sent with this attack was primarily directed to France, which sent 3,000 French troops in 2013 to destroy al-Qaeda militants in the area where it is now most active, namely North and North West Africa.

The demolition of a Russian plane in the Sinai Peninsula for which the IS claimed responsibility, taking 224 casualties, at first glance seems to be driven by the same motives as the al-Qaeda attack on Mali.

In an official statement of the terrorist group, they say "This was to show the Russians and whoever allies with them that they will have no safety in the lands and airspace of the Muslims," the group wrote. "That their daily killing of dozens in (Syria) through their air strikes will only bring them calamities."[20] This message and the tactics of carrying out a terrorist attack at first seemed identical to the well-known attacks throughout the history of other terrorist groups. But what makes this situation different is the fact that after the Russian intervention in Syria, the IS lost ¼ of its established territory.

The primary goal of the IS is first to localize the takeover of the territories of Iraq and Syria to establish the basis for their global caliphate. Due to the huge losses in recent years, the IS are expanding their targets and tactics by responding to "attack by attack" primarily because of the inability to retain their occupied territories. They are now withdrawn in rural areas, losing their resources and the primary goal of their policies and agenda is being distorted.

5. The War against al-Qaeda and the IS

Like all other terrorist formations, the IS is a malicious hotspot in the modern world, but what makes this group malignant and by far the most serious threat to our liberal world is the fact that they function as a state (Picture III), a state with a similar but much more brutal policy compared to the former Ottoman Empire. Building parallels and the resurrection of Neo-Ottomanism leaves room for numerous speculations as to whether all states really want and actively participate in the fight against them. In March 2015, Business Insider released a text that said al-Qaeda's main focus was on the Arab countries of the Middle East, they were in no hurry to form the Caliphate because it would simply mean a division of resources. On the other hand, some experts believe that for Turkey, the existence of the Caliphate would be an advantage, and "Erdogan would like to be some form of Sultan in the caliphate that would merge his country with the Persian Gulf, both for historical and economic reasons." Turkey is

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[20] Ahmed Aboulenein, Lin Noueihed, Islamic State says 'Schweppes bomb' used to bring down Russian plane; Reuters; November 2015.

somehow seeking to regain its influence in the Middle East lost in the First World War, and a sign of this was the sending of Turkish troops to Qatar 2015, one hundred years after the withdrawal of their forces from the entire region. The ninth paragraph of the text reiterates the fact that al-Qaeda's main enemy is the United States, while the main enemy of the IS are the Shiites in Syria and Iraq, as well as the Assad regime. From an economic point of view, what is stated above makes sense, al-Qaeda's hatred of the United States is, of course, fueled by the US efforts to build the TAPI (Turkmenistan-India-Indian Ocean) pipeline.

When it comes to Turkey, the TAPI pipeline is neither a priority nor a problem. The problem for IS and Turkey are the Arabs in Syria and Iraq who have rejected the construction of the Qatar-Turkish gas pipeline, instead agreeing with Russian Gazprom to build a gas pipeline linking Iran-Iraq-Syria.[21]

Another article in The Guardian, "How the IS crippled Al Qaeda" explains the US position and their passivity with regard to the IS. The reason for al-Qaeda's weakening is the fact that the United States has ruthlessly destroyed all of the group's hotspots since the 9/11 attacks, while the United States only formally sees an enemy in the IS in order not to jeopardize its relations with Turkey.[22]

But after the brutal execution of American journalists, after the attacks in Brussels and Paris in which suicide bombers were nationals of these European countries, the humanitarian crisis and the huge influx of refugees from the Middle East that could be abused by radicalized individuals with hidden agenda and fanatic views (and that is to inflict terror far beyond the crisis hotspots), the possibility of owning WMD, Europe and the United States began to reassess their strategies, tactics and finally attitudes to the question how powerful the IS really is.

The conflict in Syria unfolded in a historical period when Russia–US relations were slowly but surely deteriorating from the erstwhile partnership of the late 1990s and early 2000s to a Cold War confrontational model bearing some new features. The generally accepted norms of international law were unilaterally revised, while the collective crisis settlement mechanism advocated by Russia never materialized. As the President of Russia suggested at the Valdai Forum in 2014, this mechanism might include a 'coherent system of reciprocal commitments and agreements' and 'clear-cut conditions under which interference is necessary and legitimate.'[23] [24]

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[21] Paul Cochrane; The 'Pipelineistan' conspiracy: The War in Syria has never been about gas; https://www.middleeasteye.net/big-story/pipelineistan-conspiracy-war-syria-has-never-been-about-gas; April 2018

[22] Shiv Malik, Mustafa Khalili , Spencer Ackerman and Ali Younis; How Isis crippled al-Qaeda, The Guardian; June 2015

[23] Alexander Aksenyonok; The Syrian Crisis: A Thorny Path from War to Peace; https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/valday/The-Syrian-Crisis-A-Thorny-Path-from-War-to-Peace-20168; August 2019

[24] 'Zasedanie Mezhdunarodnogo Diskussionnogo Kluba «Valdai»' [Valdai Discussion Club's Annual Meeting]; http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46860; October 2014

The protracted Syrian crisis has presented the international community with a major dilemma: whether it will be able to extinguish the tinderbox conflicts or allow regional centers of power to engage in military rivalries designed to promote their geopolitical interests and indulge their outsize ambitions. In this sense, the outcome of the civil war in Syria will have implications that go far beyond the regional framework.[25]

By the end of February 2016, the Russian Air Force carried out about 60 air strikes a day, with the US-led coalition only seven.[26]

"The Russian reinforcement has changed the calculus completely," Lt. Gen. Vincent R. Stewart, head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, said in Senate testimony. Assad is "in a much stronger negotiating position than he was just six months ago," Stewart said. "I'm more inclined to believe that he is a player on the stage for a longer term than he was six months to a year ago."[27]

Conclusion

Today, according to OIR (Operation Inherent Resolve) spokesman, after the US-led operation and the partners, the IS (Daesh) has completely lost the territory under its control. More than 7.7 million people are free, but this does not mark the end of the campaign. Furthermore, on 27th of October 2019 the US President announced that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi had been killed in an US raid.[28] The US President claimed that the IS leader killed himself by detonating a suicide vest during the raid, and DNA test results from the aftermath positively identified his body, which is yet another triumph in the battle against this terrorist formation. Nonetheless, we need to realize that this non-state actor is cruel, adaptable, complex in its structure and has ideological background, which represents a huge challenge and a danger to the international community.

According to some analysts, reduced power, lost territories, resources (human, military and infrastructure) do not mean final defeat of the terrorist organization itself, on the contrary, similar to the case of al-Qaeda, the IS is currently considered to be in a state of latency, which can suddenly grow exponentially and rise again into the most serious threat to the security of the liberal world order.

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[26] David Axe; "Russia Is Launching Twice as Many Airstrikes as the U.S. in Syria". Daily Beast. February 2016

[27] "U.S. officials: Russian airstrikes have changed 'calculus completely' in Syria". Washington Post. 9 February 2016.

[28] Statement from the President on the Death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi; https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-death-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi/;October 2019

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ONE BELT ONE ROAD – HOW DOES IT AFFECT THE EURASIAN ECONOMIC AND SECURITY ISSUE

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Abstract: *China has long posited that common security can be improved through economic development and cooperation. Infrastructure, in turn, is one of the essential foundations of economic development and cooperation—no economically prosperous state has been able to progress without it. As the Chinese people say* **'if you want to be rich, first build a road'**. *China's "One Belt, One Road" project is comprised of two components: the Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI) and the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB)—that were announced separately in 2013. Each component has the potential to transform the global geopolitical landscape through the construction of interrelated infrastructure projects including ports, highways, railways and pipelines.*

Large parts of Asia have a critical lack of basic infrastructure such as roads, rail tracks, bridges, airports and power grids, which current national and multilateral developmental institutions are unable to address. The MSRI is a geopolitical project that involves a number of actors (governments, private companies and Chinese state-owned enterprises) at a number of geographic scales (cities, provinces, states and continents). It is an ambitious multi-decade vision to physically, digitally and culturally connect Eurasia, pursue closer Eurasian economic cooperation and mitigate poverty. This grand vision has become the pillar of President Xi Jinping administration's foreign policy.

The EU and China both have an interest in promoting greater connectivity and stability in Eurasia. In China's case, this is largely achieved through its visionary Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). So far, the EU has given the initiative a welcome and is still thoughtful how to engage it strategically. This is partly because the BRI remains operationally uncoordinated, and the EU remains concerned about commercial feasibility, transparency, sustainability and environmental issues.

Moreover, the differences in needs, interests and strategic planning among EU member states in relation to China slow down their common response. While the EU's cautious approach could certainly lead to a more well-informed and gauged response, an overly long delay may come at the risk of the EU being left behind as China takes a stronger lead in shaping the Eurasian security.

Key words: *China, economy, EU, security, belt, road.*

Introduction

Connectivity, including infrastructure, projects have long been recognized as an integral element of global political and economic change, as well as a reflection of new political and

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economic realities. Many have started to consider the political and economic implications of the MSRI and SREB for China's economy, provinces and cities and multinational corporations (MNCs), the geo-political and geo-economics order in the Asia-Pacific Region, Central Asia, South Asia, global power structures, and patterns of investment, trade and people-to-people exchange regionally and globally.

However, the EU first requires a more comprehensive understanding of the Belt's strategic implications in their totality - and how they might relate to its own security and foreign policy objectives. There exists a vast vacuum of critical infrastructure in large parts of Eurasia, which many relevant states are not able to fill, even with the aid of existing multilateral development funds. The Belt intends to fill much of this vacuum, and while the political endurance of the initiative and the efficacy of its implementation remains to be seen, it has been received with enthusiasm throughout many parts of Eurasia. It has the potential to become a leading model of bilateral and multilateral economic cooperation in Eurasia.

But what is clear is that the Belt is driven by a wide range of motivations, including enhancing China's domestic economic security by increasing its global economic and, particularly, financial clout, mitigating security threats, and garnering strategic space. Political tensions and the Silk Road economic belt disorder within Eurasian states may impact the Belt, but the Belt itself also interacts mutually with these dynamics. For now Belt does not structurally conflict with Russian security or Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) objectives, whether nationally or in Central Asia.

EU economic and security interests

First of all, we know that Silk Road Economic Belt touches a number of EU foreign and security priorities, including global governance, state-societal resilience and cooperation among regional orders. Second, it is largely in line with the EU interests in Central and South Asia, although the implications for the EU normative and value-based agenda remain in question. Third, it has at this stage, limited prospects as a platform for EU–China hard security cooperation, but it does offer greater cooperation potential in relation to human security.

In coordination with the EU, it should strategically utilize opportunities to engage China and other relevant actors, and calibrate the Belt to contribute towards a 'rules-based global order' in line with its own interests and values. Then, it should think about forging closer strategic relationships with key stakeholders such as China, India and Russia in the interest of a more stable Eurasia, with the Belt as one possible impetus for this. Furthermore, it should think and plan more strategically about its own vision for a more secure Eurasia, and develop a more coherent position on Eurasian integration visions such as the Belt. And it will need to allocate greater institutional and human capital to continuously study and monitor the Belt and its political, economic and security implications.[3]

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[3] THE SILK ROAD ECONOMIC BELT Considering security implications and EU–China cooperation prospects, SIPRI 2018

Picture 1. China project SREB and MSRI

The EU 2016 Global Strategy states that the EU will 'pursue a coherent approach to China's connectivity drives westwards'[4]. Overall, there needs to be greater integration of development as a core tenet of security, inclusion and stability within the EU's regional engagement of South East Asian and IOR states. While this need not obviate the EU's pursuit of democratic and human rights ideals, a failure to take better account of local demands and need for growth will leave the EU marginalized.

Greater EU attention to maritime security in the SCS and especially the IOR is firmly recommended as its relevance to economic and security interests cannot be overstated. In the SCS, China may through the Road gain the leverage to achieve its maritime claims over time, thereby possibly impacting the security of EU SLOCs. This is a red line and the EU is advised to engage with China, ASEAN and other stakeholders to stress its concerns. In the IOR, the EU should utilize the emerging interplay and merger of maritime and terrestrial security spaces to its economic, diplomatic and security advantage.

The belt should contribute to a "global rule based on rules" in accordance with its own interests and values. Next, it should consider establishing closer strategic relationships with key stakeholders such as China, India and Russia in the interest of a more stable Eurasia, with the Belt as a possible impetus. In turn, it needs to think and plan strategically for its vision of a safer Eurasia and to develop a more coherent position on Eurasian integration visions such as the Belt. Greater institutional and human capital will need to be allocated for the continuous study and monitoring of the belt and its political, economic and security implications.

Eurasia's geopolitical and geo-economics landscapes are in rapid transition. While actors such as China and Russia are initiating and stimulating their own regional integration efforts such as the Belt and the EEU, the EU is facing its own internal integration challenges and is also preoccupied with crises in its immediate neighborhood.

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[4] European Union, 'Shared vision, common action: a stronger Europe', June 2016.

