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**STATUS AND CHALLENGES OF THE DEFENSE REFORMS  
IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA FOR  
EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION**

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## **Abstract**

The main objective of this paper is to present the results of Serbia as a member of the A-5 group of SEE countries, which on the regional level through the Regional Cooperation Council has achieved good results, but on the national level this country should perform further reforms in the field of defense for Euro-Atlantic integration. Concrete steps in establishing the cooperation with the Partnership for Peace, the union of Serbia and Montenegro were submitted on 19.06.2003. The Military representatives of the Republic of Serbia in NATO for the first time were established on 27.09.2010, with the main task to represent the armed forces of Serbia in NATO headquarters in Brussels. Republic of Serbia in 2012 for the first time participated in crisis management operations in the EU.

The main hypothesis is: Where and where should be the Republic of Serbia in implementing the necessary defense reforms for Euro-Atlantic integration? The main hypothesis will be proven through the use of historical method and analysis of Serbian defense reforms.

The reform process in some of the SEE countries is well under way. Some of them are waiting for invitation and some of SEE countries have political disagreements or they have national problems which are not yet solved. One of the SEE countries which is on the way for Euro-Atlantic integration is Republic of Serbia. But having in mind the current military-political reforms and situation, the consent of NATO and EU accession on the Republic of Serbia in the Euro-Atlantic family and chronological change of public opinion in the Republic of Serbia for membership in NATO and the EU will be the auxiliary hypotheses in this paper.

**Keywords:** *interoperability, defense reform, Republic of Serbia, NATO, EU*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In NATO there was not a basically accepted definition for the "Defense reform". But when we are talking about the measures which are connected to "defense reforms", they are separated in three main levels: 1. Defense transformation - defines the comprehensive transformation of the defense institutions for better defense effectiveness;

2. Developing defense capabilities for more successful and effectiveness dealing with old and new challenges in defense sector and 3. Delivering efforts for joint operability in multinational operations for dealing with: conflicts, crisis and wars (Center for CIMIC, 2003:23).

The development of the defense system of Serbia is a great importance in accordance with the assessment of national risks and threats<sup>1</sup> (National security strategy, 2008:7). This is an imperative to ensure a stable defense budget in order to ensure the continuation of defense reforms, modernization of the army and achieving the required level of interoperability<sup>2</sup> (Strategic Defence Review of Serbia, 2013: 5).

Military challenges and threats in the form of: aggression, armed rebellion and other forms on use of the armed forces as: non-military challenges, risks and threats in the form of terrorism, organized crime, corruption, natural disasters, technological accidents and other hazards beside human resources includes defense potential of the country, which is the subject of defense, capable and trained to join the defense system<sup>3</sup> (Defense Law, 2015: No 10). The answer to these threats involves the inclusion of the whole society and better strengthens cooperation among states<sup>4</sup> (National security strategy, 2008: No.75).

The climate change are the new dimension of non-military threats which requires combine efforts from the Army and the civilian authorities in rescuing people and property<sup>5</sup> (Defense Law of Serbia, 2014: No.32, 14). Also the expansion of information technology, social networks and virtual computer programs are impossible to ignore. This wide range of threats requires constant adjustment and reforms on the defense system, which will enable the creation of the necessary skills and organization of the army forces to become interoperable with NATO and EU member countries.

## **2. INTEROPERABILITY OF THE SERBIAN DEFENSE SYSTEM WITH NATO AND EU**

The commitment of the SEE region to join NATO and the EU are to accept and promote the values of democracy, economic development and social stability and security, which will positively affect on the regional security environment<sup>6</sup> (White book of defense, 2012:12).

In order to prepare the Union for participation in the Partnership for Peace, NATO at June 30, 2003 started a special program for Serbia and Montenegro (Tailored Cooperation Program, TCP)<sup>7</sup>. In December 2006 the North Atlantic Council approved the establishment of the NATO DRG, after months of consultations in NATO, Political Committee and the Political-Military Steering Committee on Partnership for Peace.

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<sup>1</sup>Strategy of National Security (Official Gazette, No. 75/08 od 08.12.2008),7.

<sup>2</sup>Strategic review of the defence of Serbia, 2013, 3-5.

<sup>3</sup>Law on Defence (Official Gazette, No. 116/2007, 88/2009, 10/2015)

<sup>4</sup>Strategy of National Security (Official Gazette, No. 75/08).

