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Final report NATO-EAPC research Fellowships

The NATO Enlargement and Problem of National Security of South-Eastern European Countries: the Dynamics of Stereotypes' Development in Social Thought

Introduction

The objective of the present project is to investigate the attitude of the public opinion in Southern-Eastern European countries (Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Yugoslavia) towards the NATO enlargement policies and national security problems. It is common knowledge that there is hardly any unanimity in the world today in supporting the idea of the NATO enlargement. The analysis of today's situation shows a wide range of forces, which keep using different and often polar approaches to solving global security problems. There is considerable opposition to NATO enlargement policies in both Eastern and Western European countries. It is quite evident today that all attempts of the NATO's advance to the East are sure to end in failure if they do not meet the demands of national interests of the countries which are regarded today as potential candidates for admittance and if they result in separationism and redevision of today's world into antagonistic camps instead of consolidation tendencies in these countries. Public opinion in many Southern-Eastern European countries is still under the influence of the "Cold War" stereotypes. Thus, it seems very important to understand what feeds these stereotypes today: economic hardships inside the former socialist camp countries, ruling elite's policies, mass media, public organizations, political parties or NATO's activities in a definite region.

Today all post soviet countries realize the need of economic transformations towards market economy models and complex integration into international institutions. Abundance of old conservative separation and isolation stereotypes in

people's behavioral models opens ways for some political forces of young East-European countries to easily manipulate public opinion. Considerable part of population in those countries is still under the influence of standardized images in accordance with which "west" is equated with "hostile".

In accordance with their temporal characteristics stereotypes can be divided into two groups: those rooted on the past experiences which are passed from generation to generation (common historical destiny of the people of a definite region, common religion, negative memory of the past conflicts) and dynamic stereotypes based upon reality, which reflect the present situation. A good example of high dynamics of the latter type was the war in Kosovo.

It is not by chance that the six post soviet countries (Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Yugoslavia) were chosen as an object of the study. A common feature of these countries is their proximity to the centers of civilization and the fact that their borders coincide with the borders, separating slavic-nonslavic nations which explains the existence of another "slavic unity" stereotype based on the alleged originality of slavic nations.

Another important thing, which supplies excellent material for comparative analysis, is connected with different status of relations with NATO for different post soviet countries.

It is remarkable that in many post soviet countries both the government and public opinion seem to treat NATO enlargement as something taken for granted. I am not apt to assign these probabilities so much stability. There is still risk for these countries to undergo many political developments, which can create serious obstacles on the way to future integration with NATO. Economic and political transformations also can stimulate the development of hostile attitudes towards NATO as it could be observed during the war in Yugoslavia.

Problems of identity and security

The societies of the countries under research were suddenly seized with the new feelings of unsafety connected with the process of “going out” from the socialistic past, fall of the bipolar world, change in the values under the conditions of global instability of the 20th century. The level of adaptation to new conditions, seek of the way out from the chaotic, crisis and unstable period of life in all the countries under research had their influence on the formation of public opinion in the security question. Sharp, specific feeling of constant unsafety is characteristic feature of the population. It expresses a difficult moral and psychological climate of the society in these countries. Those years of “transition” or “transitional period” according to the theory of P. Shtompka can be named “post soviet cultural trauma”. The researchers consider societies of these countries to be in the state of permanent ruining: critical level of property differentiation, total poverty of the majority of the population, criminal or half-criminal economy, politics are completely unmanaged processes.

The citizens of South-Eastern countries understood that unsafety may not be only in the form of the aggression from neighbors, for today the notion of the security is not only limited to military aspects. For example, security can be challenged by international terrorism (events of the September 11th showed that it has no limits or borders.), big migration (480 thousand refugees-kosovars in 1999 threatened the stability of Macedonia), organized criminality, people trade, and other negative phenomena.

At the beginning of the 90th statement of “united Europe from Antlantics to Urals” became popular. “West is thinking about us and it will help us”, “NATO is the security umbrella”. In the mind of post soviet countries citizens was created an illusion that on the one hand “integration into Europe” – means quick improvement of their material and financial state, on the other – responsibility about the international security, stability and development of the region will be re-given to the others – the USA, Western countries, NATO, UN OSCE, EU, etc.

The thrive to the reassuring myth – an aware, and to some extent unaware desire for passiveness and laziness, was supported by the promises to share values of Western democracies. But the level of the political culture of post communist countries is very low and therefore it is difficult for them to understand new political reality and overcome the crisis of political identification. The majority of the population of Eastern European countries do not understand their affiliation to a society and to the world society in general. Therefore in a social demeanor of these countries population some kind of dichotomy is fixed. On the one pole is an aggravated desire to preserve national identity, traditionalism, on the other – the desire not to lag behind Europe.

During the last 10 years almost 2 million people left former Yugoslavia, 700 thousand moved within the former Yugoslavian borders. Approximately 120 000 citizens left Romania. 600 000 left Bulgaria, 400 000 left Moldova, 2 mln left Ukraine. If the population of the former Yugoslavia and Moldova suffered from ethnical conflicts and wars, Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine do not suffer ethnical purges or wars, and citizens leave not only because of economic reasons. The internal instability of these countries is much more dangerous for them than external aggression. The majority of emigrants leave their countries considering them as some kind of fatal place.

Today it is evident that the expected rapid "return to Europe" for the majority of the post soviet population has not occurred, and citizens of these countries, physically not moving, often find themselves behind the hostile line.

Pressure, international sanctions, ultimatums and other forced actions to support peace from the international organizations and world society is a norm on the Balkans.

Balkan countries, contrary to the West, cannot afford financial spending on the maintenance of strong military structure or peace maintaining police (KFOR), or acceptance and settlement of a huge number of refugees.

Deficit of resources, lag in military and technical spheres – are the basic reasons, that determine foreign policy of the prevailing majority of post soviet

countries, and therefore they cannot defend their borders and ensure national security themselves.

Doubts as to NATO enlargement are present both in Eastern Europe and in Western Countries and the USA. As Ramsfeld, minister of defense of the USA, stated:

“membership in NATO is more than a step in the evolution of the European democracies. Country members accept the obligations to secure defense, and they must act according to the such obligations ... the new members must share the values of the alliance member countries and must be ready to carry the burden of necessary investment into security.