While this is underlined in the 2016 Global Strategy, a vision for Eurasia specifically is not delineated—a direct connection is made between the EU's prosperity and security and Asian security. It is pivotal that the EU goes beyond the 2016 Global Strategy and more clearly delineates its vision for a more stable and secure Eurasia. This would need to incorporate its own strategic role in Eurasia, its views on Asian security architecture and its vision for governance vis-à-vis other important stakeholders, including not only the USA and China, but also India and Russia, middle powers, and local actors.[5] China's large-scale economic engagement in so many breakable, developing and even developed nations across Eurasia has important implications for global governance. Economic implications of the BRI are perhaps better understood, and the EU has already engaged with China through the EU–China Connectivity Platform on investment cooperation, which also provides the future possibility of joint investment in third countries. Development means the greatest security and master key to regional security issues as one of the keys for the success of these concepts. Analysts are providing greater security and stability in Eurasia's volatile regions, through the stimulation of economic growth and poverty reduction brought about by investment, trade and infrastructure provision. This means that it will need hard and soft infrastructure investment which will increase the economic and geostrategic stability in EU and Asia.

The various EU interests in the One Belt and One Road Initiative

So far, the EU has given the initiative a lukewarm welcome and is still pondering how to engage it strategically. This is partly because the BRI remains operationally uncoordinated, and the EU remains concerned about commercial feasibility, transparency, sustainability and environmental issues.

But differences in needs, interests and strategic planning among EU member states in relation to China also hamper a common response. While the EU's cautious approach could certainly lead to a more well-informed and gauged response, an overly long delay may come at the risk of the EU being left behind as China takes a stronger lead in shaping the Eurasian landscape.[6]

The BRI is China's vision for comprehensive connectivity and economic cooperation, mostly focused on, but not limited to, the whole of Eurasia. The initiative has generated diverse degrees of interest throughout the EU. Member states in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Greece, Portugal and Spain have mostly reacted enthusiastically to it. Given their own poor economies, these states have welcomed Chinese investment in large infrastructure projects, and they see Chinese investment as a way

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[5]   Reiterer, M., 'Asia as part of the EU's global security strategy: reflections on a more strategic approach', LSE IDEAS, Dahrendorf Forum Special Report, Apr. 2016.

[6]   Richard Ghiasy and Jiayi Zhouhe EU: Pondering strategic engagement with China's Belt and Road Initiative, SIPRI, May 2017.

to boost their local economies and employment.

In Italy, commercial prospects have led local business communities to take active steps towards engaging with the BRI, and at the national level the Italian Government itself is seemingly becoming more interested. Ahead of the Belt and Road Forum held in Beijing on 14–15 May 2017, Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni said that Italy is 'enormously interested' in the BRI.

France's policy community interest in the BRI seems to have peaked already, although the incoming Macron administration could revisit the initiative. Many regional and municipal governments in Germany have indicated a strong desire to engage with China on the BRI, but at the national level the response has been more restrained. The German and Dutch Governments do not want to engage too closely without a better understanding of the BRI's long-term strategic implications, and do not want to sideline the EU in the process. Nordic governments have so far not indicated much interest in the BRI, although interest in Denmark is starting to pick up.

At the supranational level, the EU has established together with China, the EU-China Connectivity Platform, through which the two have agreed to cooperate on a number of investment projects within the EU and China. This has been the EU's most progressive response to the initiative. But beyond this limited economic cooperation, the EU has not so far engaged with China's BRI on a more strategic level, despite it having strategic implications for the EU's political, economic and security interests abroad.

Both China and the EU see economic development as a pillar of stability, but their development support approaches differ. China has tended to emphasize physical infrastructure and no-strings-attached investment, while the EU has tended to promote institutional reform, good governance and rule of law as pre-conditions for inclusive economic growth. Both approaches are necessary but neither are alone sufficient to achieve sustainable development. And while these different approaches in theory are complementary, the EU emphasizes normative values such as human rights, democracy and civil society in a way that makes it more difficult for the two sides to engage in cooperation.

As the BRI unfolds over the next few years and decades, the EU needs to be aware that China's BRI efforts and stepped-up presence in Eurasia will probably be a significant shaper of future regional governance in economic, financial, political and even security terms. As China's overseas investments and economic footprint grows, so will its political and security presence. The Chinese naval base in Djibouti is one such example of how China's overseas interests have evolved in recent years.

Geostrategic changes and blending security spaces

The EU is a stakeholder in Asia's security and any major security incident in Asia would have serious implications for the EU's economic and security interests.

More recently, the ASEAN and the EU have been facing common security challenges: from the increased investment in maritime connectivity to boosting regional trade with Asian countries.[7]

Therefore, the EU has been actively participating in the ARF on maritime security cooperation, which includes the improvement of maritime awareness, surveillance and information sharing, maintenance of peace and good order at sea, and the development of environmentally friendly ports.[8]

From 2018 until 2020, the EU will co-chair the ARF's Inter-sectional Meeting on Maritime Security with Australia and Viet Nam, which will allow the EU to play a role as maritime security coordinator. Several ASEAN participants noted that they intend to pursue a process similar to the EUMSS as a medium to long-term goal.[9]

Such official activities reveal that while Asia-Pacific maritime security issues have not traditionally penetrated far into EU policies, the SCS is one of the few exceptions. This is understandable given the scale of EU member state trade traversing these waterways.[10]

The approach of celebratory economic initiatives and tools to geostrategic aims, which has been labeled as geo-economics, is hardly the sole preserve of China. Part of the reason why some have dubbed these activities neo-colonialist or mercantilist is that they smack of the tactics used by past empires. China's own popular series from over a decade ago, (The rise of great powers), presaged this fascination with how countries emerge as global powers.[11]

China's geopolitical and military aspirations are understandable, as explained in the first part, particularly given the growth of its markets and interests throughout the SCS and the IOR.

However, when these aims start to impinge on the sovereignty and sustainability of local stakeholders, and to conflict with core EU interests in maintaining flows of information, products and resources throughout these regions, there needs to be more than simply rhetoric in response. The Road, as with the Belt, advances through trial and error. As such, China may be receptive to revising those objectives that meet its core interests, and then at least some existing approaches if a combination of the right incentives and disincentives can be applied. One such example is the first Silk Road NGO Cooperation Network Forum, which was held in November 2017 and attended

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[7] European Commission, Joint Staff Working Document: Second report on the implementation of the EU

Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan, Brussels, SWD (2017) 238 Final, 14 June 2017.

[8] Gatpolintan, L., 'ASEAN, EU to intensify maritime cooperation', Philippine News Agency, 7 Oct. 2017

[9] European Commission.

[10] Germany, $215 billion; the UK, $124 billion; France, $83.5 billion; and Italy, $70.5 billion in 2016. Center for Strategic and International Studies, 'How much trade transits the South China Sea?', ChinaPower, n.d

[11] [The rise of great powers], CNTV, Nov. 2006

by more than 200 NGO delegates from over 50 countries. Such a forum would have been unimaginable in the first three years of the BRI, which shows that with the right amount of practical initiatives and through dialogue, notable changes can be achieved.[12]

The EU Global Strategy states that the EU is seeking to serve as a credible political and security player in the region.[13] From the Strategy, it is evident that South East Asia, and in particular the freedom of navigation and the SLOCs through the SCS, maintain a stronger hold on European consciousness than the Indian Ocean and its SLOCs. This is perhaps understandable because ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) are more akin to the EU framework, whereas South Asia lacks a cohesive grouping even under the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Moreover, there have been frequent tensions in the SCS in recent years.

When observing the EU engagement with these two regions, its placement of China at the head of the chapter on Asia in the Global Strategy, combined with greater granularity on the EU-China Connectivity Platform, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the ASEAN–EU frameworks, indicate where EU priorities lie. Nonetheless, the SCS and the IOR are interconnected maritime domains, and have a strong shared impact on Europe's intertwined economic and security interests. Certainly, the EU needs to start paying closer attention to maritime security and connectivity developments in the IOR. Indeed, EU security interests do not always coincide with those of the United States, and the EU may benefit from the opening up of the IOR maritime space and the merging with the Eurasian terrestrial security space. This may prove valuable to the EU in that it may improve the connectivity of and stimulate the development in Central Asia and South Asia. Central Asia's pathway to the Indian Ocean will mostly depend on the stability in Iran and Pakistan through China. If successful, however, the massive landlocked region of Central Asia will finally be able to connect more easily with the world's oceans and mitigate its dependence on Russian transit routes and Russian economy. South Asian intra- and extra-regional connectivity, currently in a dismal state, may also improve and expand markets that the EU could tap. From an economic perspective, the Road could thus be a positive impetus for growth.

Following the official renaming by the US Department of Defense of US Pacific Command as US Indo-Pacific Command on 30 May 2018,[14] the uncertainty with which the EU has approached the concept of an Indo-Pacific will likely, of necessity, shift to a clearer stance. As it does so, even if only conceptually at this stage, it will be important for the EU to better articulate its position on how the BRI sits within this concept. This will require a country-by-country mapping and analysis of how projects are unfolding.

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[12] Gon Jie, '1st Silk Road NGO Cooperation Network forum kicks off', China Daily, 21 Nov. 2017.

[13] European Union External Action Service (EEAS), Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe, A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy(EEAS: Brussels, June 2016).

[14] Copp, T., 'INDOPACOM, it is: US Pacific Command gets renamed', Military Times, 31 May 2018

Conclusion

Besides the capital necessary to get its ambitious programs off the ground, there are two greater problems with OBOR. The first is that even if China and the various countries it has identified as its Silk Road partners come up with the money, OBOR does not have a centralized organizing body or a strategic goal it is meant to accomplish beyond enriching all of Eurasia.[15]

Looking at the projects the Asian Infrastructure Bank has approved in recent months is telling: rehabilitating a hydropower plant in Tajikistan, investing in Indian infrastructure service companies with high growth, a highway project in Georgia, a dam improvement project in Indonesia. Though they benefit local populations, they are all far-flung, one-off infrastructure projects that do not connect to form a new Silk Road and, thus, do nothing to increase Chinese power.

The second problem is that China's main goal for OBOR is to accomplish what each successive Chinese leader has failed to do: distribute the wealth of the coast to the impoverished parts of China's interior without destabilizing the country. China has chosen to dress its OBOR strategy in the raiment of the Silk Road, which to most of the world conjures up images of history and nostalgia for a simpler time. But that should not obscure the differences between the Silk Road and OBOR. The Silk Road was built on the exchange of goods between equally willing trading partners. China possessed silk. India possessed spices. The Romans and later the Europeans possessed silver and other precious metals. British historian Peter Frank pan estimates that in the 1st century nearly half the money produced by the mint of the Roman Empire was used to buy Chinese silk. The Silk Road was a constantly evolving marketplace that moved goods across a vast continent where they could be exchanged for other goods. And unlike today, Eurasia was the center of world civilization, home to the most important economies.

That world is gone, and Eurasia is no longer what it was. China may be the world's second largest economy, but the U.S. economy is still much larger. The U.S. is the largest consumer of Chinese exports and, just as importantly, it does not rely on exports for growth. The most concrete part of the OBOR action plan is how Chinese provinces are to profit from developments in infrastructure and increased trade. As the U.S.-based Center for Strategic and International Studies pointed out in a study published in March 2016, OBOR is not about China's geopolitical ambitions, but rather about achieving two domestic economic objectives.

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5. European Commission, Joint Staff Working Document: Second report on the implementation of the EU Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan, Brussels, SWD (2017) 238 Final, 14 June 2017.

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[15] Deep Dive, One Belt, One Road: When a Trade Route Isn't a Trade Route July 13, 2017

7. European Commission.

8. Germany, $215 billion; the UK, $124 billion; France, $83.5 billion; and Italy, $70.5 billion in 2016. Center for Strategic and International Studies, 'How much trade transits the South China Sea?', ChinaPower, n.d

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10. Gon Jie, '1st Silk Road NGO Cooperation Network forum kicks off', China Daily, 21 Nov. 2017.

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12. Copp, T., 'INDOPACOM, it is: US Pacific Command gets renamed', Military Times, 31 May 2018

13. Deep Dive, One Belt, One Road: When a Trade Route Isn't a Trade Route July 13, 2017

METODOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE RESEARCH OF EXPLOSIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA IN THE PERIOD FROM 2006 TO 2011 – INSTITUTIONAL APROACH

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Rose SMILESKI[2]

Abstract: *Explosions are a phenomenon that occurs as a result of the use of explosive materials, which is increasing, and as a result, they cause many casualties and the destruction of material goods. In order to determine the total number of explosions on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia, the paper presents a survey conducted in the institutions, i.e. we have used the institutional approach to the detection and determination of explosions for the period from 2006 to 2011 from the following: The State Statistical Office, the Directorate for Protection and Rescue, the Customs Administration, the Territorial Firefighting Brigades and the Ministry of the Interior. During the processing of the data obtained in the course of the research, a comparative analysis method was used, which gave a detailed picture of the methodology for determining the explosions, showing all its positive and negative sides. The whole research was aimed at confirming whether the method of research of explosions was appropriate, or if there is a need of certain changes and the establishment of appropriate methodologies for efficient investigation of the explosions in the Republic of North Macedonia through the implementation of appropriate strategies in direction of increasing the effectiveness and the efficiency in building those strategies, given as conclusions in this paper.*

Key words: explosions, victims, analysis, strategies, effectiveness, efficiency, conclusion.