<sup>5</sup>Law on the Army in Serbia (Official Gazette, No. 75/10, 40/11, 32/14).

<sup>6</sup>White book of Defence of the Republic of Serbia, Ministry of Defence, Sector for Defence Policy, Direction for Strategic Planning, Belgrade 2012, p. 12

<sup>7</sup> Tailored program of cooperation included participation in courses of NATO schools in Oberammergau, seminars and conferences, the greatest contribution was the participation of the Army, as an observer on a various number of military exercises in the Partnership for Peace.

The main objectives of the group were to renew the support of institutional cooperation between Serbia and NATO on the reform of the defense system, making partner in the planning and review, developing projects to address specific issues of reform and to improve coordination with NATO and the EU<sup>8</sup> (Andrej etc, 2013: 511). In March 2005, NATO together with Serbian Army realized the project for destruction of stockpiles of anti-personnel mines with funding of about \$ 1.5 million, which was donated by 11 countries. For an executive agency in the implementation of the project were determined by NATO Maintenance and Supply - NAMSA. The personnel of the project were: Technical Overhaul Institute (Payroll) in Kragujevac and the company Iskra Baric for destroying mines. The project was implemented over a period of two years and was successfully completed in May 2007 with a total of destroyed about 1.4 million antipersonnel mines<sup>9</sup> (Serbian ministry of defense, 2014:7).

The strategic decisions of the defense policy on the Republic of Serbia have the following major objectives:

- To maintain an effective defense system,
- Peace and a favorable security environment and
- Integration into European and other international security structures and participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace<sup>10</sup> (Andrej etc, 2011: 99).

In order to achieve the above-mentioned goals, Serbian army followed these tasks of defense policy:

- The transformation of the Serbian Army
- Upgrading the capacity of Serbian Army
- Reforms and building of institutions for civil defense
- Effective management of the defense system
- Participation in multinational operations
- Engaging in European security and defense policy
- Involvement in NATO's Partnership for Peace and
- Achieving interoperability with the defense systems on the countries involved in the NATO Partnership for Peace<sup>11</sup> (Bozidar, 2011:208).

The framework of the accession negotiations between the EU and the Republic of Serbia were successfully completed in March 2015. So far, 14 screening reports have been tabled in the Council. The action plans for chapters 23 and 24 have been finalized, sketching out a comprehensive reform agenda in the area of the rule of law. Serbia was invited to table four other negotiating positions on chapters 5, 13, 20, 25 and 26. Serbia is participating in the Stabilization and Association Process. Serbia has continued to build a track record in implementing the obligations of the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA). The protocol on the adaptation of the SAA, to take account of Croatia's accession to the EU, was ratified by Serbia in October 2014<sup>12</sup> (European commission, 2015:77).

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<sup>8</sup> Andrej Ilijev, Drage Petreski, Dragan Gjurcevski. Euro-Atlantic integration in SEE through regional cooperation, International conference in EURM, 2013, p. 510-512

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Serbia, American-Adriatic charter - A5, 2014, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Andrej Ilijev, Drage Petreski, Janche Ilijevski. Incentives of NATO and the EU for regional collaboration of the countries from south-east Europe, Security dialogues, Skopje, 2011, p. 98-100

<sup>11</sup> Bozhidar Forca. Strategic management in the system of defence, Belgrade, 2011, p. 208

<sup>12</sup> European commission. Commission staff working document - Serbia 2015 Report, EU enlargement strategy, Brussels, 10.11.2015, p. 75 - 77

Under IPA II, Serbia continues to benefit from pre-accession assistance with a total indicative allocation of € 1.5 billion for the period 2014-2020. The IPA National Program 2014 amounts to € 115 million overall, with most of the funding supporting public administration reform, justice and home affairs, competitiveness, education and energy.

Following the floods that occurred in May 2014, the Commission designed a special program on flood recovery and risk management, allocating € 62 million exclusively to Serbia. In October 2015, the Commission adopted a special measure on strengthening the response capacity of the most affected countries in the Western Balkans to cope effectively with increased mixed migration flows of an amount of € 10 million, focusing primarily on Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>13</sup> (European commission, 2015:74).