The analogous idea was expressed in April 2001 by the then ambassador of the USA in NATO Verbshow; none of the countries candidates did enough to be sure to be accepted today – all of them have a long way to go. Practically some of the countries calmed down very soon. They made a wrong conclusion that NATO principle is that none of the euroatlantic countries can be excluded from the list of candidates due to their geographic position, and it means that they can reach the finish thanks only to their neighbourhood with Russia, without any serious efforts in defense sphere”.

After the Washington NATO summit in April 1999 political leaders of candidate countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Macedonia, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Estonia) considered such an enlargement a guaranteed fact.

In reality in most of these countries, especially on the Balkans, many events may happen, and already happened, that can postpone integration into NATO for an indefinite period of time.

First of all, these are changes in the population attitude in the candidate countries. Citizens, especially of Slavic countries, did not have an opportunity to estimate adequately political aspects of conflicts on the territory of former Yugoslavia and USSR, but clearly understood the threat to their security.

Bombing Yugoslavia, great number of victims among civilians, increased number of refugees, and also conflict with Russia as to NATO enlargement, are key moments at the end of 20 century that became catalysts in formation of negative public opinion to NATO.

It should be added that part of the elite in power in post soviet countries, using internal political instability in new countries, tried to keep power with the help of finding an external foe and support stereotypes from the time of cold war like “ the USA is the world policeman”, “West is always threatening East” or under the pressure of external circumstances, as it was in Ukraine, easily reject proclaimed course of Euroatlantic integration for a certain time.

Though it is evident that Balkan crisis that started in 1991 and which is still going on, showed that without the participation of NATO, and other international organizations, the countries of South Eastern Europe cannot stop violence and solve problems of their security themselves.

But the solution of Kosovo problem – military intervention of NATO, - does not calmed down Balkans, and the problem did not only vanished but became more complicated and interfered with the interests of neighboring countries - Macedonia, Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania.

The greatest paradox of the situation lies on the one hand in dissatisfaction of opposition parties and part of population with the presence of NATO troops in the region, on the other - every country of South Eastern Europe (for it own reasons) do not wish NATO leave the region.

Moreover there is kind of contest among new countries: each of them would like to benefit from proximity to the West, often at the expense of its neighbours.

Accordingly it absolutely do not foster the development of horizontal relations and integration on a regional level, but gives politicians of these countries an opportunity to realize their own goals, both political and economic.

Macedonia

During the first two years of the existence of independent Macedonia the idea of demilitarization of the country was extremely popular in the Macedonian society. Macedonian government took the decision not to send recruits to the Yugoslavian army, insisted that the Yugoslavian army left with the part of weapon peacefully the territory, banned the formation of the armed troops in the Republic of Macedonia. The intelligentsia of Macedonia headed by writer and academician Hane Todorovsy, stood out with new ideas how to keep peace in the region in the “Manifesto about Demilitarization of Macedonia”¹. The main ideas of the document are as follow: preservation of peace in general, in Europe in particular, demilitarization in Macedonia, peaceful relations with the neighboring countries as the guarantee of peace in Balkan. The authors of the document considered it very important that the independent Macedonia was under the auspices of big European countries, but not become the arena for power division in the region. This will help to keep peace in Southern Europe. But the reality of military conflicts on the territory of former Yugoslavia caused the rejection of the idea of the demilitarization of Macedonia in a very short time.

In February 1992 the Law of Defense which supposed the formation of Macedonian army, was adopted. It was clear that the newly formed Macedonian army would not be able to protect the country where there always existed threaten to be involved into conflicts in the South (Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo). That is why, the UNO was pled for help. In 1993 the “blue barrettes” of UNO or UNPROFOR were led in Macedonia. In March 1995 after serious debates the mandate of peacemaking forces was prolonged. They were called “the preventive forces of UNO” (UNPREDEP). In 1996 the Meeting of the Republic of Macedonia ratified the agreement with NATO about military cooperation (Status of Forges Agreement).

The population of Macedonia positively accepted the results of UNPREDEP mission. 72,57% of people polled by the Data-Press agency in March 1998 supported the idea to continue the mission in the region. It proved that the majority

of the population felt more secure at the presence of the peacemakers when the situation in the region got complicated.

In July 1998, 2800 citizens aged 18-65 were polled to study “Attitude of the Population to Safety Problems”. To the question “Is Macedonia still a safe place to live?” 62,43% answered “yes”, and 37,5% answered “no”. Thus, despite the conflict in Kosovo the majority of the population felt safe.²

To the question “Do you think that Kosovo conflict can spread to Macedonia?” 50 % answered “yes”, 37,57% answered “no”, 17,43% gave no answer.³

To the question “ How Macedonia will be safer?” 42,29% answered “ supported by NATO”, 3,71 answered “supported by Russia”, 17,86% answered “ in case of neutrality of the country”, 2,14% answered “ in the unity with other lands”, 21,00% answered “ to have trusty relations with the neighbors”, 8,6% gave other variants, and 12,14% found no answer. Thus, in 1998 the people of Macedonia placed NATO to the first position as the guarantee of safety in the region, the second place took “ friendly relations with the neighbors”, and the third place was given to the “neutrality”.⁴

In February 1999 the unique mission of UNO in Macedonia was stopped. During a very short period of time the territory which was the “oasis of peace” turned to the military base. Citizens of Macedonia were the first to understand that such simple and innocent phrases as “ limited contingent”, “peacemaking mission”, “humane catastrophe” had a hidden context. As the number of refugees from Kosovo increased feeling of danger correspondingly became stronger in the Macedonian society. Breaking of the unstable ethnic balance destabilized the society at once. Though the ethnic relation between Albanians and Macedonians in the country were at that time not so strenuous as the relations between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo. But continuing violence in Kosovo and Southern Serbia led to the break of the existing balance in Macedonia.