Introduction

In order to understand the term explosion and what the entire process covers, from its very beginning, until its resolution, and which institutions are involved in the entire process, we will define the term **explosion**. The term explosion refers to a sufficiently rapid process of converting the physical, chemical or nuclear composition from one state to another.[3] This process is followed by the transition of the elementary particles to the potential and kinetic energy in mechanical operation. The operation carried out during the explosion is conditioned

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[1] Ministry of Defence of the Republic of North Macedonia, General Staff of the Army, PhD
[2] Military Academy "General Mihailo Apostolski", Professor
[3] Pleshe M., *„Physics and Chemistry of Explosive Substances"*, Ministry of defense of the Republic of Croatia, Zagreb, 2008, page. 25.

by the rapid explosion of gases that were or are created during the blast. The basic characteristics of the explosion are the sudden pressure drops at the site of the explosion and the variable propagation velocity of the process.[4] This definition reflects the complexity of the process itself that occurs during the explosion and which should be a guide for the institutions in terms of their approach to the event. A survey was conducted involving the institutions in the Republic of North Macedonia that are directly or indirectly involved in the prevention, handling and recording of events related to explosives and explosions as a consequence thereof. For this purpose, research was carried out in the following institutions: the State Statistical Office, the Directorate for Protection and Rescue, the Customs Administration, the Territorial Firefighting Brigades and the Ministry of Interior.

The State Statistical Office Data

The State Statistical Office[5] is an institution that brings together data that is integrated by the competent stakeholders in the society. This includes data on crimes committed by means of explosive materials in which an explosion has been caused and as an event, or a certain amount of explosive substances and explosive devices have been seized.

The survey that was conducted for the period from 2006 to 2011 gave the following results:

Period	Reported perpetrators for Chapter XXVI from the Criminal Law	Reported perpetrators under Article 288 Causing General Danger	Reported perpetrators for Chapter XXXIII from the Criminal Law	Reported perpetrators under Article 396 Illegal manufacture, possession and trade in weapons or explosives
2006	413	303	822	252
2007	397	300	741	203
2008	450	332	861	220
2009	481	413	953	199
2010	399	322	959	192
2011	376	309	869	180

Table 1. Table showing the total registered perpetrators of crimes in the Republic of North Macedonia in the period from 2006 to 2011

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[4] Akhavan J., *„Chemistry of Explosive Substances"*, II Edition, AD Verbum, Skopje, 2009, page. 21.

[5] www.stat.gov.mk

Table 1 shows the data of the total registered perpetrators of criminal acts in the Republic of North Macedonia for the research period 2006-2011, obtained during the research using the method of analysis of the contents of the documentation from the State Statistical Office – the area of judiciary. Using this method, numerical and statistical data of the reported perpetrators of criminal acts caused by means of explosives or spraying materials and explosive devices, and according to the Criminal Code of the Republic of North Macedonia - Chapter 26 "Criminal offenses against the general safety of people and property ", Article 288, caused general danger, and in accordance with Chapter 33 "Crimes against the public order", Article 396 committed a criminal act for the illicit manufacture, holding and trading of weapons or weapons spraying substances.

Period	Reported	Revealed perpetrators	Unknown perpetrators	Indictment proposal submitted
2006	252	244	8	213
2007	203	195	8	172
2008	220	219	1	188
2009	199	195	4	166
2010	192	185	7	168
2011	180	176	4	155

Table 2: Reported perpetrators and submitted a prosecution proposal for a criminal offense Illegal production, holding and trading with weapons or explosive materials

Table 2 shows the reported, revelled and unknown perpetrators of the criminal offenses of illicit production, holding and trading of weapons or explosives, as well as the number of submitted prosecution proposals for the same crime.

Compared with the reported perpetrators of criminal acts, there is a difference in the number of known perpetrators against whom the prosecution proposal was submitted. That means, in 84% of the cases when a crime was committed, an indictment proposal was submitted. There are also perpetrators of crimes that are unknown, and their number is about 4% of the total number of reported perpetrators of criminal acts. This number of perpetrators of crimes that are unknown to institutions belongs to the so-called "gray number of criminality", which in the period covered by the survey was between 3% and 4%.

The data obtained during the survey carried out within the framework of the State Statistical Office indicate that in the Republic of North Macedonia crimes are committed involving explosive materials and that the number of the perpetrators and the criminal cases arising as a result of this type of criminal offenses in the period from

2006 to 2011 is not at all insignificant.

In this regard, the fight against this type of crime must be a priority for the institutions that are authorized by the law, primarily the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The increase in this kind of crime at a time when the danger to the Republic of North Macedonia comes from all sides through asymmetric threats, the fight against terrorism as a global problem, and recently the refugee crisis puts the Republic of North Macedonia on the same map with the countries through which they transit carrying with them the danger of radical Islam and the "Islamic state", which are considered as a strong indicator and reinforce the possibility of committing crimes.

Directorate for Protection and Rescue Data

In accordance with the Law on Protection and Rescue[6], the Directorate for Protection and Rescue has existed from 16.05.2005, and its main task has been the protection and rescue in the Republic of North Macedonia, which is organized as the only system for detecting and preventing the occurrence and elimination of consequences that result from natural disasters and other accidents.

These include explosive substances and explosive devices, and during the research that was carried out in the institution in the past period, i.e. in the period from 2006 to 2011, the personnel who is part of the Sector for planning, organizing and dealing with the protection measures and rescue and training, realized humanitarian destruction of explosive materials and explosive devices, found during construction activities and originating from the World War I.

Also, a specialized humanitarian demining operation on the Lake Ohrid was carried out, that is, cleaning the lake from explosive devices originating from World War I and World War II. The realization of these activities was based on the Decree on the implementation of the measures for protection from unexploded ordnance and other explosive devices[7], which regulates the planning, organization and implementation of the measures for protection from unexploded ordnance and other explosive devices, activities in the function of prevention, undertaking measures and activities in case of imminent danger, during the duration of the danger and measures and activities in the removal of the consequences, including the destruction of unexploded ordnance and other explosive devices, then the standard operational procedures for protection against unexploded ordnance and other explosive devices[8], which are a set of procedures undertaken for the protection of unexploded ordnance and other explosive devices, and the standard operational procedures for humanitarian underwater demining, which form part of the strategy for the development of the Regional Council for Countermeasures in

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[6] *Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia No. 93/12.*
[7] *Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia No. 101/10.*
[8] Act of the Directorate for Protection and Rescue number 10-1760/1 from 07.05.2010.

Southeast Europe (SEEMACC), aimed at removing pollution and removing the dangers of sea, lake and river mines, and other unexploded ordnance and explosive assets that are left behind by World War I and World War II, as well as other armed conflicts in the territory of Southeast Europe, including the Republic of North Macedonia.

Customs Administration Data

The Customs Administration[9], The Law on Customs Administration[10], The Customs Law[11] and other laws and regulations represent the basis that regulates the rights and obligations through direct enforcement of the laws and regulations, as well as the matters that fall within the scope of the Customs Administration. The Customs Administration includes customs supervision, customs control, prevention and detection of customs offenses, prevention of criminal offenses, smuggling, control of imported goods, including illicit import of explosive devices.

Due to its specificity, especially in the attempts for illegal import and export of illicit explosive devices, the Customs Administration has in its organizational and formational structure a Sector for Control and Investigations, in which the Investigation Unit is located. With the assistance of the Mobile Customs Administration and the Customs Intelligence Unit, the level of protection against entry into the Republic of North Macedonia or the export of explosives and explosive devices from the Republic of North Macedonia is high, and it is impossible to carry out smuggling because the Customs Offices and the Customs Branches have scanners installed to help detect explosive substances.

Research of explosions conducted in the Territorial Fire Fighting Units on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia in the period from 2006 to 2011

The research of explosions in the Republic of North Macedonia is based on statistical data, that is on the structure of data provided by the general picture of the explosions, their causes, material damages, consequences for the lives of the people and, of course, the whole environment.

The data processing methodology is based on the selection of a group of indicators that lead to explosions, which show the vulnerability of people, homes, the working environment, the environment, material damages, environmental problems, as well as the creation of policies related to security, criminal politics, environmental protection, etc. The application of the quantitative method is particularly important for research

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[9] *Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia No. 25/92.*
[10] *Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia No. 46/04.*
[11] *Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia No. 39/05.*

where there are mass phenomena, such as processes and forms of explosions, involving competent state authorities and other organizations. This method is correlated with the phenomena, structures, prevalence, intensity, frequency, etc. The results obtained in surveys using a quantitative method are reported numerically in the form of tables, graphs, sketches or maps.

The advantage of quantitative analysis in terms of qualitative is in the clearer, simpler and more complete explanation of the researched phenomenon. This method allows for a systematic discussion of a large number of causal factors through the determination and statistical checking of the relationships that make up the research problem.[12]

This method enables the production of permanent records by computer processing of collected data, precise processing and interpretation of data for a given period of time.

Quantitative data are the result of regular annual statistical processing of territorial firefighting units (TPPE) of the Republic of North Macedonia. The Republic of North Macedonia with its area of 25.713 km² and the number of inhabitants 2.022.547 is divided into eighty urban and rural municipalities based on the 2002 census data.

In the part of the interventions, the following entities are dealing with explosions: the territory of the City of Skopje is responsible for the firefighting brigade of the City of Skopje. Due to the complexity of the city and the large territory covering 225 km², the brigade is equipped, systematized, technically equipped and located in one main centre in the settlement Avtokomanda and in four sub-centres in Bit-pazar, Taftalidze, Gjorce Petrov and Drachevo; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Kumanovo is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Kumanovo; On the territory of the Municipality of Kriva Palanka, the Territorial Firefighting Unit - Kriva Palanka is in charge; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Kratovo is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Kratovo; On the territory of the Municipality of Probishtip, the Territorial Firefighting Unit - Probishtip is in charge; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Zletovo is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Zletovo; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Veles is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Veles; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Sveti Nikole is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Sveti Nikole; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Shtip is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Shtip; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Kochani is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Kochani; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Vinica is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Vinica; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Makedonska Kamenica is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Makedonska Kamenica; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Delchevo is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Delchevo; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Berovo is in charge of the territory of the Berovo Municipality and the Municipality of Pehcevo; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Radovish is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Radovish; The

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[12] Stojchev V., „*Methodology of the military science*", Military Academy „General Mihailo Apostolski", Skopje, 2004.

Territorial Firefighting Unit - Strumica is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Strumica; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Gevgelija is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Gevgelija and the Municipality of Dojran; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Valandovo is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Valandovo and the Municipality of Bogdanci; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Kavadarci is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Kavadarci; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Negotino is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Negotino and the Municipality of Demir Kapija; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Prilep is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Prilep; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Bitola is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Bitola; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Resen is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Resen; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Ohrid is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Ohrid; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Struga is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Struga; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Gostivar is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Gostivar; On the territory of the Municipality of Debar, the Territorial Firefighting Unit - Debar is in charge; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Kichevo is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Kichevo; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Tetovo is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Tetovo; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Makedonski Brod is in charge of the territory of Makedonski Brod; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Demir Hisar is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Demir Hisar; The Territorial Firefighting Unit - Krushevo is in charge of the territory of the Municipality of Krushevo. Part of the smaller municipalities that do not have territorial firefighting brigades, interventions in case of eventual explosions are in the competence of a neighbouring larger municipality, as is the case with the municipalities of Bogovinje, Brvenica, Jegunovce, Tearce and Zhelino, which are under the jurisdiction of the Territorial Firefighting Unit - Tetovo.

For the methodological aspects of the research of the explosions, the necessary data that were processed were from the books on the records of the explosions, the explosion statistics for the firefighting brigade of the city of Skopje and the territorial firefighting units of the municipalities in the Republic of North Macedonia for the period from 2006 to 2011. The results of the conducted research are presented in the form of tables with numerical data and as diagrams.

The presented data for the City of Skopje for the period from 2006 to 2011 show the results of the survey for the years in question. The same research procedure was conducted for other municipalities in the Republic of North Macedonia regarding the topic of this research. However, due to the complexity of the research material, summary data are presented and a comparison of the comparative data by municipalities has been made, according to the principle of the presented research results for the City of Skopje.

From the summarized results of the conducted research there are interesting data on certain variables, registered by the territorial firefighting units in the Republic of North Macedonia, which will be used for the conclusion.
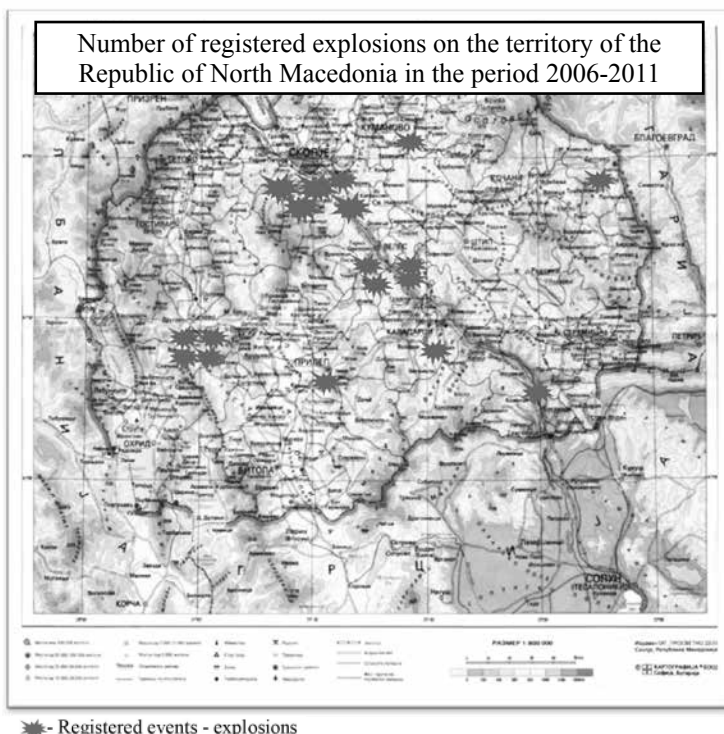
- Registered events - explosions

Figure 1. Registered events - explosions on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia for a period of research 2006-2011
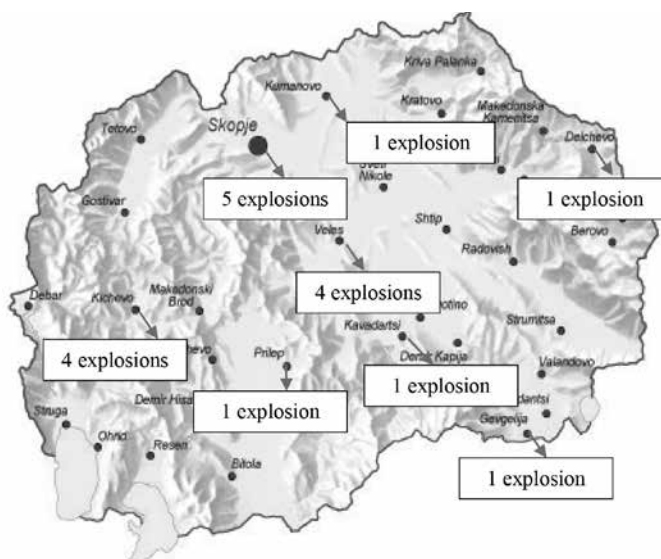
Figure 2. Registered events - explosions on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia for the period of research 2006-2011

Figures 1 and 2 present the events in the Republic of North Macedonia that were registered as explosions. During the research period, the territorial firefighting units covering the entire territory of the Republic of North Macedonia were included. The methodology of data processing is based on the application of the quantitative method, i.e. the use of the overall data, which are correlated with the phenomena, structures, intensity, distribution and frequency of the afore-stated from the aspect of the territorial firefighting units in the Republic of North Macedonia.

If we take a look at the map of registered events, taking into account the causes of explosion occurrence, we obtain one structure of events that is not closely related to the crime rate in a certain part of the state, population density, and the technical and technological development of the region etc.

Diagram no. 1 shows the number of explosions that occurred on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia in the period 2006-2011. The largest number of explosions out of 18 that occurred was as follows: on the territory of the City of Skopje 5, on the territory of the Municipality of Veles 4, as well as on the territory of the Municipality of Kichevo, while in the Municipalities of Prilep, Delchevo, Kavadarci, Kumanovo and Gevgelija there was 1 explosion each. Compared by years, the most recorded explosive events by year happened in 2010 - 7 explosions, in 2007 - 4 explosions, in 2009 - 3 explosions, in 2011 - 2 explosions, in 2006 and 2008 - one explosion.
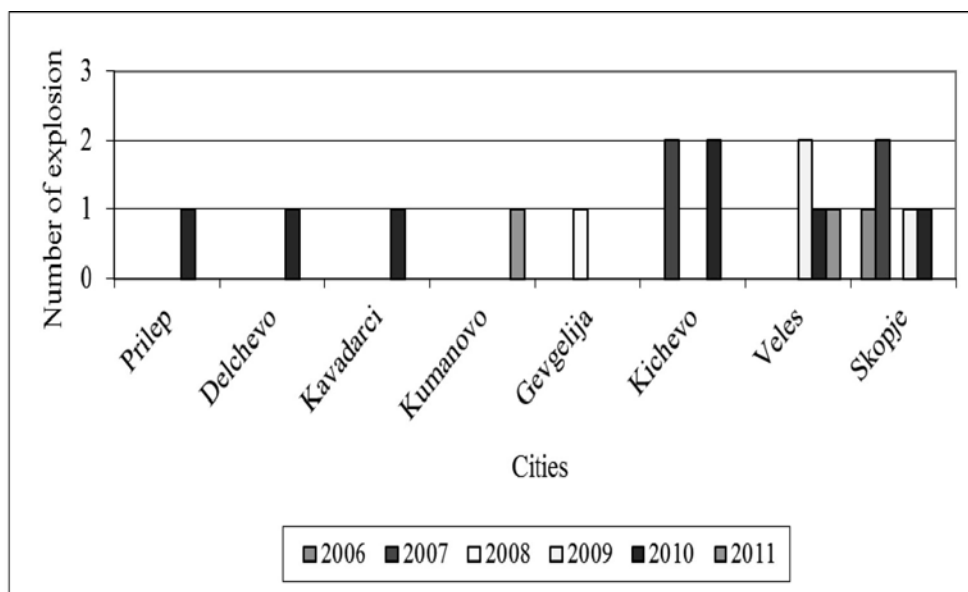
Diagram 1. Number of explosions on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia in the period 2006-2011
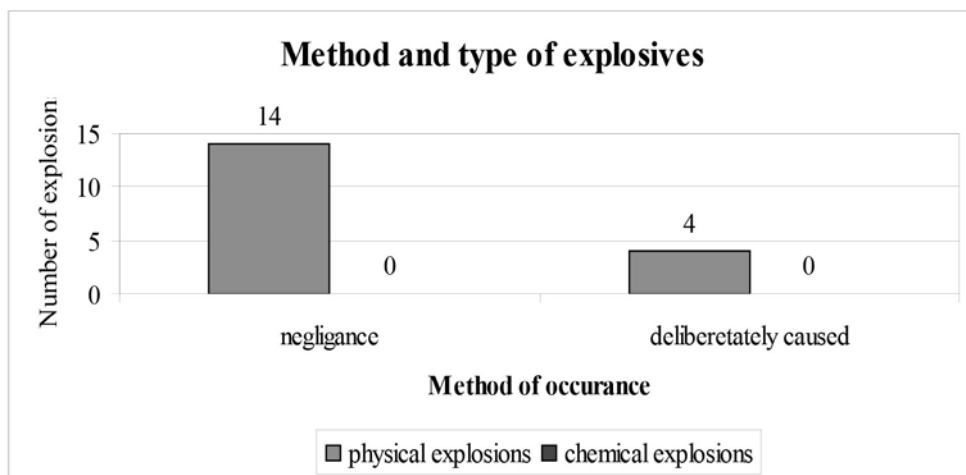
Diagram 2. Method of explosions on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia in the period 2006-2011

Diagram no. 2 shows the method, or manner the explosion occurred. Of the total of 18 explosions that occurred from physical nature, the factor was human, which as a consequence of their behaviour caused 14 explosions due to negligence, while 4 were caused by intent. These points to the fact that 77.77% of the explosions occurred as a result of human negligence and the main factor for the occurrence of explosions had a human nature. This means that the safety measures at work are very little respected, especially when it comes to activities where the possibility of causing an explosion with careless work is very high.

Typically, when deliberately causing explosions as motive there are unsettled debt-creditor relations, as well as the possibility of obtaining a large sum of funds by insurance companies, because the facilities are usually insured by the businessmen and in the event of an accident, the damage incurred is completely covered. Such is the case in 2010 with an economic facility in the City of Kavadarci.

Ministry of Interior Data

The results of the analysis of explosives are related to solving criminal offenses, where a quick response is sometimes essential to solve cases that can lead to major disasters. For these reason, it is necessary to apply simple, fast, non-constructive, but still precise and reliable methods for forensic analysis of explosive substances.

Taking into account the topicality and danger that follows from the misuse of explosives, it is a real need to constantly find and improve (perfect) the methods for their analysis. In the period from 2006 to 2011, in the Republic of North Macedonia, in accordance with Chapter XXVI of the Criminal Law of the Republic of North Macedonia

"Crimes against the general safety of people and property", a total of 2123 cases and a total of 1522 perpetrators were registered. In the same period the registered criminal offenses under Article 288 "Causing general danger" were a total of 1658 acts and a total of 1037 perpetrators.[13]

Table 1 lists the total registered criminal acts and perpetrators in the Republic of North Macedonia in the period from 2006 to 2011.

Period	Total crimes for Chapter XXVI from the Criminal Law of the Republic of North Macedonia	Total perpetrators for Chapter XXVI from the Criminal Law of the Republic of North Macedonia	Registered crimes under Article 288 "Causing general danger"	Registered perpetrators under Article 288 "Causing the general danger"
2006	355	231	246	115
2007	385	246	295	174
2008	397	259	323	194
2009	350	215	275	152
2010	261	262	258	187
2011	375	309	261	215
Total	**2123**	**1522**	**1658**	**1037**

Table 1. Total registered criminal offenses and perpetrators in the Republic of North Macedonia according to Chapter 26 of the Criminal Law of the Republic of North Macedonia in the period from 2006 to 2011

In the same period in the Republic of North Macedonia, according to Chapter XXXIII of the Criminal Law of the Republic of North Macedonia "Criminal offenses against public order", a total of 1382 acts and a total of 1592 perpetrators were registered under Article 396 "Illegal production, holding and trading with weapons or explosive materials". In the same period, registered criminal offenses under Article 395 "Creation and acquisition of weapons and funds intended for the commission of criminal offenses" totalled 5 acts, and a total of 5 perpetrators.[14]

Table 2 lists the total registered criminal acts and perpetrators in the Republic of North Macedonia in the period from 2006 to 2011.

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[13] Answer on Demand No. 24.5 – 507 from 01.07.2015 from the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of North Macedonia.

[14] Answer on Demand No. 24.5 – 690 from 23.09.2015 from the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Period	Registered crimes under Article 396 "Illegal manufacture, holding and trading of weapons or explosives" in Chapter XXXIII of the Criminal Law of the Republic of North Macedonia	Total perpetrators under Article 396	Registered crimes according to Article 395 "Production and supply of weapons and funds intended for committing crimes" in Chapter XXXIII of the Criminal Law of the Republic of North Macedonia	Total perpetrators under Article 395
2006	250	279	2	2
2007	240	286	/	/
2008	248	288	2	2
2009	237	270	1	1
2010	199	223	/	/
2011	208	246	/	/
Total	**1382**	**1592**	**5**	**5**

Conclusion

From the conducted research of territorial firefighting units in the Republic of North Macedonia, the following can be concluded:

1. 18 explosions occurred on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia. 14, i.e. 77.77%, were due to negligence and 4, i.e. 22.23%, were deliberately caused.
2. The survey found that out of 4 deliberately caused explosions, 2 or 50% were incurred on private motor vehicles, 1 or 25% occurred on an economic facility in order to cause great material damage, which will later be compensated by the insurance companies and 1 or 25% occurred on a private building (basement room) when detonating a device with a certain amount of explosive charge (firecrackers). Of the 14 occurred blasts due to negligence, 6 or 42.85% were recorded on private buildings, 3 or 21.42% were recorded on explosions of motor vehicles, 4 or 28.57% explosions of commercial facilities and 1 or 7.14% of the resulting explosion was recorded at a catering facility.
3. Of the total of 18 explosions, 7 were in private housing units or 38.88%, 5 explosions were caused on motor vehicles and commercial facilities or 27.78% and 1 explosion occurred on a catering facility or 5.56%.
4. According to the years of explosion, most explosions 7 or 38.88% occurred in 2010, while in 2006 and 2008 there was 1 explosion in each year, or 5.56% in relation to the total number of explosions that occurred.

According to the data obtained from the conducted research in the Ministry of Interior, the following can be concluded:

1. In the period from 2006 to 2011, in the Republic of North Macedonia, according to Chapter XXVI of the Criminal Law of the Republic of North Macedonia "Crimes against the general safety of people and property", a total of 2123 crimes and a total

of 1522 perpetrators were registered. In the same period, criminal offenses under Article 288 "Causing Common Dangers" were registered in total of 1658 cases and a total of 1037 perpetrators were registered.

2. In the same period in the Republic of North Macedonia, according to Chapter XXXIII of the Criminal Law of the Republic of North Macedonia, "Crimes against public order", a total of 1382 acts and a total of 1592 perpetrators under Article 396 "Illegal production, possession and trade in weapons or explosives" were registered. In the same period according to Article 395 "Production and supply of weapons and funds intended for committing criminal acts", a total of 5 acts and 5 offenders were registered.

The conclusions summarize the general goal in the direction of scientific and theoretical analysis and research of the methodological aspects that are used in the investigation of explosives and explosive matters in the Republic of North Macedonia, with particular reference to the Ministry of Interior and territorial firefighting units. Separate conclusions are given on the mentioned entities where it is underlined that in the Republic of North Macedonia there are conditions for applying appropriate methods for investigating these crimes, but that there are also huge deficiencies, omissions and weaknesses in the area of detection, clarification and proving of committed criminal offenses as a result of an explosion.

The inadequate, unequal methodology in reporting, recording and acting by the competent institutions can be a very serious disadvantage in the determination of the steps to be taken in order to ensure proper handling of the crime as a security phenomenon.

The scientific and theoretical analysis, the conducted research, the interpretation of the data and the discussion on the disputed issues in this area inevitably led to the identification of the weaknesses, deficiencies and omissions in the detection, clarification and proving of criminal offenses.

The preparation of this paper presented a great challenge because due to the fact that it is an issue that is topical and it can be concluded that the institutions, with certain difficulties, manage to cope with this kind of criminal acts. According to the investigations carried out, the difference in the registered criminal acts and the detected perpetrators according to the data of the Ministry of Interior and the data of the territorial firefighting units is significant and it points to the different methods of research applied by these institutions.

The phenomenology of the use of explosives follows a trend of technology advancement, hence the application of new, modern methodological aspects of their research is the key to successful criminal investigation and dealing with explosive matters. The explosion itself is the result of certain laws and by applying modern methods in its research the desired results, such as their detection, clarification and proving, can be achieved.