The high level of relations between Serbia and Russia, especially the last offer from Russia that is ready to give most modern military techniques, warplanes, helicopters and missile systems S-300 which will be the key factor for the defense of Serbia from possible aggression. All this is happening at a time when the United States are donating modern missile systems with a range of 300 kilometers to Republic of Croatia. Russia is ready to invest in Serbia over 5 billion Euros in the next 3 years (2016 - 2019).

Russia in the following three years, announced that investments will consist in: improving the traffic infrastructure, railway traffic, airports, etc. As a priority of Russia will be the great investments in the gas power plant with whom Russia plans to make Serbia as a leader in the SEE region. In bilateral agreements between them, Russia doesn't have negative thinking about Serbian membership in EU.

### **3. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**

After her independence, the Republic of Serbia escaped the classical system of command on all three defense components: land, navy and air forces. Unlike the previous strategy, the current required reforms for the defense system that will meet the new challenges and threats to the national security<sup>14</sup> (White paper, 2012: 14). Today the Ministry of Defense on the Republic of Serbia comprised of four departments (Department for Defense for Policy, Department for Human Resources, Department for Material Resources and the Department for Budget and Finance), three separate internal units (the General Secretariat and Cabinet on Minister of Defense) four internal units outside the sector and the Secretariat (Public Affairs Directorate on Military Health, Ministry Internal Audit and Chief Inspector Service) and three administrative bodies within the Ministry (of Defense Inspectorate, Military Security Agency and Military Intelligence Agency)<sup>15</sup> (White paper, 2012:29). The subjects of the defense are: citizens, state bodies and organizations, other legal persons and the Army of Serbia. Defense forces are human and material resources on the Republic of Serbia organized in defense system<sup>16</sup> (Serbian defense strategy, 2009:14).

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<sup>13</sup> European commission. Commission staff working document - Serbia 2015 Report, EU enlargement strategy, Brussels, 10.11.2015, p. 73 - 75

<sup>14</sup>White book of Defence of the Republic of Serbia, Ministry of Defence, Sector for Defence Policy, Direction for Strategic Planning, Belgrade, 2012, p. 14

<sup>15</sup>White book of Defence of the Republic of Serbia, Ministry of Defence, Sector for Defence Policy, Direction for Strategic Planning, Belgrade, 2012, p. 29

<sup>16</sup>Serbian defence strategy, Belgrade, 2009, p. 12-14

For achieving more efficient use of resources and for improvement of the management of programs and processes of harmonization and improvement of existing structures on Ministry of defense are following:

- Integration of certain parts of the Ministry and the General Staff in a way that is unique to create functional units in the area of human and material resources, smart defense and financial services and to provide the functions of General Staff;
- Decentralizing the management and transfer of powers to a lower level;
- Improve the capacity to combat corruption in accordance with the national strategy to combat corruption and organized crime and international obligations<sup>17</sup>( Serbian defense strategy,2009:19).

Development priorities will be:

- The development of the military-intelligence system
- The development of the newly established organizational unit for Public Relations of the Ministry,
- Establishment of an operational command center for continuously commandment of the army in operations and crisis response within the General Staff.

#### **4. REORGANIZATION OF THE ARMED FORCES AND MILITARY EDUCATION**

The army of Serbia is structurally divided into general and specialty services for the kind of their specialties. The Army of Serbia consists of:

- land forces
- Air Force and defense<sup>18</sup>.

Single system of command and control in order to effectively manage all Army forces in the country and abroad is given in (Figure 1). This will ensure the integration and networking of all components of the Army in a modular structure, capable for joint action and to perform operations with specific tasks and challenges<sup>19</sup> (Common Security and Defense Policy, 2011, 5). Its main priorities are:

- Deterring armed threats;
- Defense of the territory;
- Providing conditions for the mobilization and development of the Army and other bodies and organization on defense system;
- Participation in peacekeeping operations and international military cooperation
- Support civil authorities in the fight against non-military challenges, risks and threats.