After the ruining of the Social Federal Republic of Yugoslavia the majority of the Macedonian population did not have distinct and clear political views, but in

several years the ethnic cultural differences became the main reason of social political division of the Macedonian society. During the first election campaign (1990) Macedonian sociologists emphasized that the major part of the citizens were unsure in their political choice and felt perplexed when making choice among new as well as transformed parties that had the same slogans “democracy”, “market economy”, “reforms” and so on. But second election campaign was marked by the division of the electorate. Despite disputable results of polls before the election, Macedonian sociologists noticed that the division was not made according to left, right or centrist parties, but according to support of the parties with two opposite ideas to solve problems in ethnic relations: radical solution of “Albanian question” and moderate oriented to peaceful coexistence of different ethnic groups in the society and equidistance in the relations with neighboring peoples.

Crisis in Kosovo and its internationalization had negative influence on the development of ethnic political situation in Macedonia. Macedonian scientists consider that bombing by NATO the territory of neighboring Yugoslavia directly intensified a split in the Macedonian society, the feeling of danger became stronger as the situation in Kosovo turned more tense.

Bombing of Serbia caused some meetings of protest , especially numerous they were in front of the US Embassy. In was unsafe to move in the country for the American diplomats and journalists. Macedonians blamed NATO in aggression. The following inscriptions were made on the houses during 78 days of bombing “Clinton is Hitler”, “NATO go away from Macedonia” and so on. Albanians who had family or friendly ties with Albanians in Kosovo supported the West. The majority of Albanians in Macedonia shared their homes with families from Kosovo. They were agitated that not all Macedonians were ready to accept refugees. Level of inner ethnic unity and understanding between two most numerous ethnic groups (Macedonians and Albanians) reached its climax in fall 1999. Macedonian researcher B.Vankovska thinks that the results of the unity are still very serious.⁵

Because of the criminalization of Balkan countries, the word “Albanian” (shyptar) means today for Macedonians, Serbs, Gypsies representatives of criminal groups dealing with illegal trade of weapon, drugs, prostitution. The expression “shyptar’s work” is widely spread in Balkan, the expression constitutes “ gypsy’s work”.

Public opinion and the opinion of political elite about NATO actions in Balkan differs a lot, they developed separately. Political elite, having got promises to join European Union and NATO quickly, supported the West. But they got disappointed soon when the West left the solution of refugee problems to Macedonia only.

When during the bombing of Yugoslavia the population supported Serbs and blamed NATO, and political elite wanted to keep friendly relations with the West, but the situation changed in March 2001. The governing coalition tried to keep its leading positions, and claimed Western countries and NATO responsible for the safety and stability in the country. The same views were shared by the opposing parties.

Many observers consider the events in Macedonia at the beginning of 2001 the same as during Kosovo crisis. Kosovo conflict threatened peace in the region evidently. Mass media and political elite of Macedonia observing actions of NATO and the USA came to conclusion that in the conflict the latter protected only one side – Albanians.

Since March 2001 Albanian extremists have started open military actions on the territory of Macedonia, they got financial and military support from Kosovo, they controlled western parts of Macedonia (Tetovo, Debar) where Albanian population live. Many analysts think there is a tie link between these military actions and demarcation of border between Yugoslavia and Macedonia. Before these events in February 2001 president of Yugoslavia V. Koshtunitsa and president of Macedonia B. Traikovski had signed the agreement of state border that settled all questions including the question of border near Kosovo. Albanian leaders took it as threaten for their plans to join territories of Southern Serbia and

Northern Macedonia to Kosovo. No one trusts any longer the declarations of Albanian politicians and military commanders that they fight for national rights of the Albanians in Balkan. Kosovo and Western Macedonia are in the center of illegal trade of drugs, weapon and people. This very fact attracts criminals from all over the world, but not the protection of ethnic Albanians. 75 % of drugs that reach European market go through so called "Balkan corridor". The income from drugs trade enables Albanians to seek for support among influential politicians and military officials.

Till now there is no answer to many questions bothering citizens of Macedonia: Why among those who crossed Macedonian border in 2001 were soldiers of Kosovo defense corps, who got salary from UNO? Why is it forbidden for many leaders of Albanian groups to enter the USA, but in Macedonia they wanted amnesty? Why western countries reluctantly admit the connections of Albanian fighters with international terrorists?

In August 2001 in Ohrid the Framed agreement was signed by the leaders of the most influential Macedonian and Albanian parties. It is supposed politically regulate crisis in Macedonia. A lot of measures were taken to regulate it: 15 amendments to Constitution were taken by the parliament of Macedonia, in which Albanian minority got more rights; NATO carried out the operation "Necessary harvest" and confiscated weapon from soldiers; there are observers of OCSE in Macedonia; in fall 2002 the operation "Amber fox" took place, in which soldiers of NATO participated. But all the measures only smoothed the conflict. No one can guarantee that the control over the country will not be lost and the events will not follow a proposed by the western countries scenario.

Situation remained complicated in the Macedonian society during the years 2002-2003. It is paradoxical that at the same time Macedonia speaks against NATO and wants to join it. According to sociological poll only 12 % of Macedonians (February-March 2002) support joining NATO, that is why the declarations of Macedonian government of joining NATO seem strange. ⁶There are

several factors that influenced popularity of NATO in Macedonia and diminished it.

They are as follow:

- unpopular actions of NATO in Kosovo,
- often actions of NATO looked like oriented to support in the conflict only one side – Albanians,
- Macedonian government was unable to solve inner problems and blamed NATO and other international organizations in crisis in the country.

People trust NATO in different parts of the country differently. 51,2% of the population of north-western Macedonia trust NATO, while in eastern part only 10,4 % of people do that.⁷ Problem of negative attitude to NATO does not concern NATO only, it is the problem of Macedonia, because nowadays this fact splits the society. It should be mentioned that Macedonian mass media not always gave objective information and helped to form a negative image of NATO in the country especially in 2001.

The fall of NATO popularity in Macedonia was caused by several factors. First, NATO actions in Kosovo were considered as a support of one side of the conflict (mostly Albanians). Second, Macedonian government was not capable to solve internal problems itself and thus blamed NATO and other international organizations of the crisis. One should mention that statements of the previous Macedonian authorities and mass media bias especially in 2001 together with above-mentioned factors created negative image of NATO in Macedonia.