It is evident that the cooperation between the competent institutions in dealing with this type of crime is also an important factor in such research. Each institution dealing with this type of crime must plan, coordinate and synchronize its activities, since any lack of coordination is leading to the use of late, inadequate and incomplete research methods.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, there is still a large amount of illegal weapons, mine-explosive devices and chemicals. Although the Republic of North Macedonia has signed and ratified the Ottawa Convention, it still has not fully implemented this Convention which is a major problem for the state, since its practical non-implementation left the possibility for illegal explosive substances to be used in criminal acts, which is afterwards very difficult to detect, clarify and prove.

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ANALYSIS OF MILITARY-ECONOMIC REFORMS ON THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA WITH SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AS A PRECONDITION FOR NATO ACCESSION

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Abstract:*This paper analyzes the military-economic reforms on the Republic of North Macedonia with some Southeast European countries which are members of NATO, and some are even members of the European Union.*

In this context is the analysis on the Republic of North Macedonia, in terms of meeting the basic prerequisites for NATO accession, such as: defence, political and economic reforms. The focus of the analysis of the defence reform takes the defence spending as a part of the country's annual budget in terms of the size of the armed forces and the needs for a progressive increase in the defence budget.

The research of the size and technological sophistication of the Armed Forces of the Republic of North Macedonia has also been conducted. In order to compare the situation in the Republic of North Macedonia we have considered the member states of Southeast Europe with approximately the same population, such as: the Republic of Slovenia, Croatia and Montenegro.

Through analysis of the Freedom House and European Commission's annual reports, we have conducted a comprehensive analysis of the fulfilment of military-political and economic criteria for membership of the Republic of North Macedonia to NATO.

In addition, by analyzing the strategic position and the armed forces we have made an assessment of the strategic expediency of our country's accession to NATO.

On the basis of analyzing the numerical indicators, a final conclusion and recommendations are given in order to fulfil the military-economic conditions for the final accession of the Republic of North Macedonia to NATO.

Keywords: *Analysis, reforms, Republic of North Macedonia, Southeast Europe, NATO*

Introduction

The basic motive behind the political and military determination of the Republic of North Macedonia for membership to NATO, as well as the motive of other aspirant countries from the region of Southeast Europe, stems from the assessment that in this way we shall achieve better

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security of our country, and of the region of Europe. From a security point of view, the Republic of North Macedonia has a partially favourable geographical position as part of Southeast Europe, because it is at the crossroads of the main roads leading from Europe to Asia and Africa. As a result, there are real opportunities for numerous threats to the security on the Republic of North Macedonia in different forms, such as: terrorism, proliferation of weapons for mass destruction, interethnic conflicts, crime, drug trafficking, people and weapons, mass migrations, and other[3]. The cooperation of the Republic of North Macedonia with the international security structures enables its active participation in the creation of a global defence policy and the enhancement of national capabilities for dealing with new security threats. Without a full Euro-Atlantic integration of all democratic countries in the region of Southeast Europe, including the Republic of North Macedonia, we cannot speak of fulfilling the widely-known vision of unifying the European peoples (United Europe) into a free and democratic community. The defence policy of the Republic of North Macedonia, as part of the national security system is aimed at meeting the requirements and set obligations for its restructuring and preparation for NATO membership[4].

Defence reforms in function of the integration of the Republic of North Macedonia to NATO

The existing functional position of the Ministry of Defence of Republic of North Macedonia, as well as its overall system of defence, represents a result of extensive studies and additional annual analyses of the actual needs and lessons learned for successfully addressing the contemporary security challenges. As a result of the reform process in our state administration body, a significant functional improvement of the internal plan has been achieved, in addition to the strengthening of its planning capabilities in the future direction of involvement in the NATO defence planning.

The Army of the Republic of North Macedonia is one of the most important tools for achieving the defence policy in the area of achieving the strategic interest of the Republic of North Macedonia's membership in NATO. In the past period, significant efforts have been made by the Republic of North Macedonia in the direction of achieving full professionalization of the army, with the aim of forming significantly larger forces that are trained and able to participate in international missions and operations. In order to contribute to the overall spectrum of NATO-led operations, the Republic of North Macedonia is obliged to develop and maintain deployable capabilities at the level of 50 percent of the overall structure of the army's ground forces.

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[3] Стратегија за одбрана на Република Македонија (СВ на РМ, 30/10), 2-3.

[4] Национална концепција за безбедност и одбрана, 9-10. http://morm.gov.mk/?attachment_id=39383

At the request of NATO, the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia envisages the deployment of a military force at the level of a medium infantry battalion group and a national support element[5]. The 2003 Strategic Defence Review, 2011-2020 Long-Term Defence Development Plan and the 2014-2023 Long-Term Plan for the Development of Defence are the essential documents for restructuring the Army. In addition, the concentration of human and material resources and capacities, the improvement of the efficiency of the command and control system and the development of new capabilities and capacities necessary for carrying out the missions and tasks of the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia has been achieved[6]. The Army of the Republic of North Macedonia consists of a permanent professional composition and a reserve forces. In addition, the projected number of personnel in the Army is 6500 persons in the permanent composition and 1500 persons in the active reserve or a total of 8000 persons[7]. For comparison, the active component of the Army of the Republic of Slovenia envisages a maximum of 7250 people and the projected number of personnel in the reserve component amounts to 1500 persons or a total of 8750[8]. On the other hand the number of military forces of Montenegro amounts to 1950 persons in total[9].

The defence expenditures of any NATO member state by the end of 2024 should be no less than 2 percent of their gross domestic product[10].

The defence expenditures as a percentage of the GDP (gross domestic product) of the Republic of North Macedonia (Table 1) are only 50 percent of the reference value for the NATO member states. These expenditures of the Republic of North Macedonia are lower than the expenditures for the defence of NATO member states, such as Croatia and Montenegro, while they are equal to those of Slovenia (column 3 of Table 1).

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[5] Стратегија за одбрана на Р. Македонија (СВ на РМ,30/10),4-5. Strategija_ za_odbrana_na_ Republika_ Makedonija_ 2010.pdf

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[10] Techau, J. (2015). The Politics of 2 Percent. NATO and Security Vacuum in Europe. Publications Department 1779 Massachusetts Avenue NW Washington, D.C. 20036. p.3. Accessed on 17 December 2017. http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP_252_Techau_NATO_Final.pdf

Table 1. Defence Expenditures of the Republic of North Macedonia, Slovenia, Croatia and Montenegro

State	Defence Expenditures[11]	Defence Expenditures as % of GDP[12]	Peacetime Active Force Size[13]	Defence Expenditures Per Troop[14]	Defence Expenditures Per Capita[15]
1	2	3	4	5	6
North Macedonia	$130 million	1,1	6500	$20000	$62
Slovenia	$477 million	1,0	7250	$65723	$242
Croatia	$772 million	1,4	15650	$49329	$180
Montenegro	$74,3 million	1,7	1950	$38102	$116

On the other hand, based on the data given in the table we can easily notice that the calculated value of the defence expenditures per soldier of the Republic of North Macedonia is 20,000 dollars, which is significantly lower than the defence expenditure of Montenegro, which amounts to 38,102 dollars, Croatia with 49,329 dollars and Slovenia with 65,723 dollars. The situation is identical when it comes to the defence allocations per capita of the Republic of North Macedonia in relation to the expenditures on this basis by the above-stated countries. The Army of the Republic of North Macedonia belongs to the category of less modern armed forces because its defence expenditure per soldier is less than 25 percent lower than the defence expenditure of the NATO member state with the lowest value, which currently is the Republic of Albania.

The Army of the Republic of North Macedonia is also on the lower end of the scale because its peacetime status is less than 50 per cent of the reference value of the 25,000 troops. By comparison, the Armed Forces of Croatia and Slovenia as NATO member states, fall into the category of small and modern armed forces.

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[11] Calculated by SIPRI. Military expenditure by country, in constant (2016) US$m, 2009-2017. https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/1_Data%20for%20all%20countries%20from%20 1988%E2%80%932017%20in%20constant%20%282016%29%20USD.pdf

[12] Calculated by SIPRI. Military expenditure by country as percentage of gross domestic product, 2003-2017.https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/3_Data%20for%20all%20countries%20from%20 1988%E2%80%932017%20as%20a%20share%20of%20GDP.pdf

[13] International Institute for Strategic Studies. The Military Balance 2018. London: Routledge, 55-59.

[14] Calculated as the defence expenditures rate (column 2) and the number of peacetime armed forces (column 4).

[15] Calculated as the defence expenditures rate (column 2) and the total population number.

Table 2.   Troops and border length ratios on the Republic of North Macedonia[16]

State	Peacetime Active Force Size	Total Land Border Length + Coastline (km)	Total Border Length with Current Non-NATO or Non-EU States (km)	Troops per km of Current Non-NATO or Non-EU Border	Total Border Length with Current Non-MAP, Non-NATO or Non-EU States (km)	Troops per km of Current Non-MAP, Non-NATO or Non-EU Border
North Macedonia	8000	838+0	261	31	261	31
Montenegro	1950	680+293	475	4	233	8

On the basis of the data given in Table 2, the number of troops available for the defence of one kilometre border line in the Republic of North Macedonia against non-NATO or European Union countries is 31, which is a rough measure for assessing its ability for deterrence from aggression. Of course, this situation does not favour the Republic of North Macedonia in conditions of a real military threat to its territorial integrity.

Nevertheless, the Republic of North Macedonia has greater capability than Montenegro, which, with its available 4 and 8 soldiers per kilometre border line, represents one of the countries with the lowest value in NATO.

Fulfilment of the political criteria

On the basis of the European Commission's Progress Report for the Republic of North Macedonia, it can be concluded that "the country has finally overcome its most serious political crisis in the period from 2001 onwards". In the local elections held in October 2017 year, the citizens supported the policies of the government-led NATO-EU-oriented coalition[17]. The government demonstrated its commitment and political will to achieve serious progress in meeting the political category of criteria for admission to NATO.

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[16] CIA. World Factbook (page last updated on September 3, 2018). https://www.cia.gov/library/publica tions/the-world-factbook/

[17] Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2018 Report. European Commission, Strasbourg, 17.4.2018 SWD(2018) 154 final. 5-7. https://ec.europa.eu/ neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-the-former-yugoslav-republic-of-macedonia-report.pdf

In this context, progress has been made in the area of judiciary as regards to its functioning as an independent entity in the Republic of North Macedonia. The new judicial reform strategy has been adopted and the key laws have been amended in accordance with the recommendations of the Venice Commission and the priorities for urgent reforms. The Special Public Prosecutor's Office faces fewer obstructions from the courts, which enabled its more efficient work. This report, among other things, states that the legal framework for the protection of human rights is to a large extent in line with the European standards. According to the data published by Freedom House, the Republic of North Macedonia for the period 2015-2019 is estimated as a partially free country with indexes on the scale range from 3.5 to 4.0 (Table 3). In each column of the table, the first number represents the index of political rights, while the second number is the index of civil liberties in the period 2015-2019 year.

Both indexes are based on a scale from 1 to 7, where index 1 represents the highest and index 7 is the lowest level of development of political rights and civil liberties in the country. The countries with an average value of the first two components between 1 and 2.5 are considered free, between 3 and 5.5 partially free, while between 5.5 and 7, non-free countries[18].

Table 3. Freedom House Rating on the Republic of North Macedonia

State	2015[19]	2016[20]	2017[21]	2018[22]	2019[23]
North Macedonia	4.0/PF	4.0/PF	3.5/ PF	3.5/PF	3.5/PF

For comparison, the Republic of Slovenia and Croatia as NATO member countries are continuously assessed as free countries whose indexes on the "Freedom House" scale are 1.5 F or 2.0 F. Nevertheless, Montenegro as well as the Republic of North

[18] Szayna, S. T. (2001). NATO Enlargement 2000-2015: Determinants and Implications for Defence Planning and Shaping. Rand, Santa Monica. p.63. Accessed on 16 August 2016 https://www.questia.com/library/103985408/nato-enlargement-2000-2015-determinants-and implications

[19] Freedom in the world 2016: Anxious Dictators, Wavering Democracies, Global Freedom Under Pressure. Freedom House. p.20. Acccessed on 4 2016. https://freedomhouse.org /sites/default/files/FH_FITW_Report_2016.pdf

[20] Freedom in the world 2017: Populists and Autocrats: The Dual Threat to Global Democracy. Freedom House. p.20. accessed on 6 March 2017. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/ default/files/FH_FIW_2017_Report_Final.pdf

[21] Freedom in the world 2017: Democracy in Crisis. Freedom House. https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2017-table-country-scores

[22] Freedom in the world 2018: Democracy in Crisis. Freedom House. https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2018-table-country-scores. Accessed on: 20.10.2018.

[23] Freedom in the world 2019: Democracy in Crisis. Freedom House. https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/macedonia. Accessed on 05.02.2019.

Macedonia are ranked as partially free countries in the mentioned period. Regarding the freedom of expression in the Republic of North Macedonia, during 2017, significant progress was made, especially through the improved climate for media and the reduced pressure on journalists. Among other things, the European Commission recommends the continuation of the initiated reforms in the public administration in order to provide the necessary administrative capacity to deal with the high degree of politicization and lack of transparency. The Republic of North Macedonia maintains constant good relations with other countries and actively participates in regional initiatives. In addition to this, decisive and important steps have been taken to improve good neighbourly relations, such as the entry into force of the bilateral agreement with Bulgaria and the signing of the Prespa agreement with Greece, in order to resolve the more than two decade-long "dispute" about the constitutional name of our state.

However, the fact remains that further substantial efforts are needed from the Republic of North Macedonia for fulfilment of the political criteria, in parallel with the serious approach and unreserved support on the path towards NATO by all its political entities.

Economic progress of the Republic of North Macedonia

The European Commission's report on the economic progress of the Republic of North Macedonia says, that "the country essentially has a good degree of readiness to develop a functioning market economy". But, the key weaknesses in the economy still remains. They include shortcomings in the business area, such as the poor implementation of contracts and the large informal economy. Structural problems on the labour market are reflected in the low activity and high unemployment rates. Fiscal policy targets are short-term measures and do not have a lasting consolidation plan[24]. The economy of the Republic of North Macedonia is moderately prepared to deal with the pressure of competition and market forces in the Union. The economy is still suffering from weaknesses which relate to low rates of innovation and investment shortfalls in particular including the public infrastructure[25].

In comparison with the real growth rate of Croatia's gross domestic product for the same period was 2.8 percent, Montenegro 4.2 percent, while Slovenia's rate was 5 percent. The value of the gross domestic product per capita of the Republic of North Macedonia, according to the data given in the table is 14,900 dollars and it is lower than

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[24] The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2018 Report. European Commission, Strasbourg, 17.4.2018 SWD (2018) 154 final. 7-8. https://ec.europa.eu/ neighbourhood enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-the-former-yugoslav-republic-of-macedonia-report.pdf

[25] The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2018 Report. European Commission, Strasbourg, 17.4.2018 SWD(2018) 154 final. 8-9. https://ec.europa.eu/ neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-the-former-yugoslav-republic-of-macedonia-report.pdf

Montenegro's which is 17,700 dollars, Croatia's which is 24,400 dollars and Slovenia's which is 34,400 dollars. In addition, the integration of a particular aspirant country in the Euro-Atlantic structures is much easier if the country has higher GDP per capita[26].

Table 4. General characteristics of the GDP of the Republic of North Macedonia, Croatia, Slovenia and Montenegro[27]

State	Total Population	Gross Domestic Product (Purchasing Power Parity)	Gross Domestic Product – Real Growth Rate	Gross Domestic Product Per Capita
North Macedonia	2103721	$30,96 billion	1.5%	$14 900
Croatia	4 292 095	$101,03 billion	2,8%	$24 400
Slovenia	1 972 126	$71,08 billion	5%	$34 400
Montenegro	642 550	$11,05 billion	4,2%	$17 700

The level of realized income and the living standard of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia are lower compared to most NATO countries. Moreover, it is estimated that the Republic of North Macedonia hasn't invested adequate efforts and political will in direction of improving the management of its public finances, the consequence of which is the continued borrowing and increase in its total public debt. Another problem is the phenomenon of the educated young people leaving the Republic of North Macedonia which has negative consequences for the economy in the country[28].

Analysis of the military-political and economic preconditions of the Republic of North Macedonia for NATO accession

The analysis of the Republic of North Macedonia for a future NATO member was made by reviewing its progress on the fulfilment of the basic prerequisites for admission to NATO, as well as by analyzing the strategic goal of NATO enlargement with this country.

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[26] Szayna, S. T. (2001). NATO Enlargement 2000-2015: Determinants and Implications for Defence Planning and Shaping. Rand, Santa Monica. p.51. Преземено на 16 август 2016 https://www.questia.com/library/103985408/nato-enlargement-2000-2015-determinants-and implications

[27] Central Intelligence Agency. The World Factbook (Page last updated on October 1, 2018). https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mk.html

[28] Freedom in the world 2019: Democracy in Crisis. Freedom House. . Пристапено на 05.02.2019 год.

Table 5 gives an overall assessment of the Republic of North Macedonia regarding the fulfilment of the basic prerequisites for NATO membership. The progress in meeting the political criteria, from the possible four levels of evaluation, is valued with medium-low level ("countries with the sum of the first two components in the Freedom House estimates from 2 and 3 are valued with high, from 4 and 5 with medium-high, from 6 to 7 with medium-low and with 8 and more are evaluated with a low degree[29]"), because the sum of the first two components in the estimate for 2017 in Table 3 is 7 and the same result is for 2018 and the first quarter of 2019 year.

Table 5.   Overall analysis for the Republic of North Macedonia in fulfilling the basic criteria

State	Political	Economic	Military	Total	Overall Assessment
1	2	3	4	5	6
Macedonia	Medium-low (2)	Medium-low (2)	Medium-low (2)	6	3,3 (Medium)

Based on the time frame needed for the country to gain the capacity to cope with the pressure of competition and market forces with the Union, the progress of the Republic of North Macedonia in establishing a functioning market economy is also valued with medium-low level. At the same time, the progress of the Republic of North Macedonia in fulfilling the military criteria as a prerequisite for NATO membership is valued at a medium-low level, because the amount of its defence expenditures per soldier ranges from 25 to 50 percent in a negative direction in relation with the European countries the with lowest expenditures in NATO[30] (table 1). Each of the above-mentioned degrees in columns 2 to 4 is valued by numerical value: 1 for low, 2 for medium-low, 3 for medium-high and 4 for high degree.

The aggregate value in column 5 of this table is 6. Finally, with the simplified converting the given sum of values into column 5 represented on a scale with 9 matrices (3-12) in the proportional value in column 6 using a measuring scale with fins from 0-10 the overall assessment on fulfilment the basic NATO criteria for the Republic of North Macedonia have been obtained. Overall, the Republic of North Macedonia has been assessed with a medium degree (for values from 3.1 to 6.9), since the obtained value in column 6 of Table 5 is 3.3.

[29] Szayna, S. T. (2001). NATO Enlargement 2000-2015: Determinants and Implications for Defence Planning and Shaping. Rand, Santa Monica. p.68. https://www.questia.com/library/103985408/nato-enlargement-2000-2015-determinants-and implications

[30] Szayna, S. T. (2001). NATO Enlargement 2000-2015: Determinants and Implications for Defence Planning and Shaping. Rand, Santa Monica. p.69-70. https://www.questia.com/library/103985408/nato-enlargement-2000-2015-determinants-and implications

By recognizing the strategic position and effectiveness of the armed forces, the strategic importance on the Republic of North Macedonia's accession to NATO comes to light. Table 6 gives an assessment of the strategic position of the Republic of North Macedonia[31].

Table 6. Analysis of the strategic position of the Republic of North Macedonia

State	Power Projection	Interior Borders	New Risks	Impact on NATO Cohesion	Overall
1	2	3	4	5	6
North Macedonia	High (1)	High (1)	Medium (LH) (0.5)	High (1)	3,5 / (Medium)

Moreover, in the part of "projection force" criteria (column 2), the Republic of North Macedonia is valued with high level (1), since its admission to NATO, which is possible to increase the efficiency of NATO in eventual operations in the region of the Balkans and beyond. Also, the Republic of North Macedonia is valued with a high level (1) in the category of *"internal borders"* (column 3), because according to the given data in Table 3, with its accession to NATO the country achieves shortening of the length and exposure of its borders with the countries without a Membership Action Plan, which aren't NATO or European Union members. In the category of *"new risks"* (column 4, table 6), the existence of potential bilateral disputes of the Republic of North Macedonia with any neighbouring country, as the first sub-criterion, is valued at a low level (0), and as a result of the Greek-Macedonian dispute over the constitutional name of the state. In the presence of senior European political representatives and mediators from the United Nations on 17 June 2018, in the Greek part of Prespa in the village of Psarades (Nivitsi), the foreign ministers of the Republic of North Macedonia and Greece signed an agreement aimed at ending the name dispute. So far, great efforts have been made from both governments for the entry into force of the agreement, which the two countries ratified in Prespa. However, we are witnesses that in the middle of January 2019, the Prespa Agreement was first voted with the 2/3 majority in the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia and a few weeks later this agreement was voted in the Greek Parliament. All of this was emphasized as a positive step by the NATO General Secretary, Mr. Jens Stoltenberg and senior representatives of the European Parliament.

In addition, the Republic of North Macedonia is valued with a high level (1) because its admission to NATO has a very positive impact on the overall security environment in Europe, which is actually the second sub-criterion of the mentioned category.

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[31] Freedom in the world 2019: Democracy in Crisis. Freedom House. . Пристапено на 10.02.2019 год.

Accordingly, in the category "new risks", the Republic of North Macedonia is valued with a medium level (0.5), as an average value of the individual assessments of the afore-mentioned sub-criteria. When it comes to the category "impact on NATO cohesion" (column 5, table 6), the Republic of Macedonia is valued with a high level (1), primarily because of its candidate status for membership in the European Union.

Column 6 of Table 6 presents an aggregate value of the numerical values from columns 2 to 5, and represents the overall assessment of the strategic position of the Republic of North Macedonia. In the context of this, it is easy to conclude that the strategic position of the Republic of North Macedonia, whose aggregate score is 3.5 is assessed with a medium degree (for values from 1.6 to 3.5).

Table 7 gives an assessment of the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia. Moreover, in the part on criterion for achieving the "projection of force" (column 2), the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia is valued with a medium-low level (2) because it belongs to the group of small and less modern armed forces.

While in the part of the criterion "deterrence ability", the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia is valued with a high level (4), due to the fact that it has more troops on a kilometre border line towards countries without an Membership Action Plan, which aren't NATO or members of the European Union, in respect to Montenegro and Latvia, as member states with the lowest value for the size of their Army per one kilometre border line.

Table 7. Analysis of the Armed Forces of the Republic of North Macedonia

State	Power Projection	Deterrence	Overall
1	2	3	4
North Macedonia	Medium-Low (2)	High (4)	Medium (6)

Column 4 of this table presents the aggregate value of the numerical values from columns 2 and 3, with possible values of the aggregate score from 0 to 8, and it represents the overall assessment for the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Moreover, the Armed Forces of the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia are generally assessed with a medium degree, since the cumulative value of the numerical values from columns 2 and 3 is 6 ("low for values from 2 to 3, average for values from 4 to 6 and high for values from 7 to 8"[32]). By reviewing the obtained results from the assessment of the strategic position and the Armed Forces of the Republic of North Macedonia, we have insight into the strategic importance of the Republic of North Macedonia's accession to NATO (Table 8).

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[32] Szayna, S. T. (2001). NATO Enlargement 2000-2015: Determinants and Implications for Defence Planning and Shaping. Rand, Santa Monica. p.98. https://www.questia.com/library/103985408/nato-enlargement-2000-2015-determinants-and implications

Table 8. Analysis of the Strategic Rationale of the Republic of North Macedonia

State	Strategic Position	Armed Forces	Overall Assessment
1	2	3	4
North Macedonia	8,7	6,6	7,6 (High)

In addition, the numerical value for the category "strategic position" in column 2 of Table 8 is 8.7 and it is obtained by simply converting the given collective value into column 6 of Table 6 represented on a measuring scale from 0-4 in the proportional value in column 2 from Table 8 using a measuring scale with parts from 0-10.

However, the numerical value for the category "Armed Forces" represented in column 3 of Table 8 is 6.6 and it is obtained in a similar manner, with exception that it converts the given sum in column 4 of Table 7 and represented on scale with values from 2 to 8.

Column 4 of Table 8 presents the average value of the sum of the multiple values of columns 2 and 3, with possible values of the aggregate score from 0 to 10, and represents the overall assessment of the strategic validity of the Republic of North Macedonia's accession in NATO. Moreover, the strategic validity of the Republic of North Macedonia's accession in NATO is generally assessed with a high degree, since aggregate value of numerical values from columns 2 and 3 is 7.6 (low for values from 0 to 3, average for values of 3.1 to 6.9 and a high degree for values from 7 to 10[33]).

By combining the results obtained with regards to meeting the basic criteria and strategic expediency, we came to a final assessment for the Republic of North Macedonia for admission in NATO.

Table 9. Final analysis for the Republic of North Macedonia

State	Criteria	Strategic Attractiveness	Overall
1	2	3	4
North Macedonia	3,3 (Medium)	7,6 (High)	5,45 (Medium)

In column 2 table 9 presents the numerical value of column 6, table 5 and column 3 present the numerical value of column 4, table 8. In column 4 of this table the average value of the sum of numerical values from columns 2 and 3 is 5.45. According to this, the Republic of North Macedonia is finally assessed with a medium degree (low

[33]   Szayna, S. T. (2001). NATO Enlargement 2000-2015: Determinants and Implications for Defence Planning and Shaping. Rand, Santa Monica. p.99. https://www.questia.com/library/103985408/nato-enlargement-2000-2015-determinants-and implications

for values from 0 to 2, medium-low for values from 2.1 to 4, average for values from 4.1 to 6, medium-high for values from 6.1 to 8 and a high degree for values from 8.1 to 10) for the readiness and strategic desirability of admission to NATO.

Conclusion

The accession of the Republic of North Macedonia in NATO, is not only a benefit for a higher level of security for the citizens, but in general, it promotes the overall security for the country under the defence "umbrella" of this political and security system, which means accelerating the country's economic progress by creating favourable working conditions and increasing foreign direct investments, as well as providing the opportunity to share and implement democratic values and principles.

Current development of events will strengthen the role of a credible state and partner that the Republic of North Macedonia plays in the eyes of other European democratic countries and this will speed up the path towards integration into the European Union.

Sending an invitation to the Republic of North Macedonia for starting the process of membership in the Alliance, during the last NATO summit in Brussels, is a confirmation of progress made on its path to NATO.

Nevertheless, the admission of the Republic of North Macedonia as the 30th member of NATO is conditioned by the finalization and full implementation of the Prespa agreement.

Considering the complexity of the social and political relations, the strategic interest and the permanent commitments of the Republic of North Macedonia, it is easy to conclude that in this moment the country has no other viable alternative than joining NATO. In the period that follows, the Republic of North Macedonia needs to undertake measures and activities to create all the conditions for its final admission to NATO, as follows:

(1) Continuation and consistent implementation of the reform process in all social spheres of the Republic of North Macedonia for NATO membership;

(2) Overcoming essential differences and assuming the responsibility and concrete steps by all political entities in the country in order to implement the undertaken obligations from the signed agreement with Greece for resolving the name dispute. Everything else implies further deterioration of the positions of North Macedonia in the negotiations and indefinite delays in the Euro-Atlantic integration process;

(3) Maintaining good neighbourly relations between the Republic of North Macedonia and all neighbouring countries on the basis of mutual trust and cooperation;

(4) Promoting democratic processes and achieving high standards in respecting citizens' political rights and freedoms, including the rights of minorities;

(5) Achieving consistency with the implementation of the reforms in the defence sector and full compatibility of the Armed Forces of the Republic of North Macedonia with NATO member states;

(6) Actively contributing with its own forces and assets in operations and missions led by NATO, EU or UN, as well as finding means and capabilities to develop capacities for their full logistical support outside the country;

(7) Strengthening the available capacities of the Republic of North Macedonia in support of international efforts to deal with modern security challenges, such as: terrorism, cybercrime, proliferation of weapons for mass destruction, illegal migration, human trafficking and other.

(8) Implementation of the undertaken obligations and provisions of the Ohrid Framework Agreement as an issue of essential importance for maintenance of interethnic relations in the Republic of North Macedonia.

(9) Continuing the commenced economic reforms, establishing and maintaining fair and competitive working conditions for all economic entities, improving the business climate and attracting foreign investments, maintaining economic growth and undertaking effective measures for reducing the high unemployment rate.

(10) Improving the management of public finances and preventing further borrowing and increasing the total public debt of the Republic of North Macedonia.

The current scientific researches in the process of integration of the Republic of North Macedonia into NATO lead us to the following conclusions: from the independence of the Republic of Macedonia in 1991 to date, through numerous surveys of the citizens of our country over 80% of the respondents answered that they would vote positively in the direction of integration of the Republic of North Macedonia to NATO[34].

Another scientific survey concludes that over 60% of Macedonian citizens oppose the change of the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia as the last condition for full-fledged membership to NATO. It is interesting that the research was conducted in three phases in the period from 2016 to 2018, which clearly concludes that almost 70% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia, irrespective of the ethnic and religious determination are for admission of our country to NATO under the temporary reference FYROM, even if it become the permanent name of our country[35].

In all of aforementioned researches, the Macedonian ethnic Albanians do not set any conditions on the name of our country, and regardless of the change of our country name, they strongly support the integration process of the Republic of North Macedonia to NATO[36]. According to everything we noted above in the paper, through accurate numerical indicators, evaluations and indicators from relevant international organizations for the assessment of the overall validity in fulfilling the conditions of the Republic of North Macedonia for integration in NATO, and having in mind the very fast pace in the ratification of NATO membership protocol by member states at the end of 2019, the protocol for full-fledged membership of the Republic of North Macedonia to NATO would be signed from almost all NATO member states, which gives us realistic expectation that all 29 NATO member states will succeed to ratify the protocol for full membership on Republic of North Macedonia to NATO before the NATO Summit [37].

[34] Mulchinock Niall (2017). NATO and Western Balkans: From neutral spectator to proactive peacemaker. Palgrave Macmillan. p. 241. *ISBN 9781137597243*

[35] *Braw, Elisabeth.* "Greek troubles prompt Macedonia NATO push". *www.politico.eu. Politico*. Retrieved 27 January 2019

[36] *Bechev, Dimitar.* What next after the failed Macedonian referendum?". *www.aljazeera.com. Aljazeera*. Retrieved 4 October 2018. "Albanian community, which is traditionally strongly pro-NATO and EU."

[37] Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty on the Accession of the Republic of North Macedonia". *Treaty Base*. Retrieved 11 February 2019.

On the other hand, having in mind that in order to complete all administrative procedures for full-fledged membership of the Republic of North Macedonia to NATO requires a longer period of time, the full-fledged membership of our country with the right to vote and all this will be finished during April 2020. According to this, the Republic of North Macedonia will the 30th full-fledged member state of NATO.

The next NATO summit is scheduled to take place during the second half of December 2019, in London, the United Kingdom, because London was the seat of NATO's main headquarters in its inception in 1949, and this year's NATO summit is planned to take place there because of the jubilee *"70 years since the establishment of NATO"*. In addition to the comprehensive agenda of the upcoming challenges and threats for the functioning of NATO as a military-political alliance, this summit will emphasize the commitment of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Greece in overcoming the nearly three decade-long name dispute and thus meeting all necessary conditions for admission of the Republic of North Macedonia as the 30th full-fledged member state of NATO.

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Review

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MILITARY BASES OF THE GREAT POWERS IN THE BALKANS IN FUNCTION OF REALIZATION OF THEIR GEOSTRATEGIC INTERESTS

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Abstract: *In 2006, the U.S. started to implement strategic plans to strengthen their military presence in South-Eastern Europe by restructuring and deploying U.S. forces. With these plans they intended to gradually abandon the concept of establishing large military bases far from potential conflict zones, and establish instead smaller military bases closer to locations where the US Army forces can be used. This was formalized by signing defence cooperation agreements (DCAs), as the one with Poland, as well as with the new NATO member countries, Romania and Bulgaria. This strategic commitment was also confirmed by the 2010 National Security Strategy, which provides strategic guidance for repositioning sites and positioning part of their military bases on European territory. Thus, they partially repositioned from the developed countries of Western Europe to the so-called poor regions of "new Europe" - Romania, Poland and Bulgaria. The main reason for this is to confront the countries which support terrorism. Moreover, with this approach the emphasis is again on security policies, which should ensure realization of national political and economic interests.*

Introduction

Contrary to the estimates over the past two decades, the Balkans is again in the focus of the U.S. strategies for their enhanced military presence in the region. Namely, at the beginning of the 21st century, the U.S. administration strategic priorities were clearly directed towards gradually transferring the responsibility to the EU member states to decide on their own future as the U.S. increasingly turned their attention towards the Far East and the Pacific. This determination was influenced by the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the U.S., then the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the circumstances of China's rapid economic growth, and in particular the consequences of the 2007 global financial crisis (which also affected the Pentagon budget cuts).

However, the changes that have taken place in the world over the last decade, such as the rapid economic growth and China's enhanced economic presence in Europe, the effects of Europe's energy dependence on Russian gas, the Arab Spring, Russia's aggression in Georgia and Ukraine, the emergence of ISIS, the terrorist attacks in Europe, the war in Syria, the migrant crisis and the strengthening of Russia's and China's military capabilities, have forced the U.S. and other world powers to shift their previously set strategic goals and priorities regarding in-

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ternational politics and security. Thus, the Balkan countries, i.e. South Eastern Europe, became once again a priority for the U.S. and NATO Alliance to build and strengthen their defence and security capabilities.

With the repositioning of forces and bases in South Eastern Europe, the Pentagon intends to establish "Eastern Europe Rotational Brigade" based primarily in Romania and Bulgaria, which will have air and logistics capabilities needed to successfully support its operations.[3] The brigade is estimated to have between 3,000 and 5,000 combat personnel and logistic support units. Prior to the deployment of these US forces, the U.S. insists on signing precise agreements that will allow them to have access to their forces at the bases and regularly use and deploy them to military operations in other countries, crisis regions and war zones. This is important for the U.S. as they have been taught by their own experience with Turkey which, as a host country, disagreed with the intention to deploy the U.S. armed forces stationed at the Incirlik military air base in Iraq.

Under the new U.S. strategy, the 2018 military budget provided significant funding ($200 million) for reorganization, redeployment and refurbishment of the military (primarily air bases) on European territory (Iceland, Norway, Luxembourg), and especially in South Eastern Europe (Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria). The restructuring of U.S. military capabilities in Europe is also coordinated with NATO Alliance. We emphasize that most of the U.S. military bases, especially on European territory, are also declared for NATO require-ments. Russia's aggression on Ukrainian territory has only accelerated the Pentagon and NATO plans. For this reason, the Defence Ministers of NATO member countries reached a decision in February 2015 to extend the Alliance military presence in Eastern European countries in order to protect the Allies. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg confirmed this intention in 2017, noting that NATO would establish new military bases in the Baltic states, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria.[4] As we have mentioned, for the most part these are the same military bases used by the U.S. Army which operate in NATO as multinational commands, headquarters and control centers. These headquarters should help NATO lead a "rapid reaction force" that will respond to threats against NATO member countries or to defend them from attack.[5]

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[3] www.slobodnaevropa.mk. „НАТО отвора командни центри во Источна Европа", from 05.02.2015.

[4] www.mk.voanews.com. Accessed on 01.11.2018.

[5] On the territory of some NATO member countries, there are declared and established military bases (primarily air bases), which, in addition to serving their national armies, they are also used for the needs of the NATO Alliance. **The U.S.,** as the leading NATO country, has established military bases in some NATO member and other countries and are also used for NATO purposes. The network of military bases consists of about 30 bases positioned in the following states: Whiteman Airforce Base, Missouri, USA; RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire, UK; Lakenheath and Mildenhall Air Base, UK; Eindhoven Air Base, The Netherlands; RAF Brüggen, under the jurisdiction of the British Army in Germany; Geilenkirchen Air Force Base, Germany; Landsberg Air Base, Germany; Ramstein Air Base of the U.S. Army in Germany, which is also the command of the U.S. Air Force for Europe and Africa and also the NATO Joint Air Command; Spangdahlem Air Base, U.S. Army and NATO in Germany; Istres Air Base, France; Avord Air Base, France; Morón Air Base (Morón de la Frontera), Spain; Naval Station Rota, belongs to the U.S. Army, and Spain, Spain; Jedi-Brescia Air Base, Italy; Aviano Air Base, belongs to the U.S. Army and NATO, Italy; Vicenza Base, belongs to the U.S. Army and Italy; Piacenza Air Base, Italy; Istrana Air Base, Italy; Trapani Air Base, Sicily, Italy; Sigonella Air Base, Sicily, Italy; Pratica di Mare Air Base, Lazio, Italy; Ammenola Air Base (Amendola), Italy; Gioia dell Colle Air Base, Italy; Grazzanise Air Base, Italy; Brindisi Air Base, U.S. Army in Italy; Incirlik Air Base, U.S. Army and Turkey, Turkey; Eskan Village

Due to the importance and sensitivity of the Balkan region, we will herein provide more detailed data and estimates on the positioning and repositioning of U.S. and NATO military presence in the Balkans. The analysis of the existence and the role of the U.S. and NATO military bases on the territory of the Balkan countries is given chronologically, from the opening of the first bases to the current situation.

Military bases in the Balkans

Turkey

In 1951, the U.S. Army began building the Incirlik military air base near the city of Adana, Turkey.[6] Initially, the air base was planned to be used in emergency and for servicing medium and heavy bombers. The agreement between Turkey and the U.S. to use the base was signed in 1954, while in 1980, a new Defence and Economic Cooperation Agreement was signed. Currently, there is around 1,500 military and civilian personnel deployed at the base. The main unit is the 39th Air Base Wing whose mission is to support and protect the U.S. and NATO forces throughout Turkey and the southern NATO region. The air base is used as an Air Force Regional Training Centre, as a U.S. National Military Command Centre for this region and as a support to different units (medical services, supply, security and force protection, transport services, air transportation, personal services and more). This air base, together with the U.S. 728th Air Mobility Squadron, provides about 70% of all airfreight and personnel transport for the units involved in the international mission in Afghanistan.

Izmir military air base is the second U.S. Army and NATO base on Turkish territory.[7] The U.S. military presence in this air base began in 1952, with the admission of the Allied Land Forces Southeastern Europe and the deployment of the Allied Tactical Air Forces in 1953. Since 1956, the U.S. Air Force in Europe has claimed responsibility for U.S. and NATO forces at this base. The Allied Air Command in Izmir in 2012 was replaced by the NATO Allied Land Command, as part of the NATO Allied Command Operations.

In recent years, we have witnessed a strain on the bilateral relations between Turkey and the U.S., caused by a number of factors. First, because of the U.S. support for Kurdish fighters in Syria, known as "People's Defence Forces". Another reason is the U.S. protection of the religious and political leader Fethullah Gulen, whom Turkey considers the organizer of the failed military coup in Turkey in 2016. Following the failed military coup, Turkey temporarily blocked the operation of the Incirlik base. However, restrictions on using the U.S. military base were also in place in 2003, when

Air Base, U.S. Army, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; Ali al Salem Air Base, U.S. Army and Kuwait, Kuwait. Source:www.terra.es/actualidad/articulo/htm. Accessed on 28.10.2018.

[6] https://www.incirlik.af.mil/. Accessed on 10.10.2018.
[7] https://lc.nato.int/about-us/history. Accessed on 10.10.2018.

the Turkish parliament did not allow it to be used for attacks on Iraq. Namely, under the agreement between Turkey and the U.S., the U.S. military is allowed to use the Incirlik air base in the framework of NATO operations. When the U.S. aims to conduct independent military operations, they need an additional approval by the Turkish parliament to use the base. Such restrictions on operations are disliked by the U.S., and this is one of the indicators (besides the rapprochement of Turkey with Russia in the military area) that to some extent influenced the decision to reposition some military bases on the territory of Romania, Bulgaria, and even Greece. It can be noted that the U.S., when signing mutual defence cooperation agreements with these countries, insists that there are no such restrictions on the use of their force.

Greece

The U.S. Naval Support Activity Souda Bay on the island of Crete is the first U.S. military base on the territory of Greece.[8] Its operational use began in 1957, when the USS Alameda County amphibious ship was stationed at the port to support units on the island. Later, in 1969, a Navy Department was established as part of the U.S. Naval Air Force in Siljonella, Sicily. This department included the Mobile Blasting Group, Liaison Centre and other facilities. It was established as a military naval and air support base in 1980 and acts as an operational naval base, naval air base and naval armament station. This means that the base supports both naval and aviation reconnaissance missions and other allied operations, as well as multinational operations for the needs of the U.S. Army's European, Central and African Command. Several operational commands are stationed here, such as: Naval Chief Computer and Telecommunications Station, Scout Squadron, Naval Ammunition Centre, External Intelligence Centre, U.S. Naval European Meteorology and Oceanography Squad, NATO Maritime Interdiction Operational Training Centre and others. About 800 U.S. military and civilian personnel are stationed at Souda Bay, ensuring combat readiness of the deployed units.

In recent years, the U.S. Army and NATO forces have also temporarily used other military airports and ports in Greece to carry out various operations. Such is the case with the Larisa Air Base and the Alexandroupolis Naval Base.

Cyprus

Due to the important geostrategic position of the island of Cyprus, we provide data on the existence of military installations on this island. The island of Cyprus, as it is known, is located in the eastern basin of the Mediterranean Sea and is the third largest island, following the Italian islands of Sicily and Sardinia. The island is administratively and politically divided into two parts: the Republic of Cyprus, which is internationally recognized and a member of the EU and NATO Alliance, and the Turkish Republic of

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[8] https://www.naval-technology.com. Accessed on 12.09.2018.

Northern Cyprus, which is recognized only by the Republic of Turkey. However, one part of the island is a British territory acquired in 1960 by signing the Treaty of Independence with Greece and Turkey. Under British sovereignty is the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia, which occupies about 254 square kilometers or 2.8% of the island's territory and primarily serves for military purposes. The Royal Ari Force Akrotiri is in the western sovereign area, while the Aios Nikolaos military electronic and intelligence base in Dhekelia is in the eastern sovereign territory.[9] Akrotiri Air Base is a joint operational base providing support to British forces operations in the region of the Middle East and North Africa and at the same time protects the strategic interests of the UK in the wider region. The military electronics and intelligence base of Aios Nikolaos in Dhekelia serves to gather intelligence on developments in the wider region. It stations the 9th Regiment and the 33rd Royal Air Force Liaison Unit of the United Kingdom.

Hungary

On the territory of Hungary, the Papa Air Base is in operational use since 2009, located 130km west of Budapest.[10] The base is used by the U.S. Army and the NATO Alliance for Multinational Strategic Air Transport. Along with other aircraft, several F-17 Globimasters transport aircraft are also stationed here, intended to transport larger units and assets to Afghanistan and other distant countries and regions. Another military base used by U.S. and NATO forces is the Taszar Air Base, near the city of Kaposvar. From 1995 to 1999, the U.S. Army used this base to conduct air operations in the Balkans (BiH, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo). From 1998 to 2004, the base was used as a National Support Centre for the U.S. Army, and from 2001 to 2003 it served as a training base for Iraqi Army personnel. According to available data, there are no foreign troops in this military air base since 2004.

Kosovo

Bondsteel is a U.S. Army military base opened in 1999, following the end of the NATO intervention on Serbian territory. It is located near the city of Urosevac, not far from Kosovo's border with Macedonia. It is intended to station and accommodate up to 7,000 troops, who would be responsible for the security of Kosovo and the region. During the construction of the base, it served to safeguard the existing (and especially future) energy flows planned to extend from the Caspian Sea through Turkey, the Balkan countries to Italy. Such was the AMBO project, a US sponsored oil pipeline, according to which the Burgas port in Bulgaria was planned to be connected with the

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[9] https://www.raf.mod.uk/our-organisation/stations/raf-akrotiri/. Accessed on 11.10.2018.

[10] www.nspa.nato.int/en/organization. Papa Air Base - Main Operating Base. Accessed on 02.11.2018.

Vlora port in Albania, passing through the territory of Macedonia. During 2011, there were rumours of a possible closure of this base, but developments on the world stage have refuted such predictions. Bondsteel now has about 1,000 members of the reserve and National Guard soldiers. The military base also houses the command of the KFOR Multinational Battle Group East, composed of troops from the 79th US Infantry Brigade Combat Team and units of the Armed Forces of Hungary, Poland, Romania and Turkey.[11]

<p style="text-align:center">*******</p>

From the presented data we can see in which Balkan countries, when and with what purpose were military bases opened in the past. However, as we emphasized at the beginning of this paper, the Balkans is covered by the new U.S. (and NATO) strategic movements for repositioning of locations and deploying part of Europe's military bases, or their partial relocation to South Eastern European countries. For these reasons, we continue by providing data on such claims, covering Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and Greece.

Restructuring, rebuilding and building military bases in South Eastern Europe

Romania

Intensive defence cooperation between the U.S. and Romania began in April 2006 by signing the interstate agreement in Bucharest. The agreement also provides opening several U.S. military installations and bases on Romanian territory. This agreement became operational in 2018. According to Pentagon's current plan to fund military bases, $21,000,000 will be provided for modernization of Mihail Kogalniceanu US-Romanian military air base near Constanta.[12] The air base also has Patriot missile defence systems designed to protect Europe from possible missile attacks from the Middle East and Russia. Also, 3,000,000 euros have been earmarked for 2018 to renovate Romania's CampiaTurzii military airbase**.**[13] The U.S. Air Forces have already built hangars to house MQ-9 Reaper drones, and intelligence support facilities in Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region.[14] In October 2014, the U.S. Naval Support Facility was opened in the town of Deveselu and it is part of the US-NATO Ballistic Missile Defence System.[15] The system command consists of a fire control centre, an auxiliary command group, a control and communications department, and SM-3 missile launcher facilities.

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[11] https://jfcnaples.nato.int/kfor. Accessed on <u>09.11.2018</u>.
[12] BalkanEngineer.com. Accessed on 18.04.2018.
[13] Balkan Engineer.com, Romania-Insider.com. Accessed on 18.04.2018.
[14] www.romaniajournal.ro/defense-news. Accessed on 12.11.2018.
[15] www.navy.mil/submit.„Navy Establishes New Base in Romania", 10.10.2014. Accessed on 11.11.2018.

Bulgaria

The same year as in the case of Romania, a Defence Cooperation Agreement was signed in Sofia in April 2006 between the Bulgarian Foreign Minister Ivailo Kalfin and the U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.[16] The agreement contains articles that provide for the deployment and status of forces, unrestricted U.S. access to their forces, and more. The agreement envisions deploying about 2,500 U.S. troops and equipment in several U.S. military bases on Bulgarian territory, i.e. at the Bezmer Air Base in the Yambol region, the Graf Ignatievo Air Base in the Plovdiv region, the Aytos Logistics Centre in the Burgas region, and the Novo Selo Training Area in the Sliven region. The agreement provides for significant U.S. financial resources to rebuild and modernize the aforementioned military bases. Also, according to the agreement, Bulgaria waives taxes and other financial obligations on all purchases at the U.S. military bases, as well as the jurisdiction over the U.S. troops in the event of criminal or misdemeanor offenses. This agreement was approved by the Parliament of the Republic of Bulgaria on 26 May, 2006, and on 6 June 2006 the Law on Ratification of the Agreement was adopted.

According to the Agreement, the modernization and equipment of the Bezmer Air Base was completed by the end of 2015. For this purpose, the U.S. and NATO invested 27,000,000 Euros, while Bulgaria invested 3,700,000 Euros. Modernization and expansion have made it possible for this military airport to land and take off US F-5 strategic military transport aircraft, such as the Galaxy F-17, the Globmaster F-17 and the smaller F-130 Hercules. Also by 2015, the Novo Selo Training Area was modernized with an investment of $61,000,000. At this training range, 80 different military exercises between the U.S. and Bulgarian armies have already been planned.[17] Such large U.S. investments to establish permanent military bases in Bulgaria are part of defence investments of more than $300,000,000 in the past 20 years.[18]

A scheme of distribution of military bases in the Balkans

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[16] www.state.gov. Accessed on 30.09.2018.
[17] www.balkaninsight.com. Accessed on 20.08.2018.
[18] https://bg.usembassy.gov. Accessed on 12.10.2018.

Greece

Greece is also ready to expand military cooperation with the United States. Such talks were led by the Greek Defence Minister Kamenos during a meeting with the U.S. Secretary of Defence James Matisse at the beginning of October 2018. The same was announced by the U.S. during the visit of the Chief of General Staff of the U.S. Army, General Joseph Dunford to Athens in September 2018.[19] In addition to using the existing naval military base in Souda on the island of Crete, the expansion of U.S. cooperation would mean deployment of U.S. forces at the Volos Air Base near Arakos Air Base near Larissos, western Peloponnese, and at the Siros Air Base on the Siros Island, located 78 nautical miles southeast of Athens. Part of the cooperation to support certain military operations has been in place since early 2018, with the US-based Larissa military MQ-9 Reaper drones being temporarily used for deployment of the F-22 Raptor fighter jets.[20] This is the case with the Alexandroupolis Naval Base, located in the city with the same name in northeastern Greece, or the northern part of the Aegean Sea.

A scheme of the locations of military bases in Greece

Albania

The current trend of offering territories for U.S. military bases has not bypassed Albania either. Thus, during an official visit to the Pentagon in May 2018, the Defence Secretary Olta Chachka offered Secretary of Defence Matisse locations to open U.S. and NATO military bases in Albania.[21] Following the analysis and observations at the Pentagon and NATO Headquarters in Brussels, the first information on opening

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[19] www.ekathimerini.com. News, 05.09.2018. Accessed on 15.10.2018.
[20] Wall Street Journal Magazine, 13.09.2018. Accessed on 25.10.2018.
[21] http://www.mod.gov.al. Ministria e Mbrojtjes, 12.11.2018.Accessed on 26.11.2018.

a NATO air base in Albania was released in Tirana and Brussels in October 2018. In this regard, Albania's Defence Minister said the abandoned air base at Kucova was chosen as the future NATO air base in the region. For its reconstruction and construction, NATO plans to invest 50,000,000 Euros, and the base will be used for training, exercises, supply and logistics for the needs of the NATO Alliance.[22]

Conclusion

The U.S. remains a dominant political, economic and military force in the world. However, its leadership is seriously jeopardized by China's rapidly growing economic and military development, as well as by its continuing rivalry with Russia, especially in the military. Worldwide, the U.S. is the largest military superpower, allocating 3 times more than China and 10 times more than Russia for defence and military needs. This paper covers the extent and scope of the deployment of military bases and military installations of the U.S. (and NATO) primarily, dominating its main competitors. The focus of the paper was on the distribution and repositioning of military bases in the Southeastern European countries, more precisely in the Balkans. We can conclude that the U.S. has again shown its interest in enhanced military presence in the South Eastern European countries, with the aim of building an anti-missile defence shield and deploying forces and resources for the needs of the Eastern Europe Rotational Brigade. This made the not-so-recent announcement by senior U.S. administration officials that a "fire line" from Western Europe would be moved closer to the borders with the Middle East and Russia.

Analyzing the locations and distribution of the new U.S. military bases on the territory of Bulgaria, as well as the offers to open military bases in Greece and the marked-for-opening NATO military base in Albania, we can conclude that they are almost identically located along the approved and announced construction of gas and transport corridors in the Balkans. Namely, military bases in Bulgaria are located along the stretch of the Russian South Stream gas pipeline, as well as along the From-Sea-to-Sea Rail Freight Corridor, announced and approved by the European Commission, which will connect three ports in Greece (Thessaloniki, Kavala and Alexandroupolis), with three ports in Bulgaria (Burgas, Varna and Ruse on the Danube). Also, this new transport corridor through the territory of Greece extends along the established route of the Trans Adriatic Pipeline, which should transport gas from the Caspian Sea, through Turkey, Greece, Albania, to Italy. In the context of the aforementioned, it is not accidental that NATO decided to open a new military air base in Albania at the site of Kucova, located near the stretch of Trans Adriatic Pipeline going through the territory of Albania to Italy.

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[22] http://www.mod.gov.al. Ministria e Mbrojtjes, 17.04.2018. Accessed on 06.07.2018.

A scheme of Balkan oil and pipelines

A scheme of the From-Sea-to-Sea Rail Freight Corridor[23]

The data analysis presented herein shows us that nothing is accidental in the big strategic games and that military power is always in the service of achieving economic and political interests of the great powers.

We can ask ourselves a logical question, "How does all this affect the position of our country?" The behavior and actions of our neighbors and other countries in the region are of great importance to our national security. In recent years, they have sought to strengthen their strategic and military alliance with the U.S. by unwritten agreements. We have seen that their enhanced military cooperation also includes offering territories to new U.S. and NATO military bases. The Republic of Macedonia, as a country that is making the final steps towards joining the NATO Alliance, and having signed a Declaration on Strategic Partnership and Cooperation with the U.S. ten years ago, is not currently considered a location for opening U.S. and NATO military bases and is by-passed by the approved strategic pipeline and oil routes across the region.

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[23] Source: Trans-European Transport Network Executive Agency. European Commission, 2011.

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