Transforming it from the corps to brigade level they create a composition with effective operational capabilities<sup>20</sup> (EU Battle group preparation guide, 2008:7). With the abolition of the corps command they reduce the number of employees who participate in the decision making process. This will not affect to the quality of decision-making, but

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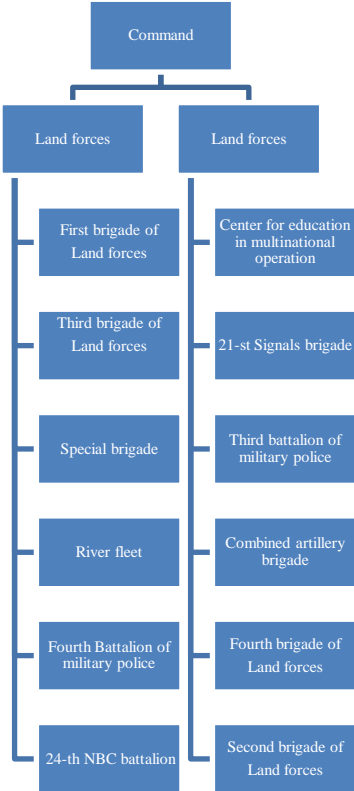
<sup>17</sup>Serbian defence strategy, Belgrade, 2009: p. 19

<sup>18</sup>Official Gazette, No. 116/2007, 88/2009

<sup>19</sup> Common Security and Defence Policy – EU Battle groups, 2011, p. 4 - 5

<sup>20</sup>EU Battle group preparation guide, Council of the European Union, Military Staff, CCM 12904/2/08 REV 2,Brussels, 2008, p. 5-7

they will generate key tasks and decision-making performance<sup>21</sup> (EU Concept for Force Generation, 2008:9).



**Figure 1: The structure of the Land forces on Serbian army**

With transformation of the ground forces from corps to brigade level they create a composition with effective operational capabilities<sup>22</sup> (EU Battle group preparation guide, 2008:7). With the abolition of the corps command they reduce the number of employees who participate in the decision making process. This will not affect to the quality of decision-making, but they will generate key tasks and decision-making performance<sup>23</sup> (EU Concept for Force Generation, 2008:10).

Brigade level organizations will provide more favorable conditions for planning, organizing, unique, important and successful use of force in specific operational situations by time and space. Ground forces (Figure 1) consist of brigades of ground troops, battalions of military police, Special Brigade, Combined Artillery Brigade, River Fleet, NBC battalion, signal battalion and training center for multinational operations. Ground forces will not have unique command it will function as a compositions that command will

<sup>21</sup> EU Concept for Force Generation, Council of the EU, Brussels, 16 June 2008, p. 8 - 10

<sup>22</sup> EU Battle group preparation guide, Council of the European Union, Military Staff, CCM 12904/2/08 REV 2, Brussels, 2008, p. 5-7

<sup>23</sup> EU Concept for Force Generation, Council of the EU, Brussels, 16 June 2008, 10

be placed under the Chief of Staff. The composition of the ground brigades and battalions will declare forces engaging in international missions and operations.

The composition of the ground crews is made of eight mechanized battalions and four armored battalions, tanks equipped mainly with M-84 and GDP-80. Now is starting the equipping plan with armored personal carriers APC "Lazarus".

With the reorganization of the Air Force, Serbian army will provide: monitoring, control and protection of air space in cooperation with allies, improving mobility units and improving the ability to respond to crises. Aviation is intended to: monitor, control and protection of air space over Serbia.

Aviation comprised of: transport aircraft AN-26, transport aircraft AN easy-2TD, school - fighter jets, "Gull" G-2 school-fighter jets, "Gull" G-4 passenger jet, YAK 40, hunter MiG-21, hunter MiG-29, hunter-bomber "Orao" UTVA 75 and others. Helicopters: SA-341h / SA-342L "Gazelle", transport helicopter Mi-8 / Mi-17. Missile systems: Missile defense system KUB-M Air, Defense missile system S-125 Neva-M and Radar system S-600 surveillance radar AN / TPS. The protection of airspace ("Air Policing") is one of the most important and complex challenges facing the country in the present days. In future the Serbian army should join the NATO concept of Smart Air Defense<sup>24</sup> (Stefanovic, 2014: 439). Serbian Army will consists two aviation brigades, missile defense brigade, engineering battalion, signal battalion, aviation medical institute and aviation institute.

Changes were also made in the military education. The military university was established by Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Serbia on February 24 2011.

The University of Defence is an independent institution of higher education which performs the activity of higher education through academic studies of first, second and third cycle of several scientific areas in the educational and scientific fields of humanities, technological and medical sciences. This kind of education enables the establishment of appropriate partnership arrangements between the Ministry of Defense and University of Serbia, together with the cadets from the partner countries. The military university on Republic of Serbia participates in the following EU programs: Horizon 2020, Erasmus +, Creative Europe - Culture Sub-Program, Employment and Social Innovation, Europe for Citizens, Customs 2020 and Fiscal's 2020<sup>25</sup> (European commission, 2015:75).

## **5. LOGISTIC SUPPORT**

The navy and air force will be kept as current elements of logistics support. To achieve more efficient management and for improving supply they plan to integrate the logistics information system. One of the first steps in this direction will be reducing the number of storage capacity from the current nine to three and leaving a large number of objects that can be used in future<sup>26</sup> (Serbian defense strategy, 2009:19).

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<sup>24</sup>Stefanovic S. and a group of authors: Security and defence aspects of the accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union, Ministry of defence / Sector for defence policy / Institute for Strategic Researches, Belgrade 2014, Part 3: Activities of the Republic of Serbia for adjustment to the requests for membership in the EU in the area of security and defence, p. 433-444

<sup>25</sup> European commission. Commission staff working document -Serbia 2015 Report, EU enlargement strategy, Brussels, 10.11.2015, p. 74-76

<sup>26</sup>Serbian defence strategy, Belgrade, 2009, p. 19

Besides improving the health care of the members of the Army, this will enable the achievement of skills for medical staff in ROL-1 module in International Missions and assistance to civil authorities. The key priorities for equipping and modernization will be:

- Purchase for equipment on declared units
- Modernization of the operative command centers
- Purchase of combat helicopters and aircrafts
- Purchase of modern air surveillance radars and building operating Center for aviation<sup>27</sup>.

Serbia's military budget in 2015 was about 560 million US dollars, which is the smallest sum allocated to the functioning of the armed forces since the global economic crisis in 2008<sup>28</sup> (Milos, 2009: 133). In the following three years the military budget every year was smaller with an average of \$ 100 million, covering the calculation of military pensions has stabilized at around 650 million dollars. Budget in the last four years:

- 58.982.905.000, 55.612.486.648 budget for 2013
- 60.368.647.000, 57.991.114.849 budget for 2014
- 57.964.159.000, 36.299.994.175 budget for 2015
- 55.788.602.000 budget for 2016<sup>29</sup> (Budget Law, 2012:No.93).

In the specific allocations for relating the Air Force in the budget there is no plan to extract something over 83 thousand Euros for a new hangar at the military airport in Batajnica. Most of the works on the hangar has been completed and it should be so far been invested in this facility less than two million. The completion of the facility is planned to be in 2017. Another significant item is the modernization of school-fighter G-4 " Super Galeb " the standard G-4MD. The plan is to allocate in 2016/17 about 4.5 million and to begin modernization of prototyping and testing in the Technical Center. The completion of the testing process should be finished by 2019 or 2020.

However, this modernization is planned for several years in the budget. In the period from 2013 to 2015 were planned € 10 million in the last budget for the period from 2015 to 2017 only 588 thousand Euros. This budget doesn't leave a space for optimism that the technical condition on the Army of Serbia and especially the Air Force will improve<sup>30</sup> (Serbian military doctrine, 2012).

## 6. CONCLUSION

The need for defense reforms in the Republic of Serbia for Euro-Atlantic integration is mostly imposed from the essential criteria given from EU and NATO<sup>31</sup> (Derek, 2013:5). Serbian long term objective is to develop military units that will be ready, efficient, equipped, trained and motivated.

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/ex-yu/Prioritet-modernizacija-vazdusne-odbrane-Srbije/225262>

<sup>28</sup> Milosh Miletic. System of financing of the expenses for defence of the Republic of Serbia, military magazine, Belgrade, 2009, p. 132-135

<sup>29</sup> Law on the budget of the Republic of Serbia (Official Gazette, No.93/12)

<sup>30</sup> Doctrine of Planning in the Army of Serbia, J-5, 2012, p. 5-7

<sup>31</sup> Derek E. Mix. European Union: Foreign and Security Policy. Congressional Research Service, 2013, p. 3 - 7



The Republic of Serbia will be forced to buy multipurpose medium helicopters which had most of the EU members<sup>32</sup> (EU Force Catalogue, 2011: 7). The Air opportunities will be achieved by adapting the activities of the organizational structure of the army integration into the collective security systems and equipment necessary for multipurpose helicopters and means of monitoring and controlling the airspace<sup>33</sup> (Serbian defense strategy, 2009:17).

By engaging the Ministry of Defense and the Serbian Army in multinational operations under the mandate of the EU, they provide very favorable impact on the overall process of European integration on the Republic of Serbia<sup>34</sup> (ISAC Fund, 2013: 53).

At the end of 2014 the Executive Director of the European Defense Agency has officially visited the Serbian Ministry of Defense. The priorities of cooperation between the Ministry of Defense and the Army of Serbia with the EU in the upcoming period are<sup>35</sup> (Stefanovic, 2014:389):

- Continued participation in operations and missions of the EU crisis management
- Further improvement of the administrative capacity for active cooperation between the Republic of Serbia in the framework of the Common Security and Defense Policy
- Continued participation in the negotiating groups in the accession process
- Strengthening the cooperation with the EU in the projects of defense<sup>36</sup> (Miscevic, 2012,14).

The Immigrant waves and the Ukrainian crisis represent a clear signal to NATO and the EU to speed their acceptance of this small country from SEE. In Serbia there is a broad social and political consensus of all relevant political stakeholders for its future membership in the EU<sup>37</sup> (Sven, 2011:7).

At the end of our paper, we were focused to answer the main hypothesis: *What year and where will be Republic of Serbia integrate*, the answers to this question were following:

In relation with EU policy the Republic of Serbia was preparing for entry into the EU in the period from 2012 to 2015. But, because of ethnic tensions, Kosovo's status, poverty and corruption couldn't integrate. Serbia had granted candidate status from 1 March 2012. The formal start of negotiations was from January 21, 2014, according to estimates of the Serbian government, the negotiations could be completed by 2018.

Having in mind that more than 50% of Serbian public opinion are for Serbian accession in EU and more than a 70% of the citizens are against Serbian accession in

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<sup>32</sup> EU Force Catalogue – Development of European military capabilities, 2011, p. 8

<sup>33</sup> Serbian defence strategy, Belgrade, 2009, p. 17

<sup>34</sup> ISAC Fund Center for international and security affairs. Four pillars of foreign policy to the European integration: Is there a will for strategic directing of the foreign policy of Serbia, Belgrade, 2013, p. 52-53.

<sup>35</sup> Stefanovic S. and a group of authors: Security and defence aspects of the accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union, Ministry of defence / Sector for defence policy / Institute for Strategic Researches, Belgrade 2014, Part 3: Activities of the Republic of Serbia for adjustment to the requests for membership in the EU in the area of security and defence, p. 387-391

<sup>36</sup> Mishchevic, T. Obligations towards the Common security and defence policy in the further process of European integrations of Serbia, Belgrade, 2012, p. 14

<sup>37</sup> Sven Biscop. Permanent Structured Cooperation: Building Effective European Forces, Egmont-Royal Institute for International Relations, Boston, 2011, p. 7

NATO. In January 2015, Serbia agreed to deepen cooperation with NATO through an Individual Partnership Action Plan<sup>38</sup>.

At the end of the 2014, more than 56% of Serbian citizens have positive opinion for accession of their country in EU. In the public questionnaire made by non-governmental organization TNS Medium Gallup 2014-2015 supported by the European Union the answers were following:

- 27% of the public opinion in the Republic of Serbia think that their country will join EU in 2020.
- 51% of the public opinion in the Republic of Serbia think that their country will join EU in 2026 and
- 60 % of the public opinion in the Republic of Serbia think that their country will join EU in 2030, the rest 40% of the Serbian citizens think that their country will never join EU or they did not express a clear opinion about this.

About the public opinion in the Republic of Serbia for joining NATO is completely opposite according to the image for the Serbian public opinion for joining EU. Measuring the public opinion, TNS Medium Gallup 2014 - 2015 said that more than a 70% of the Serbian citizens are against for their country accession in NATO. Most of the public opinion in Republic of Serbia expresses strong negative feelings about NATO bombing in Serbia from 1999 and Kosovo independence<sup>39</sup>. In our conclusion remarks, we can say that the accession of the Republic of Serbia in the EU is possible till 2030, but the image of Serbian accession in NATO according to the political and public opinion is still unpredictable.

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<sup>38</sup> [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_50100.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50100.htm)

<sup>39</sup> <http://inserbia.info/today/2015/06/serbia-only-50-pct-of-citizens-support-eu-integration-73-pct-against-nato-membership/>

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