As an example one should say about the idea of the aids of L.Georgievski, former Prime-minister, on the exchange of territories with Albania published in 2001. On May 31 2001, newspaper *New Macedonia* posted a map of “ethnic clean Macedonia”. Fortunately, Macedonian society did not show interest to such experiments.

Problem of negative attitude to NATO is one of the problems of Macedonian political elite which together with the rise of interethnic tension splits the society.

Public opinion is not able to adopt itself to the high speed of politicians' statements. During 2002 Georgievsky party tried to create an illusion of the successful integration of Macedonia into Euro-Atlantic structures, and to persuade the public in rapid joining to NATO. As a result, the NATO critique on Macedonian fulfillment of obligations at summit 19+1 in Brussels in 2001 was met with deep disappointment by mass media. In this context, any statements of Macedonian authorities and precisely L.Georgievsky about joining NATO seemed strange.

Therefore, we can conclude that the absence of objective information on the real level of cooperation between Macedonia and NATO was one the reasons of negative attitude of various strata of society (including party leaders, public figures, intellectuals) towards the problem of NATO enlargement. At the same time, political parties tried to use NATO factor in internal politics especially electoral campaign. On the one hand, a part of political specter put their own mistakes on the Alliance and other international institutions. On the other – they use the idea of integration into Europe (for example VMRPO-DPMNE) as a contrast to nationalism which was loosing support among tired population.

Macedonian expert L.Frchkovsky argues that there is a threat of Cosovan Albanians and Albanian National Army to territorial integrity of the RM. Kosovo independence will inevitably cause the change of regional borders in which Macedonia could have been a target because Albanians will try to compensate territorial lost on the expense of the RM.⁸

Former Foreign-Minister S.Chashule is sure that NATO and EU will not be able to form efficient security system with the hole in the middle (the Balkans). This notion is supported by the majority of experts. 95% of them think that territorial threat to Macedonia remains.⁹

Invitation of Bulgaria to NATO at the Prague Summit, the US and Western support of active cooperation of Macedonia, Albania and Croatia in their integration into the Alliance positively affected Macedonia society. In the IPI poll (June 6-12, 2003), of 1.108 respondents 94% were in favor of joining EU (5%

against and 2% did not have their own opinion), 72% supports membership in NATO and 22% does not support. Therefore, public opinion is gradually changing in favor of Macedonia's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures.¹⁰

There is a certain difference in attitudes towards cooperation with West between population and experts: the public pointed first the EU and subsequently 70% of experts in favor of relations with the USA. So far, the Macedonian elite is still divided on this issue: new Prime-Minister B.Tservenkovsky is oriented mostly of the EU countries and President B.Traikovsky – on the USA.

The crisis in relations between the USA and Europe on Iraq operation negatively affected public attitude towards NATO. For many people, West is not the whole any more and thus there was a split in society. Majority condemned military operation in Iraq what was a certain continuation of their negative feelings towards previous action against Serbia.

Serbia

For the collective conscience of Serbians the questions of integration to NATO is a painful matter, and often has a tragic coloring, especially for those who lost his relatives during bombings in 1999. Sonya Biserko, head of Helsinki Committee thinks that Serbia bears no resemblance to any of the countries under research, for it has special legacy, connected with war and Miloshevich.

Serbians were deprived of individual conscience, individual choice and individual responsibility for their own deed and views. Naturally that the blame is to be laid, first of all on Serbian government and S. Miloshevich in particular.

The government forced Serbians voluntary or half-voluntary to refuse from his own "self", change it into "nationwide" one. Every person has the right to have his own opinion as to the actions of his/her own nation and actions of other nations towards his own, though it may be a critical one. But in the case of Kosovo conflict, intranational critical thought turned out to be so feeble, that it created an illusion that the whole nation is receding in a united front.

Serbian intellectual elite fell in silence or gave a statement about it. (that way it differed very little from the Russian one, which also pretended that it did not see the event in Chechnya). But among Serbians were people who sympathized with Albanians and were saving Kosovo refugees; who understood that neither terror nor bombing would solve the problem.

On the other hand – the very “military humanism” of the West became among Serbians the basis for increase in xenophobic national-socialism and revived such stereotypes as “NATO aggression:”, “Slavonic unity”, “Orthodox enemies”.

Bombing of Yugoslavia turned out to be the new phenomena, new starting point that could not but influence psychological climate of the population, its attitude to life. The ideas about natural phenomena, space scale, distance have changed. The events of 1999 caused something like psychological imbalance, and a feeling of disharmony with the environment, feeling of guilt for the fate of Serbians and Albanians and despair for not being able to help them.

People tried to adapt to new state – feeling of permanent front zone. It was felt not only in Serbia, but in the countries that had common borders with SRY.- Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania. Citizens of these countries were the first to understand that behind the innocent at first sight statements about “limited troops”, “peace keeping operations”, “humanitarian catastrophe” has a hidden meaning.

Today, in Serbian society prevails a negative attitude to the USA and NATO, which is based on the statement “we lost the battle, they defeated us”. The acknowledgement of the defeat, is a difficult burden for the collective conscience of Serbians, but no matter how difficult it is. It is still easier than exhausting opposition for more than 10 years.

Serbian society is looking for a compromise and it is not only a compromise of different political views, or point of view on the problem of NATO expansion, it is a compromise of irreconcilable in own self. Though in Serbia it is not usual to talk aloud about joining NATO, but everyone understands that for Serbia and

Montenegro it is inevitable, because NATO cannot guarantee security in the region without those two countries.

A difficult political and psychological problem is collaboration with the Tribunal in Hague.

After the murder of Jinch a vacuum was created in a political elite of the country, and no politician can feel it.

The new prime minister confirmed that Serbian policy as to the participation in the program “Partnership for peace” and EU integration will not be changed.

New political elite finally understood that orientation on Russia lacks perspectives. It is not going to be an “ally” of Russia against NATO anymore.

Though the population still has a nostalgic orientation towards Russia. A great number of Serbians see joining the program “Partnership for peace” as an instrument of political submission to the USA, as a compulsion to buy Western arms. Serbian experts are interested how much it will cost Serbia to enter such a program. Serbian expert Milorad Timotich, Center of Civilian and Military Relations, is convinced that Serbian army is more professional than even some of the armies of the member countries. It is important to teach English to officers of Serbian Army according to International military education and training program. Serbian Army should be equipped with the new arms, but in the opinion of Serbian experts it does not matter whether it will come from West or East.¹¹

Among non-governmental institutions that stand against are The Society of Victims of NATO Bombing, which is headed by Milan Puck, and which united more than 2500 physical and juridical persons. The organization demands compensation to the victims of NATO bombing as a main condition of Serbia joining NATO.

According to the last poll 51,2% respondents were against Serbia and Montenegro joining NATO. The majority of the interviewed are positive about the program “Partnership for peace”, 54,9% are for entrance while 20,9% were against.¹²

To the question to rank international organizations and Western countries, Serbia and Montenegro placed France on the first position (55,3%) and second - European Union (51,6), third – Germany (46,1%). The most negative attitude is to NATO(80,9%), the USA (73,7%) and Great Britain (71,5%). The results of the poll show that Serbian political thought is more oriented to the countries of West Europe, and European Union. 73,3% support joining the EU ¹³.

Serbians are convinced that joining EU would guarantee its territory borders, because of the fact that EU has open borders and therefore there is no desire to change them. Because the problem of Kosovo is still unsolved, there is permanent fear of a new conflict connected with the border problem in the East of the country.

Public opinion in Serbia has been forming for a long as an anti NATO one. Only demonstration of sincere desire to help from the side of member countries may change it. Presently Serbia is suffering from political and economic crisis (black market, criminality, great influence of law-enforcement authorities and low level of civil society), and therefore in order not to come back to radical nationalism, Western countries and international organizations have to support the early signs of democracy that are present now. If the attitude of Western countries to Macedonia is supercilious, than Serbian society will be suffer from disillusion again. Without stable Serbia, security system cannot be built in the West Balkans.

Romania and Moldova

Romania is one of the countries under discussion that adopted the most active attitude to internal reforms and activated their efforts as to the integration into European and Euroatlantic structures.

If the majority of post communist countries leaders use European and NATO integration mottoes only as a trump card in internal political struggles and as means of getting next disburse of international aid , Romania is the exception, where willingness to join NATO and EU is clearly determined and supported by different political parties, mass media, financial, scientific, military elite and by the public.

For Romanians “Integration into West ” is not a declarative notion which is used in political contest, but strategically understood priority.

If in other countries public opinion was often changing, in Romania the question of joining NATO was supported by the majority of population.

The only moment when the percentage of those supporting joining NATO was during Kosovo problem. Only 40% percent of the population supported bombing of Yugoslavia. Today the population of the country can be divided into three groups. The first group are those people who support Romania joining NATO and who are ready for the expenses connected with it (35%), the second group supports only joining NATO (25%) and the third group consists of those people who are in opposition to NATO (19%)¹⁴.

There are regions in Romania where the least percentage of population supports Romanian intentions to join NATO - the regions bordering Yugoslavia. It is explained by polyethnic composition of the population, and results of economic crisis after navigation termination on Danube and ecological catastrophe in the pre-Danube region as a result of bombing Serbian territory.

In November 2002 90 % of the respondents knew that Romania applied to enter NATO, and 76% stated that they have a positive attitude to the Alliance¹⁵.

According to the survey conducted in December 2002, 3% of Romanians supported the idea of sending Romanian troops to participate in NATO operations. 46% were to give air corridor to NATO, 45% - to give territory for NATO operations, 41% supports the idea of locating NATO troops in Romania and 37% to give territory for locating army basements¹⁶.

Approximately only 50% of the respondent knew the results of Romania joining NATO. The population is not so interested in political aspect of it, but social and economic ones - whether it will not be a burden for the country's budget. Romanians are also perturbed with the possibility of Romanian army participation in NATO military activities (for example 71% of Romanians were against participation in operations against Iraq). The majority of the population and

intellectual elite is concerned with the fact whether together with NATO will come a more close military sphere and society will have no possibility to control it¹⁷.

At the beginning of 2002 Romanian diplomats and government officials received positive signals as to NATO office intention to undertake a more extensive expansion of NATO than it was planned before. Notwithstanding the fact that in Madrid in 1997 Romania was left behind the first wave of NATO enlargement, the elite in power overcame the psychological barrier of mistrust and speeded up the adoption of different legislative and military resolutions to meet NATO standards and requirements to the candidate countries. Romania continued military reforms and army restructuring with an increased tempo.

At the same time efforts were made to increase the level of cooperation and participation with NATO in a scope of peace keeping operations and international campaign against terrorism. It should be stressed that Romania is the only candidate country that sent its troops to Afghanistan.

Maybe previous steps of Romania (participation in peace keeping operations on the territory of former Yugoslavia, support of NATO operations against Miloshevich Serbia, joining military campaign against Afghanistan, adoption of a treaty with the US as to the International Criminal Court, readiness to support US further steps against international terrorism, etc) won favour of the US government.

But as to the other requirements, Romania can hardly be distinguished as a country that can count on joining NATO. Poor level of democracy, corruption, economic crisis - are the basic characteristics that can be used for all South Eastern countries without exception.

Besides, reforms in Romanian army showed that officer ranks are well prepared and meet the requirements, while rank and file preparation remains at low level. Besides, Bucharest has territory problems with Ukraine, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Romania continues the practice of rigid conflicts with Hungary as to the Hungarian law about foreign Hungarians. Romania has problematic relations with Moldova since president Voronin came into power.

In Romania there are parties, as for example, “Great Romania” that has one of the biggest fractions in the parliament which stand for the return of the territories lost in 1940, for example, Bukovyna, that raise the question of Romania-Ukraine borderline change and status of the Zmiinyi island. Romania has no lesser problems with agreement as to coast border delimitation and special economic regions. Even more, in contradiction to international law Romania suggests Ukraine, to change the marine borderline of the Black Sea, fixed in the treaty of 1961.

Official Bucharest perseverance as to the borderline revision shows that it is not ready for compromise and, evidently has intention to postpone the negotiations till the final NATO decision as to Romania. One cannot understand the claims of the Romanian prime minister and later repeated by the president Iliyesku that frame agreement with Ukraine of 1997 was signed hastily under the influence of NATO summit in Madrid. Both Ukrainian and Romanian mass media reacted painfully to the fact, but the problem remains.

The signing of the agreement about continental borderline in June 2003 analysts consider as a pure achievement of NATO diplomats, for only the necessity to solve all the territorial problems before joining NATO forced Romania to sign the agreement.

The achievements and problems met by the candidate countries were checked in the first half of October by US diplomat to NATO Nicholas Berns. After his visit to Romania, he said that as a result of present progress in integration process into European Atlantic structures, Romania remains a strong candidate.

Among priorities for Romanian government were noted “permanent necessity to fight corruption”, “strengthening of military reforms”, and “continuing of economic reforms”.

Also, an important element, that is in the centre of attention of the USA and NATO is the stop of people trade in South –Eastern and Eastern Europe. After a meeting with American diplomat and Romanian prime minister, the latter declared

that Nicholas Burns encouraged the members of government and state officials to continue military and economic reforms.

At the same time there is more real assessment of the present state of democratization in Romanian society. For example, on the 21 of October 2002 *Washington Post* published an article entitled: “Romania considers its joining NATO as a panacea to all the vices of the post communist period”, where it was noted that Washington officials think that present Romania does not resemble what is understood under the notion NATO ally.

Perhaps, for the US strategic planning and thinking Romanian efforts as to the military reforms and sending troops to Afghanistan do not play a crucial role, but for Romania, that spends from its own budget 30 million dollars for battalion maintenance in Afghanistan, it is a burdening task. As international commentators state that Washington interest to Romania is dictated by the September events in 2001.

In the New US – Romania relations political and economic ties do not have economic basis, for Romanian economy is oriented towards Europe, and France still have a strong political impact on its elite.

At the end of October 2002 *Washington Times* published a critical article about situation in Romania.:” Besides corruption and low life standards of the majority of Romanians, West diplomats cite such serious problems as hostile investing climate, high number of former law enforcement authorities members occupying high positions in the government.”

So, notwithstanding present problems of Romania on its way to NATO, US administration determined the question of Romanian integration to NATO.

No matter how much Romanian political establishment wants to show the unanimity of the society as to joining NATO, from time to time, there are evident signals about unwillingness of the population to see Romania in NATO.

For example when deciding the question about closing of TV channel OTV, the member of National Council on Audio and TV broadcasting Emanuel Valery, nominated by the president administration on the position, claimed that OTV

problem is not connected with national interests, but with the presence of people in Romania that are dissatisfied with the integration into NATO and that even countries that joined the alliance lately have witnessed cases of antiglobalization. Ion Iliescu, contradicted to Valery statement and stressed that he could not report the position of the Romanian president.

However there are also extremities in NATO propaganda and they cause quite opposite feelings among population. For example, two deputies from Social Democratic Party in power submitted a law bill to introduce new holiday – NATO day on the 19th of September. The other known leader of the same party stressed that the Day should have the same symbolic meaning as the year 1918, when nation was united. The initiation was opposed by the opposition parties and by the head of the state. Ion Iliyesku said that one should be considered.

Finally, one should mention that in a military and especially in political aspects, Romania starts to approach the norms and requirements, posed before the NATO ally countries, while it has many problems in administrative and economic aspects, in corruption fight , people trade, organized criminality, and dismiss of the former Chaushesku security service personnel from the high position in the government.

It will be very important for Romania to prove that it has much more merits and that it offers to NATO much more benefits than risks and problems. That it will successfully manage the role of an important element in region security.

As it is seen from experience acceptance of Central European Countries to NATO (Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary) strengthened democracy, military and economic reforms, stipulated growth of foreign policy responsibility of the countries, expanded regions of security and security on the continent in general.

Romanian population hopes that joining NATO will raise status of Romania and ensure its safety. Joining NATO Romania will extend security region, and NATO norms, requirements, standards, must speed up the evolution of the country in political, moral, economic and military reforms.

Moldova

The problem of security of Moldova depends directly on national identity. Transnistrian conflict doubted existence of Moldavian identity and now the population that speaks Moldavian (Romanian) language (approximately 45,8%) think about themselves as Romanians and accordingly orient on the relations development with Romania. Accordingly Ukrainians and Russians and all the population of Transnistria have an orientation on New Independent States and Russia.

Therefore the process of coordination of public opinion towards the integration of Euroatlantic structures is very complicated and will demand more efforts than in any other country under research. Pro NATO and anti-NATO propaganda are used in the conflict between Tiraspol and Kishinev. Presently a compromise is found in the Constitution, where neutral status of the country is fixed.

The proponents of integration into NATO are right central wing parties Christian Democratic Peoples Party, which organized meetings and demonstrations in Kishinev under mottoes : “We want to Europe”, “Moldova is a member of NATO and EU”. Official Kishinev under the pressure of opposition is forced to refuse, or at least to pretend, that it distants itself from Russia and does not depend on the Transnistrian foreign policy.

Positive cooperation experience in the frame of Partnership for Peace program, namely assistance in personnel mines and missile fuel destruction, has a positive influence on public opinion as to cooperation with NATO.

But in general proximity of NATO to Moldavian borders perturbs the population, because it may mean new limits on traveling to Romania.

Presently Moldova is one of the weakest country in economic and political aspects and there is strong power in the country which is satisfied with the current situation and will try to preserve it.

Bulgaria

First declarations about joining European Union and NATO were made in the early 1990th , but they were not taken seriously either by the public opinion nor foreign partners.

Active NATO propaganda started during the president elections in 1996 and in March 1997 Bulgaria officially applied for membership in NATO. Since the time the number of the proponents of NATO integration is growing steadily and only during Kosovo crisis it declined.

In April 2001 Bulgarian Parliament confirmed a five-year agreement that allows NATO troops enter Bulgaria in case of crisis. It must be mentioned that the agreement was sustained by all leading parties of the country, including Socialist party, which in the past was against the development of relations with NATO. Analyzing inner political life in Bulgaria in 2001-2002 we should emphasize that Bulgarian elite has clear external policy, that is, joining NATO and European Union. They are quite impatient in gaining their goals, but not all people in the country are ready to accept this policy. Bulgarian society keeps memories about socialist period, friendly ties with the USSR, negative attitude to NATO. We should not forget specific multiethnic border territories with Macedonia and Yugoslavia, that suffered a lot during military actions of NATO and sanctions against the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia.

Now 2/3 of the population stand for membership in NATO, and opposition to NATO is almost invisible. According to the poll, Bulgarians consider as positive such NATO features: Alliance is a defense (37%), peace keeping block (30%) and only 24% consider NATO as aggressive military block. To the question : Whether membership in NATO will increase countries security, 57% of respondents give positive answers, and 38% - negative¹⁸ .

Now, after the Bulgaria was invited to NATO at the Prague summit, public opinion is even more positive. Though part of opposition leaders raise the question about the cost of such membership and whether for such a small country there is a necessity to join military alliance and whether there are no alternative means to guarantee countries security.

Bulgaria's joining NATO causes nervousness of Bulgarian military industry for 95% of its exports was to Russia. Countries membership in NATO will lead to decrease in economic relations with Russia. For one can differently estimate Putin's statement that membership in NATO will not guarantee security for Bulgaria.

Positive result of Bulgaria's invitation to NATO is the improvement of its relations with neighbors. New Bulgarian government turns to Turkey looking for support in joining NATO, forgetting about the problem of Turkish ethnic minority. Not so long ago the relations between two countries were strain. Bulgaria tries to keep friendly relations with the neighboring countries, but it is not interested in active cooperation. Initiatives of Romania and Macedonia about speeding up integration processes on the Balkans are left without attention.

Ukraine

Ukraine avoids the solving of the choice problem. Ukrainian population's attitude towards NATO enlargement and NATO – Ukraine relations is one of the delicate issues that will define formation and development of the collaboration between NATO and Ukraine. This issue should not divide Ukrainian society into supporters and opponents of NATO's enlargement as it was during bombing of Yugoslavia.

Political elite of Ukraine, Russia and NATO members should not manipulate with this issue. If leader's actions will not be cautious then Ukrainian citizens will be disappointed with the "Western policy" and it can become a basis for revival of the "cold war" stereotypes. Ukrainian population, especially in the border regions, are disturbed by NATO enlargement. They think that Ukrainian territory will become a buffer between enlarged NATO and Russia.

If we compare opinion polls data we could see that in 1997 17,3 % of Ukrainian citizens considered NATO as an aggressive block (opinion polls of the "Democratic initiatives" Fund). Opinion polls of the UCEPS (July 2000 and August 2001) shows that amount of people which consider NATO as aggressive

block increased (46,2 % in 2000; 48,1 % in 2002)¹⁹. Therefore, the amount of Ukrainians who thinks that NATO enlargement is negative phenomena decreased from 46,1 % in 2000 to 26,2 % in 2001. In 2002 attitude of Ukrainians towards NATO changed and the amount of people who considered NATO as aggressive block decreased for 15,5 % and made 32,6 %. In 2001 against NATO Eastern enlargement answered 50,2 % of the population and in 2002 it made just 35,6 %²⁰.

The reasons of the negative attitude of Ukrainians towards NATO are conservative and nostalgic mood of the certain part of the population, the consequences of anti-NATO propaganda of the Soviet period. Military operation of NATO on the Balkans was perceived as aggression against the sovereign state.

But almost 1/3 of Ukrainian population have not defined their positions towards NATO. The reasons of such indefinite attitude could be caused by absence of objective information about NATO and Ukraine – NATO collaboration. As sociological polls (May 2002)of the Institute of Social and Political Psychology show, more than 50 % of the respondents do not know that Ukraine plans to join NATO²¹. About 50 % of Ukrainians do not know that Ukraine collaborates with NATO. Every fifth Ukrainian citizen do not know what is NATO, 45 % of the respondents could not mention any common action of Ukraine and NATO. Just 1/3 of the respondents heard about the common military training, another 1/3 knows about the project "Partnership for Peace“. 6 % of Ukrainians know about signing of the Distinctive Charter between Ukraine and NATO²².

If the citizens have enough of impartial information about the Ukraine – NATO relationships, they attitude towards the collaboration with NATO becomes positive. In September – October 2002 opinion polls shown that 80 % of the experts think that Ukraine can really become NATO member. In 2000 – 2001 general amount of supporters of that idea made about 40 – 55 %²³.

There is great influence of Russian mass-media on Ukrainian information space. There are many critical materials in Russian mass-media about the NATO activities. Last year Russian mass-media often stressed that NATO as security organization could not avoid the event of September 11.

We consider interesting the fact that the amount of the supporters of the out of block status of Ukraine decreased from 45 % to 42,1 %²⁴.

Today Ukraine have got the weakest kind of neutrality (support of the one-sided self-proclaimed neutrality and out of block status). Principles of the Declaration could be changed when political elite realize that proclamation of non-nuclear and out of block status is dangerous for the national interests.

Therefore, possible ways of the European security system development need to be further discussed by elite, experts and public in order to realize interests of the region.

World situation influences Ukraine's public opinion. In December 2002, 27,2% supported joining to NATO, 33% were against, 20,3% did not have clear point of view, and 19,5% would not take part in it at all. In February 2003, the idea of joining the Alliance was approved by only 21,9%, and 37,7% did not support it. Accordingly to V. Chalyi, Director of the Razumkov Center, such changes were caused by the negative attitude of Ukrainian population towards possible US military operation in Iraq which in public opinion was linked to NATO²⁵.

Therefore, public opinion of Ukrainians is affected by the following factors:

- the weak information campaign on explanation current state and prospective of NATO-Ukraine cooperation,
- inaccessibility of main documents for the public (NATO-Ukraine Action Plan hadn't been published for a long time)
- inconsistency of the Ukraine's foreign policy which often limits to mere balancing between Russia and West.

Negative attitude of a part of Ukraine's population (which includes elderly people and some intellectuals) towards the Alliance is based on the historic memory of the II World war: they do not accept the use of force in solution of conflicts as it was during the Kosovo crisis, coalition wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Among internal factors one should underline the connection between integration into Western institutions (including NATO) and real economic achievements. In order to create supportive attitude towards NATO, people should see benefits for themselves.

Conclusions

Dynamics of peoples attitude to the problem of NATO enlargement in the countries under research show that there is a tendency of growing positive attitude to NATO, except for the time when there is a threat to peace and military intervention is undertaken (Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq). Romanian population is the most positive about NATO. Analyses of public opinion shows that one of the main factors remains ethnical component of conscience (peculiarities of national mentality), foreign policy orientation traditions, and, of course, stereotypes of “cold war” and “ real socialism”. Thus, the idea to expand NATO can fail, if national interests of the countries willing to join NATO are ignored. It may split unstable post socialist societies into two opposing parts. Countries of Eastern Europe still keep stereotypes of “cold war” times. Negative influence was made by so called “humane operations” and “forced protection of human rights”, especially by NATO actions in Kosovo and bombing of Yugoslavia. It was “military humanism” of the western countries that gave new life to national socialism and revived such stereotypes as “NATO aggression”, “Slavonic unity”, “enemies of orthodox religion”. Most citizens of the former communist countries of Eastern Europe are skeptical about NATO expansion so far. They are not sure in their safety. Especially it is true for the countries neighboring with Yugoslavia and Macedonia. Stability on Balkan is possible in case when citizens change their ideas about the West as an enemy, when hostile feelings of the last century disappear.

Because of the presence of a large number of Russian speaking population, which is traditionally oriented on Russia, the number of supporters in Ukraine and Moldova is lesser. As to the Serbia and Montenegro , Macedonia has already felt that perspectives to join NATO influences positively on the policy of neighboring countries. It gives an impact to look for compromises.

Last NATO campaign in Macedonia and Kosovo, cooperation in the frame of Partnership for Peace program, assistance in old arms supplies destruction, training officers have positive influence on public opinion. But the greatest influence on public opinion have requirement and demands on democratization of

home politics and understanding of the fact that only democratic countries can become NATO members.

The results of the expert evaluation preparation showed that in post socialist countries there are not many competent professionals which has a complete image on what is going on in the security sphere of the region and Europe as a whole. Security problem still make an association with military security issue. As expert polls show they are in favour that security conditions in 2003 has become better in comparison with the year 2001. 90 % of the experts consider that firstly, strenghtening of the security in the South Eastern Europe can be explained by the military factors, secondly, political events and, thirdly, economical ones.

The experts evaluated the possibility of their countries to influence the security by themselves is very low. 86 % of the experts think that for Moldova, Ukraine , Serbia and Macedonia still remains the problem of the terrytory entity.

The collaboration with NATO, the USA and EU is a priority for the region. Russia as a guarantee of security is 6-7 in that list of countries. It's worth to mention that public opinion in Ukraine, Moldova, Serbia and Macedonia consider that the European Union can support their security better than NATO. Concerning the existence of "pro NATO lobby" the experts mentioned that it is absent in Serbia. The main supporters of the becoming of NATO members in the region are center-right parties, the representatives of military industry and bussiness elite. Conflict between the US and Europe as to security questions has negative influence on the NATO image.

There is not doubt that the minorities in Balkan countries must get international guarantees, protecting them from any attempts of assimilation or humiliation. Multiethnic countries must get international guarantees that their borders will be preserved as they are now. Ethnic problems can be solved with the help of international organizations, when no ethnic group gets priority. One negative incident can lead to the loss of trust in peacemakers in the region.

Today, the project (involving mass media, scholars, non-profit organizations) aimed at the rehabilitation of the image of Alliance for the

countries under research is of burning need. Thus, possible variations of a future system of European safety under conditions of the NATO enlargement require further discussions by the political leaders, experts and public figures in order to realize all interests of the countries of the region and their ways of the interest achievements.

Positive influence on public opinion will have open access to the information about NATO. Citizens of the countries should know both pros and cons when joining the Alliance.

Notes:

¹ Makedonia: put' k samostoyatelnosti. (Moskva, Raduga, 1997). p 58.

² Data Press. Istrazhuvachki izveshtai: Grazhdane za zammuvanje UNPREDEP Republika Makedonia. Mart, 1998, p 3.

³ Data Press. Istrazhuvachki izveshtai: Kolku ye bezbedna Makedonia. Yuli. 1998. p 3

⁴ Ibid. p 3

⁵ Yovanovska S. Mitreva: Mozhebi nema da ni trebaat stranski voyenni misiyi. (Utrinski vesnik, Scopje, November 4, 2002 p.3)

⁶ Sonja Kramarska Koigo spushta rejtingot na NATO (Utrinski vesnik, Scopje Mart 2002)

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Yovanovska S. Mitreva: Mozhebi nema da ni trebaat stranski voyenni misiyi. (Utrinski vesnik, Scopje, November 4, 2002 p.3)

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Anketa na amerikanskiot institut IRI za myslenyeto na makedonskata yavnost (Utrinski vesnik, Scopje, June, 26, 2003)

¹¹ Bogdanovich Serbolub, Vetrovi Zapada, (NIN, Belgrad, May 1, 2003 p 10-11)

¹² Politika, Belgrad, June 9, 2003

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Kivu Mircea: Mai multe vorbe despre NATO (Dilema, December 2002, anul X, nr508. p10)

¹⁵ Pirvulescu Christian: Absenta unei kampanii de informare a kreat impressia generala a unui protsess uk implikatii ekomice si politike mut mai importante. http://evenimentul%20zilei.ro/politica/?news_id=104044&

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Teodorescu A. : Nici publicul, nici guvernul nu gresesc. http://evenimentul%20zilei.ro/politica/?news_id=115585&

¹⁸ Sotsiologishne opytuvanie za 1999-2002 (Alfa Research, Kapital, Sofia, November 2002 #46)

¹⁹ Poliakov L., Mihail Pashkov: Treugolnik NATO-EU-Ukraina: noviye ugrozi trebuyut novih pidhodiv i sovместnih usilii. (Europa, Warshawa, 2001, T.1, p 171-175)

²⁰ Zerkalo nedeli, Kiev, 2002, May 11-17

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

²³ UCEP <http://www.uceps.com.ua/ukr/all/books/razumkov2000/contents.shtml>

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid