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**Public Perceptions of Euro-Atlantic Partnership:  
Issues of Security and Military  
(The Case of Bulgaria)**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**BiH** – Bosnia and Herzegovina  
**BA** – Bulgarian Army  
**BAF** – Bulgarian Armed Forces  
**BSP** – Bulgarian Socialist Party  
**CJTF** – Combined Joint Task Forces  
**COs** – Commissioned Officers  
**EAPC** – Euro Atlantic Partnership Council  
**EU** – European Union  
**FRY**- Federal Republic of Yugoslavia  
**FYROM** – Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia  
**HQ** – Head Quarter  
**IFOR** – Implementation Force  
**KFOR** – Kosovo Force  
**MOOTW** – Military Operations Other than War  
**MPFSEE** – Multinational Peace Force South- Eastern Europe  
**MPs**- Members of the Parliament  
**NATO** – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation  
**NCOs** – Non Commissioned Officers  
**NGO** – Non Governmental Organisation  
**OSCE** – Organisation of Security and Co-operation in Europe  
**PfP** – Partnership for Peace  
**PK** – Peacekeeping  
**PKOs** – Peacekeeping Operations  
**PMSC** – Politico Military Steering Committee  
**PSOs** – Peace Support Operations  
**SCBMs** – Security and Confidence Building Measures  
**SEEDM** – Southeast European Defense Ministerial  
**SEE** – South-eastern Europe  
**SEEBRIG** – Southeast European Brigade  
**SFOR** – Stabilisation Force  
**SRC**- Sociological Research Centre  
**UDF**- Union of Democratic Forces  
**UN** – United Nations  
**UNSC** – United Nations Security Council  
**UNSCR** – United Nations Security Council Resolution  
**WEU** – Western European Union

## FOREWORD

A month before the start of our study, in May 1998, Dr. Jeffry Simon wrote in his article “Bulgaria and NATO: 7 Lost Years”, “Bulgaria is still trying to understand what is expected of it, and remains ill-prepared” in its aspiration towards NATO membership. An important part of the problem “stems from the fact that NATO’s information programs have not reached their audience. This contributes to the fact that many responsible politicians as well as broader Bulgarian society have insufficient understanding of NATO.”<sup>1</sup>

We completely agree with this conclusion. Therefore we decided to undertake our study with the main aim to analyse and to compare the perceptions and attitudes of the Bulgarian citizens, the military and political elites towards Euro-Atlantic partnership in security and defence. We expect that our work will help promoting better understanding of NATO both among the Bulgarian elite and broad public. On the other hand, we expect our work to foster a better understanding of the Bulgarian position and aspirations towards NATO and EU membership among the Western audience.

This paper is a result from a two-year work on a NATO-Euro Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) institutional research project “Public Perceptions of Euro-Atlantic Partnership: Issues of Security and Military (The Case of Bulgaria)”. It covers the period from July 1998 to June 2000.

The two-year work on the project was very useful for developing research on public perceptions of defence and security issues as well as fostering the public debate about the Bulgarian accession into Euro-Atlantic security and defence structures. In addition, working on the project we broaden our knowledge and experience. An important step in this direction was the visit to the German Armed Forces Institute for Social Research (SOWI) in 1999. Finally, we succeeded to broaden the relationships of Bulgarian and foreign sociologists working on security and defence matters by organising the International Conference “NATO at 50 and in the Future: Public Opinion in the East and the West” in June 1999. During the conference we presented and discussed the results from the surveys carried out in the period 1998-1999 on the attitudes towards NATO enlargement, the perceptions of the security risks and the role of NATO in post-Cold War period. More than forty researchers from ten countries (Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Great Britain, Italy, FYROM, Romania, Russia, Slovenia and Ukraine) have taken part in the conference. We consider this conference as one of the most important achievements of the research team, as it contributed to the future co-operation among the colleagues both from NATO and Partnership for Peace (PfP) countries as well as fostering public debate on the Bulgarian accession into Euro-Atlantic defence and security structures.

*The first chapter* focuses on the objectives and the working hypothesis of the study, as well as the theoretical concepts of public opinion, public perceptions and public attitudes, which are the basis of our research. In addition, it gives a brief technical description of the research concerning data sources and methodology.

*The second chapter* deals with the general developments in the security environment in its global, South East European (SEE) and national dimensions in order to analyse the social context under which we have studied the perceptions and the attitudes of the Bulgarians concerning Euro-Atlantic co-operation in security and defence.

*The third chapter* is devoted to the Euro-Atlantic partnership mirrored in the Bulgarian public opinion.

*The fourth chapter* presents the results of the study on the attitudes of the Bulgarians towards the Kosovo crisis and the use of military force in international relations, which was a

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<sup>1</sup> Bulgaria and NATO: 7 Lost years, Strategic Forum, NDU-INSS, Number 42, May 1998

real challenge to our team. In the course of the research we had to broaden previously planned topics in order to include this hot issue.

*The concluding chapter* summarises the lessons learned and gives some recommendations concerning fostering the public debate about the Bulgarian accession into Euro-Atlantic security and defence structures.

# CHAPTER 1

## THE OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY: THE OBJECTIVES, THE CONCEPTS AND THE METHODOLOGY

### 1.1 The Objectives of the Study

How the Bulgarian public understands the Euro-Atlantic partnership in security and defence? What does it mean for the Bulgarians? Is it a privilege for the country to be a part of a defence community, or is it a shared responsibility based on the principle for common defence? Whether the Bulgarians are prone to share the responsibilities of the membership in a defence community? In this study we tried to find answers to some of these questions.

#### More precisely our objectives were the following:

- To determine to what extent the military as well as the civil population are informed on the security and defence issues, and particularly on the Euro-Atlantic partnership on these topics;
- To compare the attitudes towards the Euro-Atlantic partnership in security and defence of the following three target groups: the commanding staff of the armed forces (commissioned and non-commissioned officers); the young people (soldiers and students); the aged population in the country;
- To trace the attitude changes of the military as well as the civil population towards the Euro-Atlantic partnership in security and defence over 1998-2000 period;
- To analyse the attitudes of the Bulgarians towards the NATO air strikes against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) during the Kosovo crisis and to assess the public perceptions about the use of military force in the international relations;
- To assess to what extent the Kosovo crisis has changed the attitudes of the Bulgarians towards NATO and the EU.

### 1.2 The Concept of Public Opinion: Some Methodological Considerations

We shall start with a brief methodological discussion on one of the focal points in our study - the concept of public opinion. In our view, many questions need to be discussed in order to make clear the interpretation of the results and to utilise these results in the political decision making process. Among the most important questions are what does public opinion represents as a social phenomenon? Are the security and defence issues prominent in the public agenda, or they are rated low among the every day problems that make uneasy the life of the Bulgarian people? To put in other words, whether people are interested and informed on the researched topics, or we measure vague constructs? Finally, what is the influence of public opinion when security and defence policy formulation in Bulgaria is concerned?

With the development of the democracy in Bulgaria the public opinion polls had become common for the daily routine of the Bulgarians. Gradually, each of us realises the power and the importance of public opinion. In fact, it is one of the levers by which every Bulgarian citizen can affect politics.

On the other hand, public opinion polls are important tool for a feedback to the politicians. The polls represent the mirror in which every politician may see the results of his/her activity. They could assist in exercising a correction where it is necessary, or directing the efforts and the attention to the right place.

The present situation in Bulgaria, the necessity of achieving public and political consensus on the security and defence issues, as well as providing public support for the

Bulgarian policy of integration into Euro-Atlantic security structures, will impose an active survey of public opinion and utilisation of the results in the political decision making process.

In order to act as a real mirror of the social processes but not as a distorted one, these surveys should be perfect in terms of their methodological as well as content characteristics.

Usually we speak of representatives in respect to the samples and populations but we often forget about representatives in respect to the substance of the surveyed processes. That means they should deal with socially important problems taken into their completeness. The least compromise in terms of methodology could play a trick on every researcher and even lead to wrong decisions, so that to have a reverse effect at the end.

In this sense some elaboration on the methodology, which is of great importance in the interpretation of the results received, and especially in their utilisation in the decision making process should be made.

*The first question we would like to highlight is exactly what is meant by public opinion.* Can we equate the results of public opinion polling and the phenomenon as such? As a matter of fact public opinion is not a totality of the survey's results, it is a complex phenomenon, which partially and imperfectly is reflected in the survey tool. It is often said that public opinion polling is a moment picture of the phenomenon itself. According to us, this metaphor is insufficient. It should be added that this picture might have been re-expound or insufficiently expound; that a telescopic lens is used instead of a wide-spectrum one and the opposite; that the focus distance is not the precise one; or that the camera might have been moved a little during shooting.

In short, the public opinion phenomenon should not be mistaken for its indicators and at the same time not the public opinion as such should be assessed critically but what is presented and the way it is interpreted.

To summarise, we may define what public opinion is not. Decisively it is not just a sum total of the results of the last survey. Public opinion may be defined as an aggregate of the perceptions and attitudes of a certain group of people towards socially important facts, events, institutions, etc.

*Second question follows: what does the concept of attitude mean?* In the social psychology the concept is defined as "a learned and relatively enduring tendency or predisposition to evaluate person, event or situation in a certain way as well as to act in accordance with that evaluation."<sup>2</sup> Usually three attitude components are distinguished.

The first is the cognitive component. It is the way in which we perceive the object, event or situation: our thoughts, believes or ideas about the object, that is the thinking activity based on the information about the object.

The second component is the affective, or the emotional one. It comprises feelings and emotions-the primary reaction which the object, event or situation provokes in man.

The third component is the behavioural or conative one. This is the aptitude or the disposition towards a certain type of behaviour to a certain object, event, or situation in accordance with the evaluation it receives.

In short, the individual may have or have not information about a certain object, event, or situation. In addition, he/she may juxtapose and compare these events, objects and situations with others, may assess the event or situation as positive or negative. Finally, he/she might be disposed to act upon the assessment of the object in a certain way.

It is important to distinguish between attitude and non-attitude, as we frequently have to deal with non-attitudes in the research practice. This is the problem of "quality of public opinion"<sup>3</sup> and is directly connected with the level of information and knowledge about the topics under study. The problem of non-attitude comes in three cases:

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<sup>2</sup> Janus W. Vander Zanden, Social Psychology, Mc Graw Hill Inc., N.Y., 1987, p. 175

<sup>3</sup> For more details on the problem of "non-attitude" in public opinion pools see: Richard Sinnott, European Public Opinion and the Security Policy, WEU Institute for Security

- When the respondents give positive or negative response to an object without any knowledge but also without attaching any degree of importance to it;
- When the respondents attach salience to an object that is unknown to him/her;
- When the respondents both make positive or negative judgement and attribute salience to the object despite knowing nothing about it<sup>4</sup>.

How can we interpret “don’t know” responses in this regard? Can we consider “don’t knows” as some kind of non-attitudes? We should be very careful when interpreting “don’t knows”. On the one hand, they can be a result of a lack of information and knowledge, on the other hand they can be seen as an attempt to avoid giving direct positive or negative answer.

In the context of lack of information and knowledge about the object of the question we should consider the stereotype concept. Usually the stereotype is defined as “a belief that is simple, inadequately grounded, at last partially inaccurate and held with considerable assurance by many people.”<sup>5</sup>

The researchers are frequently confronted with non-attitudes because of lack of information about the object of the question. For example, we frequently ask about something that people do not have reliable information and knowledge about. In such a situation they either respond emotionally, or give answer “I don’t know”. In other words, we do not measure real attitude, but rather a stereotype or a non-attitude. This lack of information can produce wrong images and stereotypes.

To summarise, all this chain of knowledge, assessments and disposition to action is a subject of the public opinion polls. The meaning of these studies is to set what is people’s assessment on a given object, situation or event; to measure to what extent this assessment is based on knowledge and to what extent it is emotional; finally, to predict the possible behaviour of the surveyed persons following their stated assessments.

Despite the fact that many public opinion polls on defence and security issues have been carried out during the last several years in Bulgaria, there exist many problems. We shall summarise these problems in a following way:

- The data from most of the surveys is frequently incomparable because of different wording and different indicators used.
- Serious problem is a lack of repetition of the surveys, so we can hardly trace the changes in the perceptions and attitudes of the people in different years.
- Most of the public opinion polls are not systematically carried out, which makes their practical use minimal.
- There is no a clear defined concept what the surveys are exactly measuring. If it is public attitudes, then what component they have measured: the cognitive, the emotional, or the behavioural?
- As a rule, most of the surveys are mainly descriptive. There is a lack of explanation, i.e. why people perceive in a certain way the objects of these surveys.
- The last, but not least, the results from these surveys and public opinion polls are published incompletely in seeking for sensations, not for real public debate on the important issues of security and defence. In addition, there are a few publications in scientific journals and in this way the public discussion is concentrated on everyday level, not involving serious arguments.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Lippmann, W. Public Opinion, N.Y., Harcourt, Brace, 1922, p.

We tried to overcome some of these problems having been working on our study over the last two years. Thus, we tried to make public opinion polls on defence and security issues systematic. Our interest was mainly attracted by:

- The public awareness with the defence and security issues;
- The attitude changes over the period of the study;
- The interrelation between the public attitudes and the attitudes or the vision of the elites;
- The influence of the mass media and interest groups on public attitudes.

### 1.3 The Main Working Hypotheses

We started our study with the following working hypothesis concerning different levels of the analysis:

- We expected to observe differences on the first dimension– perceptions and attitudes of the political elites and the public perceptions and attitudes. Despite the development in the formulation of the national security and defence priorities that have taken place over the last two years, the public has not broadly acknowledged these priorities, yet. Political elites sometimes are willing to avoid public debate on important security and defence issues, and hence to undermine the importance of involving people in the political decision-making process.

- We expected to observe differences on the second dimension - perceptions of the military and perceptions of civilians. Speaking about the perceptions of civilians concerning defence and security issues, including the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country, we expected these issues are not topical among the problems that attract public attention. The insufficient public awareness is probably connected with the fact that there are much more serious problems that are of immediate importance for the population such as high level of unemployment, poverty, crime, etc. The poor economic situation of the country, low living standard, the negative social effects from the military reform, may have negative influence on the attitudes of the Bulgarians towards NATO membership. On the other hand, the issues of Euro-Atlantic orientation of Bulgaria continue to be politicised. Political affiliation is one of the strongest predictors of pro-NATO and anti-NATO attitudes. Speaking about the perceptions of the military, the leading factor for support of the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country is the professional, rather than the political one. The military share high positive expectations and consider future NATO membership as a universal remedy for our security. In this regard, they expect Bulgarian integration into NATO to foster their professional development. On the other hand, the social effects of the reform in the Bulgarian Armed Forces (BAF), especially the most painful part of the reform – radical downsizing of the armed forces, influence the perceptions of the military in a negative direction.

- We expected that the attitudes of the young people (soldiers and students) towards the Bulgarian Euro-Atlantic integration policy are more positive in comparison with elder population of the country due to different socialisation.

- We expected that non-attitudes would be registered in public opinion polls to a great extent due to the lack of proper information concerning defence and security issues, including the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country. This situation can easily produce wrong images and stereotypes. One of the widely spread stereotypes is that Bulgarian – Russian relations and Bulgarian aspiration for NATO membership are mutual excluding issues because eventual Bulgarian accession into NATO could lead to worsening Bulgarian-Russian relations. The second stereotype is the issue of “great economic as well as social

costs of Bulgarian integration into NATO”. Most of the Bulgarians share the view that our country can not afford these costs. Another, important stereotype concerns NATO’s military bases in Bulgaria as well as the engagements of the country in accordance with Article 5 of the Washington treaty when become a NATO-member-state. These anti-NATO stereotypes are typical of people above 60 years of age, living in small towns and villages, with low educational level, mainly coming from the political spectrum.

- The public perceptions and attitudes towards the use of military force in international relations are predominantly negative. They probably correlate with the educational level, the political affiliation, the place of residence and gender of the respondents. In addition, they are probably connected with the perceptions of the Euro-Atlantic co-operation of Bulgaria in security and defence. These are on the one hand perceptions of “NATO as a civilisation choice”<sup>6</sup>, and on the other hand perceptions of “NATO as a military organisation”.

## **1.4 Technical Description of the Research**

### **1.4.1 Data Sources**

Our study is based on the following sociological surveys and public opinion polls, carried out over the 1998-2000 period:

- Representative public opinion poll carried out by the Sociological Research Centre (SRC) of the MoD among the Bulgarian military. 1737 COs and NCOs and 879 conscripts were surveyed in March 1998. Self-administered questionnaire was used as a method of data collection;

- Representative public opinion poll carried out by the SRC of the MoD among the Bulgarian military. 1240 COs and NCOs and 905 conscripts were surveyed in November 1998. Self-administered questionnaire was used as a method of data collection;

- Representative public opinion poll carried out by the SRC of the MoD in November 1998 among high school students all over the country. Sample size comprised 1144 youths between 16 and 19 years of age;

- Nation-wide representative public opinion poll on attitudes towards participation of the Bulgarian army in Military Operations Other Than War, conducted by the NOEMA private agency for social and marketing research in October 1998 among 1240 Bulgarians between 16-80 years of age. Individual home interview was used as a method of data collection;

- Nation-wide representative public opinion poll carried out by the Analytical Creative Group Ltd. in February-March 1999 among 1018 Bulgarians between 16 and 80 years of age. Individual home interview was used as a method of data collection;

- Nation-wide representative public opinion poll carried out by the NOEMA Private Agency for social and marketing research in April 1999 among 985 Bulgarians between 16 and 80 years of age. Individual home interview was used as a method of data collection;

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<sup>6</sup> *The expression “Bulgarian membership in NATO is a civilization choice of the country” was introduced by the President Peter Stojanov in connection with the public discussions on the Council of Minister’s decision dated February 17, 1997 for a full Bulgarian membership in NATO. It has the meaning of Bulgarian accession into the Western culture and the family of industrially developed countries.*

- Nation-wide representative public opinion poll carried out by the National Public Opinion Research Centre (NPORC), carried out in May 1999 among 1101 Bulgarian citizens between 16 and 80 years of age. Individual home interview was used as a method of data collection;

- Nation-wide representative public opinion poll carried out by the Vitosha Research Private agency in May 1999 among 1081 Bulgarian citizens between 16 and 80 years of age. Individual home interview was used as a method of data collection;

- Nation-wide representative public opinion poll carried out by the “SOVA” 5 Agency for Social, Political and Marketing Research, in April 1998 among 1171 Bulgarian citizens between 16 and 80 years of age. Individual home interview was used as a method of data collection.

- Survey among the Bulgarian elites carried out by the “Vitosha Research” Private agency in November 1998 among 427 representatives of Bulgarian political elite, businessmen, high ranking military, policemen and security services officers, journalists, NGOs, researchers and religious authorities.

- Expert judgement survey on the topic “Prospects of Bulgarian Participation in Peace Support Operations”, conducted by the SRC of the MoD in April 1999 among 28 experts from the General Staff, the services, the Rapid Reaction Forces and officers, participated in PSOs.

- Nation-wide representative public opinion poll carried out by the Analytical Creative Group Ltd. in May 2000 among 1040 people between 16 and 80 years of age.

#### **1.4.2 Methodology**

The basic methodological requirement of our study was to insure comparability of the results at two levels: at national level, and at international level. At the first level we made possible the comparison between the results coming from the surveys among the military as well as the civilians. At the second level, we tried to compare between the results concerning the attitudes of the Bulgarians and some results of surveys carried out in the countries from Central Europe -Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic.

For this reason, we relied on data collected by representative samples. In addition, we unified the items and utilised the same wording in the questionnaires to be applied for all polls.

The second methodological requirement was to analyse the perceptions and attitudes of as broad as possible spectrum in our society. For this reason we collected data from three target groups. The first group comprises young people both soldiers and students. The second group comprises the professional military- commissioned officers (COs) and non-commissioned officers (NCOs). And the third group comprises the adult population in Bulgaria (16-80 years of age).

The third methodological requirement concerns the possibility for repetition of the polls in order to trace the changes in the attitudes over the time, both among the military and civilians over the 1998-2000 period.

As far as data analysis is concerned, the most frequently applied methods were analysis of frequency distributions, average values, chi-square analysis and Cramer’ V coefficient, correlation analysis and non-linear factor analysis.

## **1.5 The Main Topics of the Research**

Over the period of the study we have chosen six research topics concerning security and defence and their reflection in the Bulgarian public opinion. We consider all of them central and of immediate interest in public agenda as well as important from the viewpoint of the political decision making process. These topics are as follows:

- The public perceptions of risks and guarantees for the national security of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- The attitudes towards the major international institutions as factor for European security and stability;
- The expectations for a possible membership of Bulgaria in NATO and EU;
- The attitudes towards some specific tasks in connection with the Bulgarian accession into NATO;
- The attitudes towards the participation of the Bulgarian Armed Forces in Military Operations Other Than War, and especially in Peace-support operations (PSOs);
- Public perceptions of the use of military force in the international relations.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE EURO-ATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP IN SECURITY AND DEFENCE - THE BULGARIAN PERSPECTIVE

We shall start our study with an analysis of the social context under which the perceptions and attitudes of the Bulgarians towards Euro-Atlantic partnership in defence and security had developed. The dynamic developments in the global, regional and national security environment that have taken place over the last two years have determined the perceptions and attitudes of the Bulgarians.

#### **2.1 The Bulgarian Way to NATO: A Brief Retrospection**

The Bulgaria - NATO relations were established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Declaration dated 13 July 1990. Our country accepted the invitation extended in the London Declaration of the North-Atlantic Alliance of 6 July 1990 to establish regular diplomatic relations with NATO.

On 14 February 1994 President Z. Zhelev signed the Partnership for Peace (PfP) Framework Document and Bulgaria joined this initiative.

The next two years, 1995-1996 can be characterised as a lack of "integration endeavour in comparison with most Central European former communist states"<sup>7</sup> as far as Bulgarian accession into NATO is concerned. "Striking, for example, is the fact that as late as 1996, after three rounds of discussions with NATO, Bulgaria (under Bulgarian Socialist Party Rule) concluded that it did not wish to pursue membership."<sup>8</sup>

A crucial impetus on the development of Bulgaria - NATO co-operation and the involvement of the country in the PfP programme was given by the Council of Ministers' Decision dated 17 February 1997 for a full membership in NATO. A month later, on 17 March 1997, the Council of Ministers' Decision No. 304 adopted the National Programme for the Preparation and Accession of the Republic of Bulgaria into NATO. The implementation of this programme was tasked on the Interagency Committee of NATO Integration.

The Bulgarian way to NATO is not so smooth and without fluctuations as can be seen from this brief retrospection. The anti-NATO attitude of the main opposition party – the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) was the main problem as far as the achieving of political consensus towards accession of Bulgaria into Euro-Atlantic defence structures is concerned. Since May 2000 we have witnessed a gradual change of this radical anti-NATO attitude on part of the leaders of the BSP towards the acceptance of the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country as the best way to guarantee the Bulgarian national interests. In this regard, the first, serious development in the position of the BSP towards the Bulgarian accession into NATO was made during the 44<sup>th</sup> Congress of the party on May 4-6, 2000. The leader of the BSP, Mr. George Parvanov, clearly declared that "Bulgaria will be able to better stand up for its national interests being included, not excluded from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation". In addition, he said: "European and Euro-Atlantic integration of Bulgaria in all political, economic, and military defence structures have to become our (BSP) priority task."<sup>9</sup>

According to the leader of the BSP, "the membership of Bulgaria in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, as the only collective defence system in Europe, will provide the following opportunities:

- Solving of the problem with the international juridical commitments in regard to

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<sup>7</sup> Trevor Waters, Bulgaria – Now on Track for a Secure Future, CSRC, 1999, p. 3

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p 4

<sup>9</sup> George Parvanov, Political Report Presented at the 44<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Bulgarian Socialist Party, 4-6 May, 2000, "Duma" Newspaper, issue 106, May 8, 2000, p.11-12

the security guarantees of Bulgaria after a long lasting and continuing period of security vacuum;

- Providing a mechanism of discussions on Bulgarian security issues at early stage and creating possibilities for information exchange in this area;
- Full-flagged and active participation in the decision-taking process concerning European security, including the South Eastern part of the continent;
- Rise of the political prestige and influence of the Republic of Bulgaria in the international organisations and in the international politics as a whole;
- New impetus on the relations with the developed countries in economic, financial, trade etc. areas, rise of the foreign investitures trust as well as the international financial institutions, thus improving the prospects for the Bulgarian accession into European Union;
- Overcoming the lag in the contemporary warfare science and the development of the armed forces.”<sup>10</sup>

Despite the fact that Mr. Parvanov defined this new position of the BSP as “an essential stage in the evolution of the Party”, the BSP did not gave up the idea of referendum concerning Bulgarian accession into NATO. In addition, the BSP kept on assessing the NATO air strikes against the FRY as “the most flagrant mistake in all NATO’s history.”<sup>11</sup>

Speaking about the developments in the position of the political elite towards Bulgarian membership in NATO, we have to draw a special attention to the decision of the National Assembly from 26 May 2000. 189 out of 240 Members of the Parliament (MPs) of all parliamentary groups, including BSP MPs, adopted the decision that “along with the accession into EU, Bulgaria strive for NATO membership.”<sup>12</sup> Just 3 MPs voted against, which practically stated the achievement of a political consensus on Bulgarian membership in NATO.

## **2.2 Bulgaria in the New Security Environment**

### **2.2.1 Bulgarian Political Leadership and the Kosovo Crisis**

The Kosovo crisis and the NATO Allied Force Operation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) was undoubtedly the most important fact that has attracted public attention over the period of our study.

Speaking about the official Bulgarian position on Kosovo crisis, we should say that it was clear and unchanged since the beginning of the conflict. Just after the NATO’s air strikes against the FRY on 26 March 1999 the Bulgarian Parliament reaffirmed its Declaration from October 1998 stating that “The Republic of Bulgaria will not participate either directly or indirectly in any military activity in the FRY.” At the same time, sharing the principles of “a democratic legal state and defence of human values and ideas”, Bulgaria expressed its “solidarity with Euro-Atlantic community in its efforts to prevent further deepening and spreading out of the Kosovo crisis.” Finally, “the Republic of Bulgaria confirms its strategic choice for a full membership in NATO.”<sup>13</sup> 167 out of 240 MPs both from the ruling coalition – Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) as well as most of the opposition parties approved this declaration. The main opposition party – the BSP refused to support the declaration insisting on the statement that Bulgarian authorities will not allow Bulgaria to be drawn into the conflict by providing its airspace and territory to be used for military operations. They also refused to support the expression of solidarity with the NATO air strikes.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 12

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 12

<sup>12</sup> Parliamentary Declaration on Bulgarian Council of Minister’s position on foreign and defence policy of the Republic of Bulgaria, 26 May, 2000

<sup>13</sup> Parliamentary Declaration on Kosovo Crisis, 26 March 1999, Sofia

The Prime Minister and the leader of the UDF, Mr. Ivan Kostov, motivated the parliamentary decision as “a country’s interest to return the peace in the region and to return the deported people to their homes. This is the best way to stop the destabilising impact of the conflict being experienced in FYROM as a result of the enormous flow of refugees.” The second reason was that “if Bulgaria had not supported NATO operation, it would risk economic destabilisation.”<sup>14</sup>

Following its policy on the Kosovo crisis, on 4 May 1999 the Bulgarian parliament confirmed the agreement of the Government with NATO for providing airspace corridor for the Allied Force Operation. Again, the MPs of all parliamentary groups except the BSP supported the decision. The same arguments were proposed by the BSP when the agreement was discussed.

To summarise, the attitudes of the political leadership in Bulgaria towards the Kosovo crisis have seen clear and unchanged since 1998. They were based on the following three principles:

- Non engagement in the conflict (directly or indirectly);
- Solidarity with the Euro Atlantic community on the basis of shared values;
- Support for NATO to prevent further development of the conflict and involvement of Bulgaria in a war on Balkans.

The Kosovo crisis had exceptionally positive implication on the Bulgarian security policy towards fostering the relations with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). The long-standing dispute over the national languages was brought to an end. In addition, agreements for donation of military equipment for FYROM and its maintenance have been reached in March 1999 between the two countries. Finally, Bulgaria provided and equipped a refugee camp for 2500 refugees in Radusha, FYROM.<sup>15</sup>

### **2.2.2 The Washington summit of the North Atlantic Council, April 1999**

The other exceptionally important fact that has influenced the perceptions and attitudes of the Bulgarians towards the Euro-Atlantic partnership in security and defence was the Washington summit of the North Atlantic Council in April 1999.

After the disappointment of not being invited for the first wave of NATO enlargement, the declaration of open door policy of the Alliance and its intention to “extend further invitations in coming years to nations willing and able to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership”<sup>16</sup>, rebirth the aspirations of the Bulgarians for NATO membership. It was an important factor that has influenced both public perceptions and the attitudes of the political elites in Bulgaria.

### **2.2.3 The Helsinki summit of the Heads of the EU member States, December 1999**

Analysing the perceptions of the Bulgarians concerning the Euro-Atlantic partnership, we should take into consideration the fact that Bulgaria was invited to start accession talks with the European Union (EU) during the Helsinki summit in December 1999. It is important

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<sup>14</sup> Speech of the Prime Minister Ivan Kostov during the parliamentary debates on the Parliamentary Declaration on Kosovo Crisis of 26 March, 1999

<sup>15</sup> Gueorgui Ananiev, Speech at the U.S. National Defense University, Washington D.C., 20 July 1999, p.2, available from: [http://www.md.government.bg/\\_en\\_/speech009.html](http://www.md.government.bg/_en_/speech009.html)

<sup>16</sup> The Alliance’s Strategic Concept, Approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C., 23-24, April 1999

to point out that a broad consensus concerning the integration of the country in the EU exists both in public opinion and among the political elites.

The Washington Declaration and the invitation of Bulgaria to start accession talks with the EU have even changed the attitudes towards NATO of the leaders of the main opposition party– the BSP as it was mentioned above.

### **2.3 Bulgaria and the Regional Military Co-operation**

An unprecedented development in the military co-operation in South Eastern Europe has taken place during the two-year period of our study concerning the regional co-operation dimension. The most important event in this regard, is the establishment of the Multinational Peace Force South Eastern Europe (MPFSEE) on 26 September 1998 during the Third South East European Defence Ministerial (SEEDM) in Skopije, FYROM. During this meeting the defence ministers of Albania, Bulgaria, FYROM, Greece, Italy, Romania and Turkey have signed the Agreement on the establishment of the MPFSEE. It was decided to set up multinational Force on Brigade level named Southeast European Brigade (SEEBRIG).

A year and a half later, we can say that the most difficult part of the road has been travelled. The SEEBRIG Head Quarter (HQ) has been activated on 31 August 1999, and the official inauguration ceremony took place on 11 September 1999 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

The Politico-Military Steering Committee (PMSC), which will serve as a body for civilian control and guidance of the SEEBRIG, was inaugurated on 2 September 1999 in Athens, Greece.

The first Command Post Exercise SEEBRIG-99 was conducted on 8-10 December 1999 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

The newly born MPFSEE is an example for a sub-regional coalition of states, which declare their willingness and readiness to take responsibility for strengthening peace and security in the region. This is a real attempt to start an effective military co-operation on the basis of PSOs. In addition, this is a way for developing Security and Confidence Building Measures (SCBMs) in the region. Seven countries, both NATO and PfP members are willing to change the “powder keg” of Europe image of the region.

The second very important development in the Bulgaria-NATO relations during the period of our study was the fact that Bulgaria has actively supported NATO-led PSOs in the FRY. The Peace Support Operations have become one of the best ways of military co-operation between Bulgaria and Euro-Atlantic security structures, including NATO. Since June 1997 Bulgaria have contributed to SFOR one engineer platoon within the Netherlands contingent. In addition, since July 1998 the country increased the contribution to SFOR with one transport platoon as a part of BELUGA (initials of the participating countries) Multinational Integrated Logistic Support Group, presently (HELBA) under Greek operational command.

Currently, Bulgaria participates in KFOR with one engineer platoon. It declared readiness to contribute also with 3-5 CIMIC officers and a 30-bed military field hospital with staff 71-91 people.<sup>17</sup>

As a whole Bulgaria has contributed 8 engineer platoons and 5 transport platoons to SFOR as well as 2 platoons to KFOR.

To summarise, in the context of the security and defence policy of the Republic of Bulgaria, the country's participation in NATO-led PSOs is a continuation of Bulgaria's international commitments for guaranteeing security and stability in the Balkans. The expected results are the following:

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<sup>17</sup> Participation of Bulgaria in peacekeeping operations, The Situation Centre of the MoD of the Republic of Bulgaria, available from: <http://www.mo.govern.bg/publications>

- This is a test for the readiness of the Bulgarian military to serve in NATO-led multinational forces.
- The lessons learned in the operations are valuable for the implementation of the programs concerning restructuring, modernisation and interoperability of the BAF with the NATO partners.
- Participating in the NATO-led PSOs the Bulgarian military gain new experience. The traditional Bulgarian military culture changes towards the adoption of new roles and implementation of new missions in the changing security environment.

#### **2.4 The Developments in the Bulgarian Security and Defence Policy**

In April 1998 the Bulgarian Parliament adopted the new Bulgarian Security Concept. In addition, in April 1999 it approved the new Bulgarian Military Doctrine.

According to the National Security Concept, “the Bulgaria security is determined by the extent to which the country is able to provide security for its neighbours. Together with its regional initiatives for increasing mutual trust in the political and military sphere, the country assists the strengthening of security and stability on the Balkans.”<sup>18</sup>

The document clearly states “Bulgaria is not in the position to protect or strive after its own security through neutrality, due to its insufficient financial, economic and military potentials. The new realities predetermine the necessity for the country to integrate into effective collective security and economic development systems.”<sup>19</sup>

According to the Military Doctrine “the Republic of Bulgaria does not face any immediate military threat”. In implementing its defence policies, the Republic of Bulgaria:

- Does not consider any nation as its adversary, and settles the arising problems and contradictions threatening its sovereignty and territorial integrity with non-military means;
- Views its security and defence related to the regional, European and Euro-Atlantic security and defence systems;
- Supports, and takes part in initiatives for disarmament and reduction of the military potentials;
- Is actively involved in the international military and military-political co-operation, and contributes to strengthening peace and security in South Eastern Europe and to shaping the new European and Euro-Atlantic security architecture. “<sup>20</sup>

The Military Doctrine defines, “the membership in NATO and EU as a national priority for Bulgaria. It corresponds to the country’s long term interests.” In addition, “In implementing its security and defence policies, the Republic of Bulgaria defines its partnership with, and membership in, NATO, the WEU and EU as a strategic priority for ensuring its national security and defence. The Republic of Bulgaria considers its membership in NATO and the WEU as an opportunity to share the responsibility of democratic states in defending common values as a prerequisite and guarantee of a stable democratic development of the country and pursuit of effective defence policies.”<sup>21</sup>

Speaking about the missions of the BAF, the Military Doctrine declares “The Armed Forces are employed in accordance with the procedures set out by the Constitution and the laws of the country, in:

- Performing the inherent right of individual and collective self-defence as regulated in Article 51 of the UN Charter;

<sup>18</sup> The National Security Concept of the Republic of Bulgaria (Approved by the XXXVIII National Assembly on April 16, 1998), & 38

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Bulgaria Approved by the National Assembly on April 8, 1999

- Complying with international legal commitments for the purposes of operations other than war;
- Natural disasters, industrial accidents and hazardous pollution of the national territory and abroad;
- International legal arrangements and decisions of relevant authorities for interaction with NATO, the EU and the WEU<sup>22</sup>.

Both documents, the National Security Concept and the Military Doctrine of the Republic of Bulgaria, define the framework of the military reform in creating mobile, flexible and interoperable with NATO partners armed forces. At the same time, these documents have started the most painful part of the military reform – the radical downsizing of the armed forces from about 114 000- to 45 000 personnel until 2004. This process is accompanied with many hardships concerning the social integration of the dismissed Bulgarian officers and NCOs, which influenced the perceptions and attitudes of the Bulgarian citizens as well as the military towards the Euro-Atlantic partnership in security and defence.

To summarise, many developments in global, regional and national security environment have taken place over the two-year period of our study. These developments have inevitably affected the perceptions and the attitudes of the Bulgarians towards the Euro-Atlantic co-operation in security and defence. Among the most important of them are the following:

- The Bulgarian political leadership demonstrated firm willingness to follow the political choice for integration of the country in the EU and NATO, and Bulgaria practically acted during the Kosovo crisis as “a member of the Euro-Atlantic community”.<sup>23</sup> In this regard, the Kosovo crisis was a test both for the political elite and the broad public for the future Euro-Atlantic co-operation in security and defence.
- Bulgaria has actively participated in the development of the military co-operation in SEE. Currently the country is a host nation of the MPFSEE HQ in Plovdiv. Thus, an unprecedented example of military co-operation in the field of PSOs among NATO and PfP nations has emerged in the SEE.
- Bulgaria has actively participated in NATO-led PSOs in the FRY, and thus gives its input in guaranteeing security and stability in the Balkans.
- The observed developments in the attitudes towards NATO on part of the Bulgarian political elite, and particularly among the leaders of the main opposition party - the BSP are the first serious step towards establishing of a political consensus in regard to the Bulgarian accession into NATO.
- The most important step in the development of the legal base of the military reform has been completed. The National security concept as well as the new Military doctrine of the Republic of Bulgaria has been adopted by the Bulgarian Parliament. Both documents define the accession of Bulgaria into Euro-Atlantic economic, political and defence structures as national priority of the country.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, para 47

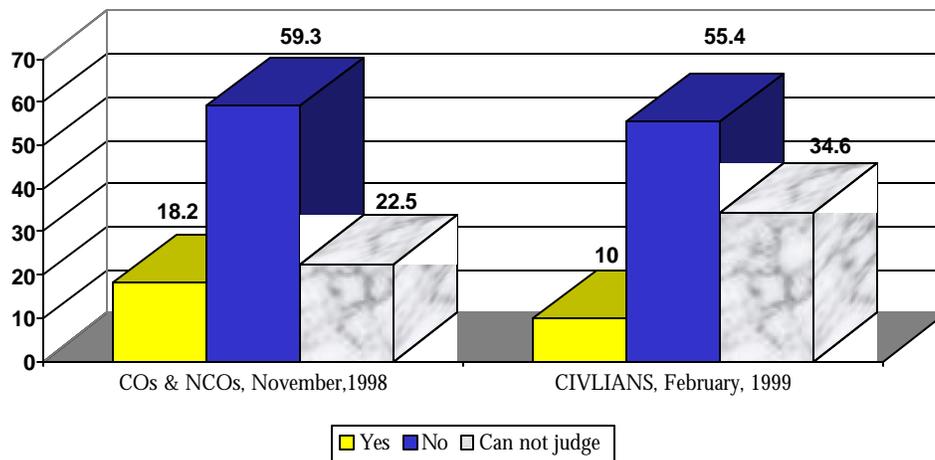
<sup>23</sup> Javier Solana, Address to Bulgarian National Assembly, 8 July 1999

**CHAPTER 3**  
**THE EURO- ATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP**  
**IN SECURITY AND DEFENCE**  
**AS PERCEIVED BY THE BULGARIAN PUBLIC OPINION**

**3. 1 Public Perceptions of the Risks and the Guarantees of the Bulgarian National Security**

Public opinion traditionally connects the threat for the security of the country with armed invasion and violation of the territorial integrity. That is why we asked the Bulgarians to assess the risk of a military aggression against the Republic of Bulgaria. The comparative data based on representative public opinion polls for the military and the civilians, as well as the assessment of the young people both in the army and in the schools are presented on the figures below.

**Figure 1**  
**Is there a danger of a military aggression against the Republic of Bulgaria in the near future?**  
*(The military and the Civilians)*

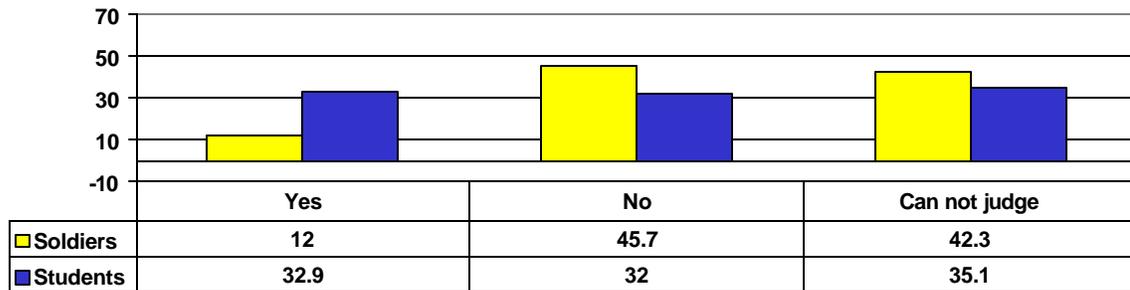


At the end of 1998 and the beginning of 1999 more than half of the surveyed people, both among the military (59.3%) and the adult population in the country (55.4%) did not expect “danger from military aggression against Bulgaria”.

The most serious difference between the answers of the military and the civilians was that more than one-third of the civilian population of the country (34.6%) had no opinion on the issue, while the share among the military was comparatively smaller -22.5%. It is not surprising if we consider that the COs and NCOs as professionals are much more aware with the defence and security issues. Being professionals, they deal with the national defence issues on day-to-day basis and are involved in the problems in their professional life. On the other hand, the civilians have different problems to overcome in their everyday life and the national defence issues expectedly are not among the priority issues of care.

Some important differences are found with the comparison between these figures and the data about the perceptions of the young people. In addition, differences are found even among the two groups of young men (Fig. 2).

**Figure 2**  
**Is there a danger of a military aggression**  
**against the Republic of Bulgaria in the near future?**  
*(Soldiers and Students, November 1999)*

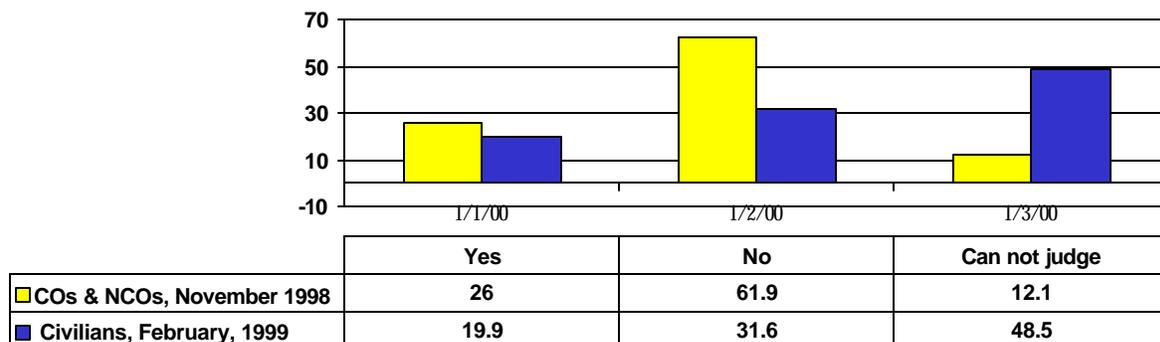


The most important feature of the perceptions of the young people -soldiers and students- is the information insufficiency on the issue. The high percent of answers “I cannot judge”, more than one-third, for both categories surveyed people unambiguously supports our hypothesis.

The young people, like the adult population and the military, share the perception that “there is no a military threat to Bulgaria”.

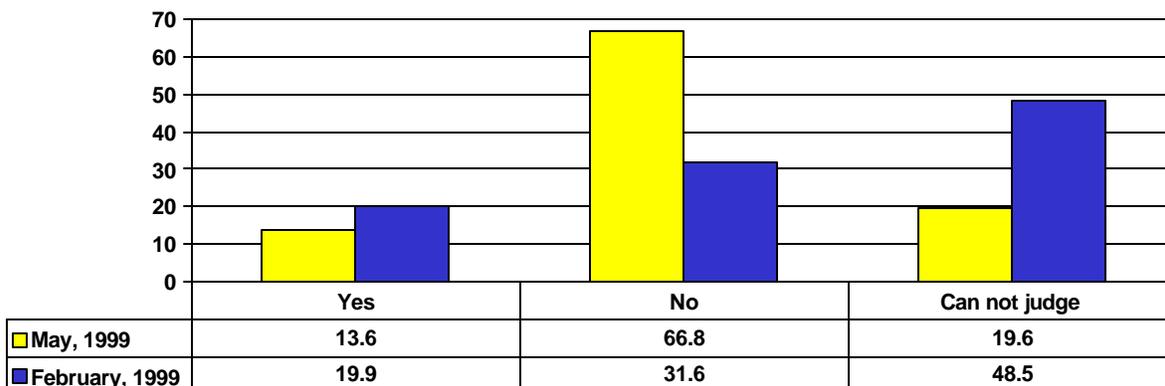
Comparing these results with the data from a nation-wide public opinion poll, carried out in April 1999, we found considerably changed picture. We registered rapid rising of the perceptions of security risks for Bulgaria during the Kosovo crisis. About two-thirds of the Bulgarians (62.2%) expected involvement of the country in a military conflict. The vast majority of the surveyed people (83.6%) declared that they experienced fear and anxiety in connection with the military and political situation close to the Bulgarian borders. According to our respondents, the main threats to the Bulgarian security were connected not only with the military threat, but also with the economic, ecological problems, and the refugee flow, resulting from the war in the region. At the same time, both the military and civilians did not believe that the Bulgarian Army (BA) could protect national security and the territorial sovereignty of the country. (Fig. 3)

**Figure 3**  
**According to you can Bulgarian Army Protect**  
**the Territorial Integrity and the Sovereignty of the Country?**  
*(The military and the Civilians)*



The comparison between the two nation-wide representative surveys from February and May 1999, before and during the Kosovo crisis, shows a considerable decrease in the believe of the population concerning the ability of the BA to protect the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of the country. (Fig. 4)

**Figure 4**  
**According to you can Bulgarian Army Protect**  
**the Territorial Integrity and the Sovereignty of the Country?**  
*(Civilians, February-May, 1999)*



Probably the widely spread public opinion about the low risk of military threat for the security and the territorial integrity of Bulgaria is connected with the changes after the end of the Cold War and the breakdown of the political blocs counterpoising. At the same time, this fact could lead to a role crisis especially among the professional military personnel and to increasing pacifistic inclinations, particularly among the young people in the society.

The widespread believes both among the military and civilians that the BA is not able to protect the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of the country are alarming. One probable explanation of these assessments are the slow and the late military reform as well as many lost years and opportunities for the modernisation of the BAF. For this reason, the Bulgarians connect the military reform mainly with the downsizing of the armed forces. On the other hand, we registered rising perceptions of non-military threats to our security, threats that the BA can hardly withstand with its manpower, equipment and training

Considering the widespread public perceptions of the security risks and the Bulgarian army's ability to protect the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of the country, a reasonable question is “What could serve as the best foreign political guarantee for the national security of Bulgaria?” The respondents were presented for assessment the whole palette of possible foreign political factors, which Bulgaria could orient towards in guaranteeing its security. Table 1 and table 2 present the distribution of the received answers.

**Table 1**  
**What could serve as the best foreign political guarantee  
for the national security of the Republic of Bulgaria?**  
*(The Military and the Civilians, in %)*

<b>N</b>	<b>Possible guarantees for Bulgarian national security</b>	<b>CO &amp; NCO November, 1998</b>	<b>Civilians, February, 1999</b>
1	Full-right membership of Bulgaria in NATO and WEU	39.8	36.3
2	Bilateral military treaties with neighbouring countries on the Balkans	10.1	8.1
3	Military treaty with Russia	8.8	9.0
4	Bulgaria to keep neutrality	16.9	17.1
5	There are no guarantees	24.5	29.5

**Table 2**  
**What could serve as the best guarantee for the national security  
of the Republic of Bulgaria?**  
*(Soldiers and Students, November, 1998, in %)*

<b>N</b>	<b>Possible guarantees for Bulgarian national security</b>	<b>Soldiers</b>	<b>Students</b>
1	Full-right membership of Bulgaria in NATO and WEU	58.0	56.9
2	Bilateral military treaties with neighbouring countries on the Balkans	4.2	3.7
3	Military treaty with Russia	5.9	6.5
4	Bulgaria to keep neutrality	7.9	7.6
5	There are no guarantees	24.0	25.3

The data in the tables above shows that the most of the people connect the national security guarantees with a “full-right membership of Bulgaria in NATO and WEU”. This is the dominating public opinion. It is shared both by the military and the civilians as well as by the young people. It is important to point out that the share of the young people who support the full-right membership of Bulgaria in the Euro-Atlantic defence structures is considerably greater than the aged population and the military, as well.

*The second group consists of people who we might define for convention as “pessimists”. They consider that Bulgaria could not rely on any foreign political guarantees for its security. This statement is characteristic for the aged civilians. Insufficient information, which impedes the comparability of different variants offered for assessment, is probably one of the reasons for this situation. No statistically significant differences are observed among the COs and NCOs, on the one hand, and young people, on the other.*

*The third group comprises the people who share the idea for claiming Bulgaria neutral state. Considerable distinctions between the COs, the NCOs and the civilians on one hand and the young people on the other are observed in this group. One of the possible explanations for these differences is that the COs and the NCOs as well as the aged civilians connect the participation in a collective defence system with a voluntary rejection of a part of the national sovereignty, while the younger people do not consider this a serious problem.*

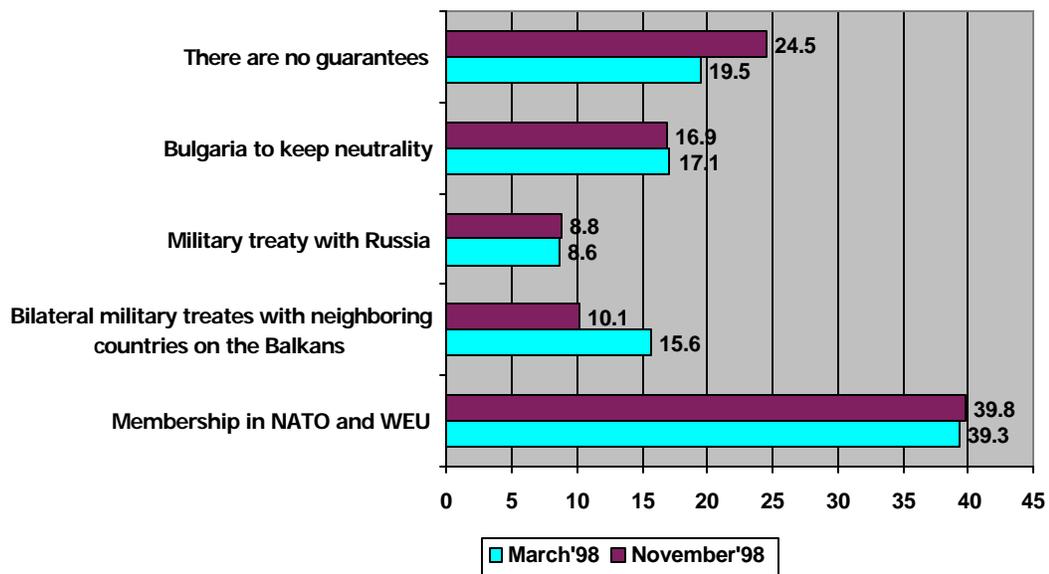
*Considerable differences are also observed among the fourth group of the surveyed people. It comprises those who have chosen the option “concluding of bilateral agreements with neighbour countries” as the best national security guarantee. Mainly the COs and the NCOs support this opinion followed by the aged civilians.*

It is important to point out that those respondents who support the full-right membership of Bulgaria in NATO and WEU, and those who prefer concluding bilateral agreements with neighbours as the best country's security guarantee, are familiar in regard to their basic socio-demographic characteristics. This result can be explained by the fact that two of our neighbours are NATO-member countries and other two are active participants in the PfP initiative.

*The least popular idea is for guaranteeing Bulgarian national security via concluding defensive treaty with Russia.* This idea is upheld by the slightest portion from the three categories of the surveyed people. One of the most probable explanations of this result is the negative perception shared by most of the people of the role played by the former Soviet Union as regard to the Bulgarian defence and security policy over the 1994-1989 period. Russia today inherited all of the negatives in the public perceptions, and the figures presented above show the willingness of the Bulgarians to overcome the socialist past and to make a new start.

What changes have occurred in the attitudes of the military over 1998 regarding to the possible options for guaranteeing the Bulgarian national security? The data from two consecutive surveys carried out among the professional military and the soldiers in the beginning and in the end of 1998 is presented on figures 5 and 6.

**Figure 5**  
**What could serve as the best guarantee for**  
**the national security of the Republic of Bulgaria?**  
*(COs and NCOs, March-November 1998)*



The relative number of the COs and the NCOs who consider a full-right integration of Bulgaria into Euro-Atlantic defence structures the best way to guarantee the national security remained unchanged. The difference of 0.5 points is statistically insignificant ( $P=0.3918$ ).

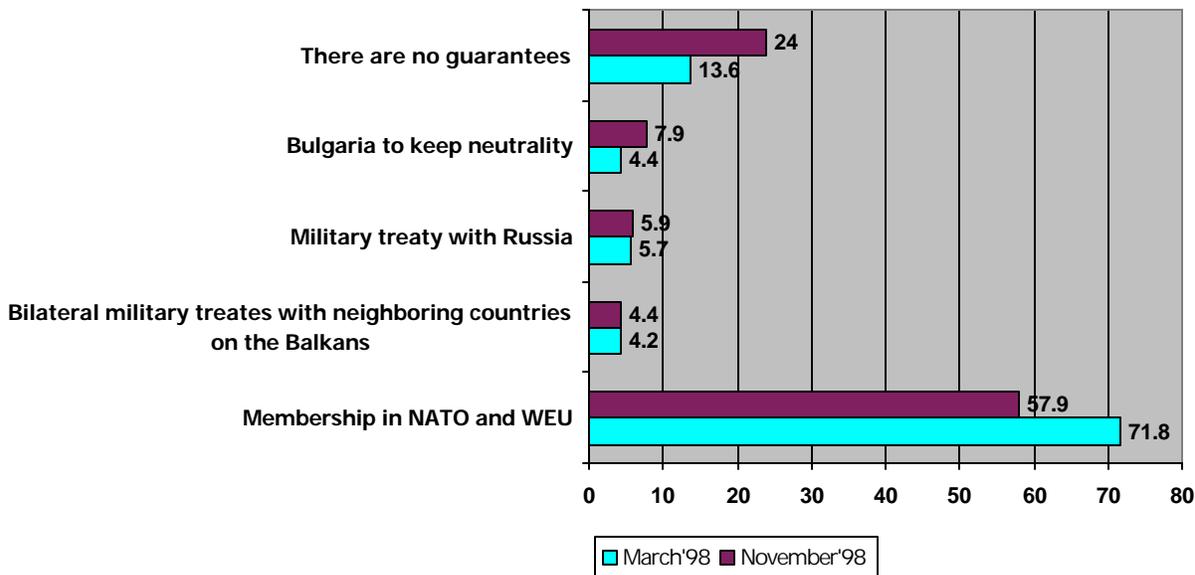
The number of the adherents of the neutrality idea among the commanding staff of the BAF was unchanged over the two periods.

The concluding bilateral agreements with neighbour countries option marks trends of decrease with (5.5) points among the professional military personnel ( $P=0.0003$ ).

There was a slight increasing number of the respondents among the COs and NCOs of the BAF considering that Bulgaria could not rely on any foreign political guarantees for the national security (5.0 points) ( $P=0.0012$ ).

No alteration was observed assessing the option of defensive treaty with Russia.

**Figure 6**  
**What could serve as best guarantee for**  
**the national security of the Republic of Bulgaria?**  
*(Soldiers, March—November 1998)*



A substantial decrease of the part of the people considering that a full-right integration of Bulgaria in the Euro-Atlantic defence structures could best guarantee the national security was observed among the soldiers for the period from March to November 1998. The decrease was with (13.9) points. (P=0.0000).

The part of the adherents of the neutrality idea among the soldiers was slightly increased with (3.5 points) (P=0.0003).

The number of the soldiers thinking that Bulgaria could not rely on foreign political guarantees for the national security in November 1998 compared to March 1998, was considerably increased (10.4 points) (P=0.0001).

Tendency of alteration was not observed in assessing the option of defensive treaty with Russia.

In the interpretation of these differences it is obligatory to note that the changes among the commanding staff of the BAF are smaller in comparison to the soldiers. It is easy to explain with the relatively stable sample of surveyed COs and NCOs. At the same time for the period between the survey phases two conscription have changed. Probably the bigger differences among the soldiers are due to the difference between the surveyed samples.

Analysing the trends in the attitudes of the military in regard to the foreign political guarantees for the national security in a long-term plan it is important to indicate that the share of people determining NATO as the best guarantee increased abruptly in 1997. This conclusion is confirmed by the data from the surveys of the SRC of the MoD carried out over the period 1994 - 1998. The abrupt increase of the portion of the military that preferred NATO as the best security guarantee is probably due to the firmly declared position of Bulgaria for full-right Alliance membership in 1997<sup>24</sup>. A stabilisation of the expressed opinions, especially as far as the professional military is concerned, was registered after

24 See: the Council of Ministers' Decision dated February 17, 1997, for a full membership of the Republic of Bulgaria in NATO.

March 1998.

In November 1998 in comparison with March 1998, we registered a slight increase of the portion of the military, both professional and conscripts, considering we could not rely on any foreign guarantees for the national security. This was probably related with the crushed hope for “immediate accession” after the decision for acceding only Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary in the first round of NATO enlargement. This is probably the reason for the considerably decreased share of conscripts that believe the NATO/WEU membership could serve as the best foreign political guarantee for the Bulgarian security.

We found some correlations analysing the factors that influence the preferences of the Bulgarians in regard to possible foreign political guarantees for the national security, and particularly the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country. As far as the professional military is concerned, we can summarise these factors as follows:

- Overall evaluation of the implementation of the reform in the BAF (V=0.171). Those who evaluate positively the implementation of the military reform to a greater extent than other servicemen consider the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country as the best way to guarantee the national security. On the contrary, those who evaluate negatively the results of the military reform are prone to prefer neutrality, or they think that there is no foreign political guarantee for the national security;

- Self-assessment of the economic status (V=0.114). Those servicemen who report higher self-assessment of their economic status prefer the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country as the best way to guarantee the national security;

- We have not found statistically significant differences among the COs and the NCOs in neither of both surveys in 1998 as far as the level of education, the military rank and the age of the respondents are concerned.

We shall summarise the factors that influence the choice of the civilians in regard to foreign political security guarantees for the country in the following way:

- Gender (V=0.187) Men support the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country and the bilateral agreements with the neighbouring countries, while women prefer neutrality. In addition, women more frequently think, “there is no foreign political guarantees to the national security”.

- Educational level (V=0.202) The supporters of the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country, the supporters of concluding bilateral agreements with the neighbouring countries and the neutrality idea supporters, are mostly among the people with high, college and university education. On the contrary, the low educated people think, “there is no foreign political guarantees to the national security”. They are the most serious supporters of the option “concluding defence treaty with Russia”;

- Age of the respondents (V=0.154) The supporters of the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country are mostly among the people below 40. On the contrary, the supporters of the option “concluding defence treaty with Russia” are mostly among elder people, above 60. The adherents of the neutrality idea and those who think, “there is no foreign political guarantees to the national security” are most frequently between 40 and 50.

- Political affiliation (V=0.282) The strongest opposition to the Bulgarian accession into NATO is among the voters of the BSP. They definitely prefer the idea of neutrality and think, “there is no foreign political guarantees to the national security”.

- Place of residence (V=0.155) The people living in cities and big towns (more than 50 000 population) are most frequently supporters of the Bulgarian accession into the Euro-

Atlantic defence structures, concluding bilateral agreements with neighbouring countries and the neutrality idea. On the contrary, people living in small towns and villages are most frequently supporters of the defence treaty with Russia. In addition, they have a more pessimistic attitude and think, “there is no foreign political guarantees to the national security”;

- Self-assessment of the economic status ( $V=0.126$ ) The supporters of the Bulgarian accession into the Euro-Atlantic defence structures are most frequently people with a high living standard, while those with a low living standard most frequently think, “there is no foreign political guarantees to the national security”.

- Occupational status ( $V=0.165$ ) The supporters of the Bulgarian accession into the Euro-Atlantic defence structures are most frequently private businessmen, people working in big government or private companies. On the contrary, the unemployed people prefer the idea of neutrality, or they most frequently say, “there is no foreign political guarantees to the national security”.

- We did not register significant correlation between the preferred way of guaranteeing the Bulgarian national security and the ethnic/religious affiliation as well as marital status of the respondents.

To summarise, the supporters of the Bulgarian accession into the Euro-Atlantic defence structures are most frequently young people, highly educated, living in the cities and big towns, with good living standard, with right-centre-political affiliation.

The supporters of the neutrality idea are most frequently people between 40 and 50 years, living in the cities and big towns, with good living standard, with left-centre political affiliation, more often among women.

The supporters of the option bilateral agreements with neighbouring countries are close to the supporters of the Bulgarian accession into the Euro-Atlantic defence structures as far as their education, political affiliation, living standard and occupational status are concerned.

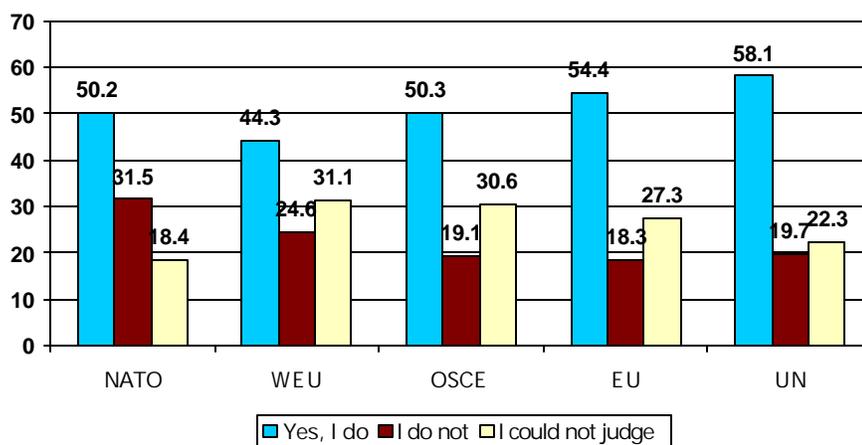
The supporters of the option of a defence treaty with Russia are among people above 60 years, living in villages and small towns, low educated, with poor economic status, and with left political affiliation.

Finally, the group of “pessimists” is mostly composed by low educated people, with low living standard, living in towns and villages, with left political affiliation, frequently unemployed, for whom the defence and security issues are not of immediate importance.

### **3.2 Trust in the Main International Institutions as Security Factors in Europe**

Most of the Bulgarians, both the military and the civilians, are willing to rely on the international military co-operation as the best way to guarantee the national security, as we have seen in the previous paragraph. In this respect, we consider important to analyse the public perceptions and attitudes towards the main international institutions responsible for building the new security architecture in the post-Cold War world (Fig. 7).

**Figure 7**  
**Do you trust the mentioned institutions as a security factor in Europe?**  
*(COs & NCOs, November 1998)*



The United Nations (UN) has the highest trust as a security factor in Europe, as it is evident from the graph. About sixty percent of the surveyed people hold this opinion. The traditional role of the UN as the main international organisation, responsible for the world security and stability is probably the reason for this comparatively high trust in this institution. On the other hand, every fifth CO and NCO does not place trust in the UN. In addition, almost the same share has no clear attitude and therefore prefers the answer “I don’t know”. The failed intervention of the UN in the conflicts in the FRY, and especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, is one probable explanation of the mistrust and the confusion when the role of the UN as a security factor in Europe is evaluated.

The European Union (EU) is rated second of the international institutions as factors of stability in Europe. A little more than half of the respondents (54,5%) put their trust in the EU and again about one-fifth of them do not believe that this institution can take responsibility for the security and stability in Europe. The share of the people who have no opinion is comparatively higher in comparison with the evaluations about the role of the UN – about one-third.

The number of the COs and the NCOs who put their trust in NATO and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) as guarantees of peace and stability is almost equal-about one half. The share of those who do not trust NATO is about one-third and this is the highest level of mistrust among all international institutions. The involvement of NATO in the conflicts in the FRY and the use of military force in managing these conflicts, which is unusual and therefore public opinion is not accustomed with, is one of the of possible explanations.

The relatively lower portion of the military who has expressed trust in the Western European Union (WEU) as a security and stability factor in Europe (44,3%) is probably due to the small popularity of the organisation as the European pillar of NATO.

The percentage of the answers “I cannot judge” is comparatively high although information on this issue is sought only from professional military personnel. It varies between 22.3% and 31.1%. This fact can be explained by lack of information and knowledge among the Bulgarian military particularly as far as the role of WEU and OSCE as factors in the new security architecture is concerned. In addition, NATO and WEU still have comparatively short history and experience in implementing UN resolutions and that is why their activity is not so popular.

The comparison of the data on the commanding staff's attitudes towards the main international institutions found out that some slight changes took place over the period from March to November 1998. (Table 3)

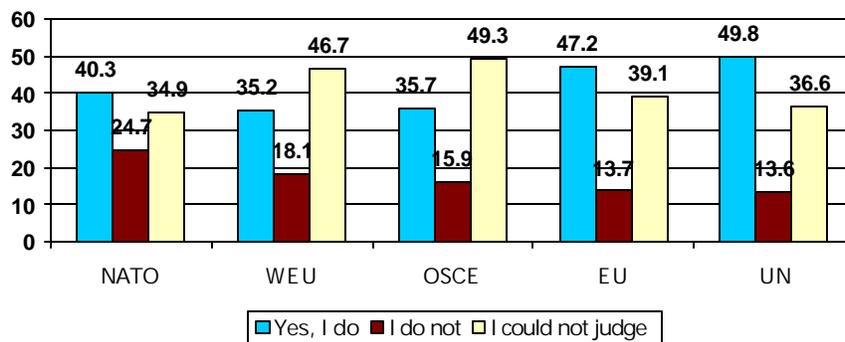
**Table 3**  
**Do you trust the mentioned International Institutions**  
**as stability factor in Europe?**  
*(COs & NCOs — March — November, 1998, in %)*

Institution	March, 1998			November, 1998		
	Yes, I do	I do not	I could not judge	Yes, I do	I do not	I could not judge
<b>NATO</b>	53.0	28.4	18.6	50.2	31.5	18.4
<b>WEU</b>	46.1	24.9	29.0	44.3	24.6	31.1
<b>OSCE</b>	50.2	20.0	29.9	50.3	19.1	30.6
<b>EU</b>	59.5	18.5	22.0	54.4	18.3	27.3
<b>UN</b>	54.6	24.0	21.4	58.1	19.7	22.3

We do not register statistically significant differences in the results from the two consequent polls among the military in March 1998 and in November 1998 as far as the evaluation of the role of WEU and OSCE as security and stability factors in Europe is concerned. Analysing the evaluations of the role of EU and NATO, we registered a slight decrease in the trust. On the contrary, the trust in the UN was slightly increased with 3.5 points (P=0.037). These results can be interpreted as stability of the attitudes of the military towards the main international institutions on the whole.

The next figure presents data on the attitudes of the civilians towards the main international institutions as security and stability factors in Europe from public opinion polls, carried out in February 1999 among the adult population in Bulgaria. (Fig. 8)

**Figure 8**  
**Do you trust the mentioned institutions**  
**as a security factor in Europe?**  
*(Civilians-February, 1999)*



The highest is the trust in the UN, followed by the EU Like among the professional military. About half of the respondents believe that these institutions can preserve stability and security in Europe.

The unfamiliarity of the Bulgarian population in regard to the role of the WEU as well as the OSCE as factors in the new European security architecture is a striking result. About half of the respondents have no opinion on the question.

The aged Bulgarians put comparatively high trust in NATO but at the same time the level of the mistrust in the Alliance is the highest among all of the international institutions.

It is important to compare the attitudes of the Bulgarians with these of the aged population in the three Central European (CE) countries that are new NATO member-states- Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic.

In addition to our data, we shall utilise the results from a 1993 public opinion poll carried out by USIA<sup>25</sup>. (Table 4)

**Table 4**  
**Trust in the main international institutions**  
**as factors of security and stability in Europe**  
*(in per-cent of positive answers)*

*(Bulgaria, 1993&1999, Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic, 1993, in %)*

Institution	Nationalities				
	Bulgaria, 1999	Bulgaria, 1993	Poland, 1993	Hungary, 1993	Czech Republic, 1993
NATO	40	33	57	51	55
WEU	35	29	38	48	45
OSCE	36	35	42	54	50

The surveyed people in 1993 from Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic put higher trust in the evaluated institutions in comparison with the Bulgarians. On the other hand, we should mention the rising share of the Bulgarian people over 1993-1999 period that put trust in NATO and WEU as factors for security and stability in Europe.

The comparison in Bulgaria between the attitudes of the military and the civilians towards the main international institutions shows some important differences. (Table 5)

**Table 5**  
**Do you trust the mentioned institutions**  
**as a security factor in Europe?**  
*(The Military & the Civilians, in %)*

Institution	The Military, November, 1998			Civilians, February, 1999		
	Yes, I do	I do not	I could not judge	Yes, I do	I do not	I could not judge
NATO	50.2	31.5	18.4	40.3	31.5	34.9
WEU	44.3	24.6	31.1	35.2	18.1	46.7
OSCE	50.3	19.1	30.6	35.7	15.0	49.3
EU	54.4	18.3	27.3	47.2	13.7	39.1
UN	58.1	19.7	22.3	49.8	13.6	36.6

We shall summarise these differences as follows:

- The professional military are much more aware with the role of the international institutions as the OSCE and the WEU in preserving security and stability in Europe.

<sup>25</sup> Data for Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic, 1993 as well as for Bulgaria 1993 is Cited from: Richard Sinnott, European Public Opinion and the Security Policy, WEU Institute for Security Studies, July 1997, p. 50

- The professional military put considerably higher trust in NATO as a security factor in Europe in comparison with the civilians.
- The issue of the international military co-operation and building the new security architecture is much less prominent among the Bulgarian citizens in comparison with the military, as a whole.

### **3.3 A Possible Membership of Bulgaria in NATO and EU- the Attitudes and the Expectations of the Military and the Citizens**

#### **3.3.1 General Attitudes towards a Possible Membership of Bulgaria in NATO and EU**

We shall start with an analysis of the general attitudes of the Bulgarian citizens towards NATO and EU membership based on the data from three nation-wide representative public opinion polls carried out over the period April-May 1999. The data was collected during the NATO Allied Force Operation in Yugoslavia and the perceptions of the Bulgarians were influenced by this fact.

Another important consideration is the different wording of the questions in the three polls, and the different categories of the responses, which makes the direct comparison among the results difficult. We shall utilise this data just to acquire a general impression on the Bulgarian population attitudes towards NATO and EU membership.

The data is presented in tables 6-8 below.

**Table 6**  
**Are you in favour or against**  
**the NATO and EU membership of Bulgaria?**  
*(April, 1999, NOEMA Ltd. N=985, in %)*

<b>Statements</b>	<b>NATO</b>	<b>EU</b>
Approve completely	17.9	43.9
Approve somewhat	27.7	39.9
Rather disapprove	30.7	11.2
Does not approve at all	23.6	4.9

According to the data from the first poll, carried out in early April 1999, less than one-half of the aged Bulgarians (45.6%) approved Bulgarian NATO membership. At the same time, 54.3% were against the Euro-Atlantic integration of our country. A vast majority (over 80%) of the surveyed people were in favour of the Bulgarian integration in the EU.

The data from the next poll, carried out in the end of April 1999, shows close results on the Bulgarian NATO and EU membership approval.

Despite the completely different wording of the question, and the category “I don’t know” that was included, the main tendency in the attitudes were preserved.

**Table 7**  
**Are you in favour or against**  
**the NATO and EU membership of Bulgaria?**  
*(April 1999, NPOPRC, N=1101, in %)*

<b>Statements</b>	<b>NATO</b>	<b>EU</b>
Yes	47.7	77.6
No	32.6	6.0
Don't know	19.7	16.4

The third poll was carried out in the end of May 1999, just during the NATO Allied Force operation in Kosovo. According to the results, more than one-half of the aged Bulgarians (51.9%) approved NATO membership, while one-third (33.6%) were against. As far as the EU membership is concerned, again vast majority (about 76%) were in favour of the Bulgarian integration in the organisation.

**Table 8**  
**Are you in favour or against the**  
**NATO and EU membership of Bulgaria?**  
*(May, 1999, Vitosha Research, N=1081, in %)*

<b>Statements</b>	<b>NATO</b>	<b>EU</b>
Approve completely	27.1	50.4
Approve somewhat	24.8	25.8
Rather disapprove	15.5	3.9
Does not approve at all	18.2	4.1
Don't know	14.4	15.8

Comparative data on the attitudes of the Bulgarians and the respondents from some Central European countries towards NATO membership is presented on table 9.

**Table 9**  
**Are you in favour or against**  
**the NATO membership of your country?<sup>26</sup>**  
*(Comparison between the attitudes of the Bulgarians*  
*and three new NATO-member countries, in %)*

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Bulgaria,</b> <b>May,</b> <b>1999,</b>	<b>Bulgaria,</b> <b>1996</b>	<b>Poland,</b> <b>1996</b>	<b>Czech</b> <b>Republic,</b> <b>1996</b>	<b>Hungary,</b> <b>1996</b>
Approve completely	27	25	28	17	19
Approve somewhat	25	27	44	34	38
Rather disapprove	16	13	9	21	15
Does not approve at all	18	14	3	12	12
Don't know	14	21	16	16	16

The comparison between the results from the 1996 and 1999 polls shows that the share of the Bulgarian membership in NATO supporters remains unchanged (52% from both categories “approve completely” and “approve somewhat”). At the same time, the share of

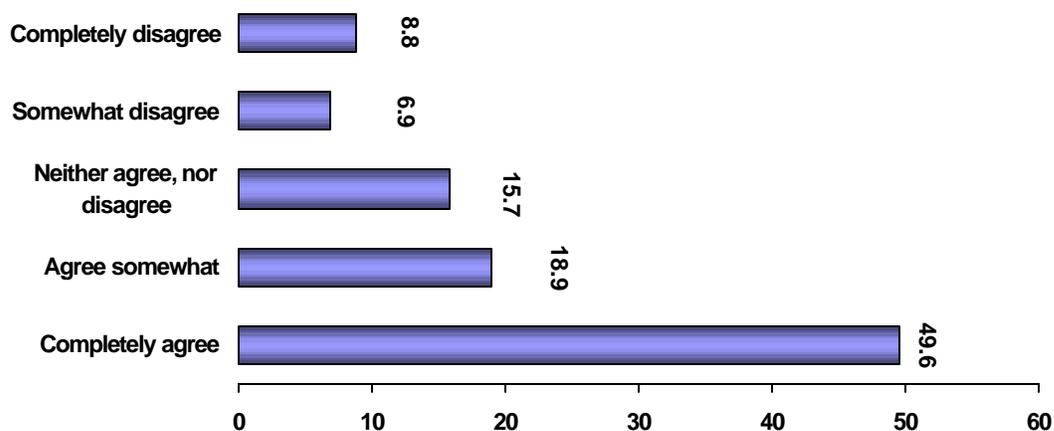
<sup>26</sup> Data for Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic, 1996 as well as for Bulgaria 1996 is Cited from: Richard Sinnott, *European Public Opinion and the Security Policy*, WEU Institute for Security Studies, July 1997, p. 52

the people who do not approve the Bulgarian integration in NATO increased with 6.7 points in May 1999 compared to 1996 (33.7% from both categories “rather disapprove” and “does not approve at all”). The share of the people who had no opinion on the question decreased with 6.6 points in May 1999. This coincidence may be accidental but probably it can be explained with a transition of opinions from “I don’t know” towards “I do not approve”.

The comparison of the attitudes of the aged Bulgarians with those of the people from the other three Central European countries shows that the level of the public support for NATO membership in Bulgaria was almost the same as that in the Czech Republic. A little higher support to NATO membership was registered in Hungary, while the public support for the integration in NATO was the highest in Poland.

It is important in conclusion to compare the public attitudes towards the Bulgarian membership in NATO and those of the elites. The next figure presents the data on the attitudes of the Bulgarian elites towards NATO membership of the country (Fig. 9).

**Figure 9**  
**Are you in favour or against the NATO membership of Bulgaria?**  
*(November, 1998, Vitosha Research, N=427)*



The comparison between the attitudes of the elites and the public attitudes shows considerably higher support for the Bulgarian accession into NATO among the elites.

To summarise, about half of the Bulgarian citizens in April-May 1999 were in favour of the Bulgarian NATO membership. At the same time, more than two-thirds of the Bulgarians approved the EU membership of the country.

We registered vastly different attitudes towards the Bulgarian NATO and EU membership. The Kosovo crisis and the involvement of NATO into air strikes against the FRY deepened this difference in the perceptions of the Bulgarian citizens.

### 3.3.2 Public Attitudes towards the Implementation of Some Specific Tasks related to the Bulgarian Policy of Accession into NATO

The joining of a state to a collective defence system is connected with a certain degree of voluntary repudiation of the national sovereignty in exchange to acquiring greater security guarantees. The participation in a collective defence system imposes also the fulfilment of certain type of tasks, which have not been common up to the present moment. To assess to what extent the public opinion is apt to support this, we asked the surveyed people to point out whether they would approve the following activities:

- Participation in Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) to take part in PSOs;

- Stationing NATO troops on Bulgarian territory;
- Participation of Bulgarian troops in defending a NATO member country;
- Conducting NATO exercises on Bulgarian territory;
- Planned NATO flights over the Bulgarian territory;
- Increasing the defence portion of the national budget.

We utilised three data sets in order to analyse these specific attitudes of the Bulgarians. The first set comprises the data for the military (COs and NCOs); the second consists of the data on the perceptions of the aged civilians; and the third set comprises the data on the perceptions of the young people (students and soldiers).

In addition, we traced some changes in the perceptions of these three groups of the respondents over the 1998-1999 period.

Table 10 presents the data on the attitudes of the professional military.

**Table 10**  
**Attitudes of the Military towards the implementation of some specific tasks**  
**related to the Bulgarian policy of accession to NATO**  
*(COs & NCOs, March-November, 1998, in %)*

Activities	Support		Oppose		Don't know	
	March, 1998	Nov., 1998	March, 1998	Nov., 1998	March, 1998	Nov., 1998
Send out troops to defend another NATO country	43.8	36.1	38.6	43.9	18.5	20.0
Have NATO troops stationed in our country	16.0	20.9	67.9	64.6	14.2	14.4
Conducting regular exercises of NATO forces in our country	57.9	50.8	30.6	37.3	11.5	11.9
Planned NATO flights over the Bulgarian territory	35.6	29.5	45.2	52.2	19.3	18.2
Increasing the proportion of national budget for the military	81.8	80.2	8.4	9.1	9.8	10.6
Participation of Bulgarian Army in CJTF for peace-support operations	78.3	74.0	10.3	15.9	11.4	10.1

The analysis of the data shows that the most popular activity among the Bulgarian military in regard to our policy for accession into the Euro-Atlantic defence structures is the participation of the Bulgarian Army in CJTF for implementation of PSOs.

The second activity that attracts more than half of the respondents' approval is conducting regular exercises of NATO forces in our country.

Typical for the group of the professional military is the high approval of increasing the defence budget in relation with the accession of Bulgaria into NATO. This is quite easy to explain and to be expected on part of the professional military personnel.

The lowest is the approval of stationing NATO troops on Bulgarian territory.

In summary, there is a decrease in the approval on part of the professional military of the most of the activities in regard to our policy for accession into Euro-Atlantic defence structures over the period March-November 1998. This is particularly true for such activities as planned NATO flights over the Bulgarian territory (-6.1 points) ( $P=0.0018$ ), conducting regular exercises of NATO forces in our country (-7.1 points) ( $P=0.0001$ ) and sending out troops to defend another NATO country (-7.7 points) ( $P=0.0001$ ).

It is important to point out that stationing NATO troops on the Bulgarian territory is the only option that marked a rise with 4.9 points over the period March-November 1998 ( $P=0.0005$ ). Although it is hard to be explained, we can speculate that this result might be connected with:

- The difficulties in the military reform and the perception of the BAF being weakened resulting in the opinion that they can not assure the national security and the territorial integrity of the country;
- The long lasting conflict in the FRY and the perception of risk to the Bulgarian national security;
- The willingness of the military to strengthen the Bulgarian national security via integration into the Euro-Atlantic defence and security structures;
- The growing number of NATO-PfP exercises resulting in a better understanding each other.

The analysis of the data on the attitudes of the aged civilians towards the responsibilities and engagements of a country being a member of a collective defence system, presented on table 11, shows that about one-third of the respondents have no opinion on the issue. One possible explanation is that these activities are new for our citizens and therefore they have not enough information and knowledge to make the right assessment.

**Table 11**  
**Attitudes of the Military and Civilians**  
**towards the implementation of some specific tasks**  
**related to the Bulgarian policy of accession into NATO**  
*(Civilians, February 1999, COs & NCOs, November, 1998, in %)*

Activities	Support		Oppose		Don't know	
	Civilians	COs & NCOs	Civilians	COs & NCOs	Civilians	COs & NCOs
Send out troops to defend another NATO country	24.3	36.1	40.6	43.9	35.0	20.0
Have NATO troops stationed in our country	18.6	20.9	47.0	64.6	34.4	14.4
Conducting regular exercises of NATO forces in our country	26.6	50.8	39.9	37.3	33.5	11.9
Planned NATO flights over the Bulgarian territory	23.0	29.5	41.6	52.2	35.4	18.2
Increasing the proportion of national budget for the military	32.2	80.2	32.1	9.1	35.8	10.6
Participation of Bulgarian Army in CJTF for peace-support operations	36.5	74.0	30.4	15.9	33.0	10.1

On the whole, the aged population tends to oppose most of the concrete engagements in regard to the Bulgarian membership in a collective defence system. This fact is striking because on the one hand there is clearly defined Bulgarian desire to be a part of a collective defence system and to make use of the advantages of this membership, and on the other hand, the respondents demonstrate unwillingness to share the responsibilities of this membership. This is one of the most important topics to be discussed in order to help promoting a better understanding of NATO membership among the Bulgarian population. The information policy in regard to the Bulgarian accession into the Euro-Atlantic security structures should be aimed at achieving a better understanding of the balance between the advantages and the obligations of the country as a member of a collective defence system.

The comparison of the attitudes of the military and the civilians reveals that the military, being professionals, better understand the responsibilities and the advantages of the Bulgarian membership in a collective defence system.

Despite the fact that we asked professional military, the share of the responses “I don't know” is comparatively high (varying between 10.1% and 20.0%). This result, as in the case with the civilians, is probably due to the lack of information and knowledge about the responsibilities in regard to the membership in a collective defence system.

The young people, both students and soldiers, demonstrate higher willingness to support and to share the responsibilities of the Bulgarian membership in a collective defence system in comparison with the aged Bulgarians (Table 12).

**Table 12**  
**Attitudes of the Soldiers and the Students**  
**towards the implementation of some specific tasks**  
**related to the Bulgarian policy of accession into NATO**  
*(Soldiers and Students, November 1998, in %)*

Activities	Support		Oppose		Don't know	
	Soldiers	Students	Soldiers	Students	Soldiers	Students
Send out troops to defend another NATO country	39.2	36.7	34.6	38.7	26.2	24.6
Have NATO troops stationed in our country	29.3	27.8	45.9	52.2	24.9	20.0
Conducting regular exercises of NATO forces in our country	39.2	37.9	38.0	43.6	22.8	18.4
Planned NATO flights over the Bulgarian territory	28.8	25.0	43.2	53.7	28.0	21.3
Increasing the proportion of national budget for the military	53.1	54.1	19.2	17.4	27.7	28.4
Participation of Bulgarian Army in CJTF for peace-support operations	46.9	47.9	16.8	17.6	36.3	34.5

An important difference between the aged Bulgarians and the young people is the approval of the increase of the budgetary expenditures for defence on part of the soldiers and the students. And again, the main problem is the high share of “don't knows” (varying between 21.3% and 36.3%). It is important to point out that there are no statistically significant differences in the assessments of the students and the soldiers.

To summarise, the Bulgarian Armed Forces participation in CJTF receives the approval of almost three-fourths (74%) of the COs and the NCOs, 46,9% of the soldiers, 41,7% of the students and 36.5% of the aged Bulgarians. The share of the soldiers and the students that answered “I can not judge” is more than one-third, which speaks of the low popularity of this most probable form of the Bulgarian Armed Forces participation in NATO defence structure.

The conducting of NATO exercises on our territory receives highest approval among the professional military (50,8%). The approval and disapproval among the soldiers is almost equal – about 40%. The disapproval prevails among the students (41,6% against 35,7% approval) and among the aged population (39.9% vs. 26.6% approval).

The respondents are not unanimous in their assessments in regard to the main NATO principle - the collective defence. The disapproval dominates among different surveyed groups except for the soldiers.

The lowest approval receives the stationing NATO troops on Bulgarian territory (20,9% of the COs and NCOs, 18,6% of the aged civilians, 29,3% of the soldiers and 27,8% of the students) and planned NATO flights over Bulgarian territory (29,5% of the commanding staff, 23,0% of civilians, 28,8% of the soldiers and 25,0% of the students).

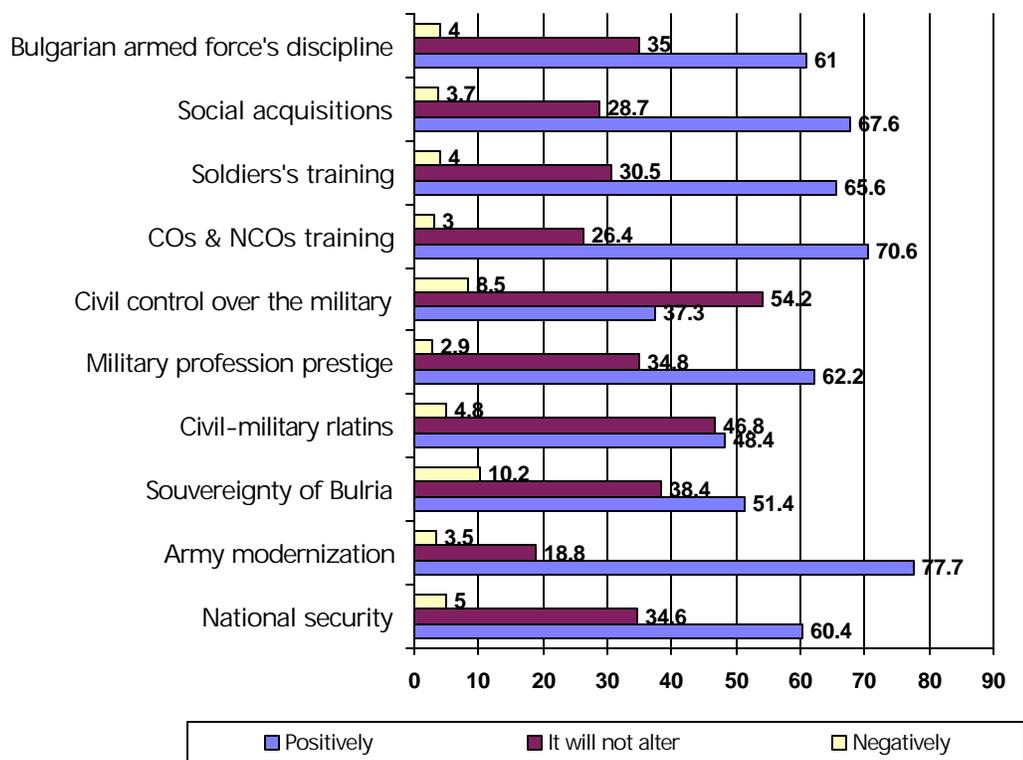
The increase of the budgetary expenditures for defence in regard to our accession into NATO receives the highest support on part of the professional military (80,2%), followed by the young people (47%), and is not supported by the aged Bulgarians (32,2%).

### 3.3.3 Expectations in Regard to a Possible Membership of Bulgaria in NATO and EU

The analysis of the surveys results carried out over the period of the study shows strongly expressed positive expectations of a possible accession of Bulgaria into NATO, both among the military and the civilians.

The COs and NCOs of the BAF were asked to assess how the possible membership of Bulgaria in NATO would affect some main activities and conditions for guaranteeing the national security and development of the Bulgarian Armed Forces. Figure 9 presents the results from a survey carried out in November 1998 among the professional military.

**Figure 9**  
**Expectations for the effect of a possible accession of Bulgaria into NATO**  
*(COs & NCOs, November, 1998, in %)*



The expectations of the military in regard to a possible accession of Bulgaria into NATO are mainly connected with the army modernisation and training improvement of the COs & NCOs as well as soldiers. In addition, Bulgarian COs and NCOs expect that our accession into NATO will result in social acquisitions, raising the prestige of the military

profession, the national security guarantees and the improvement of the Bulgarian Armed Forces' discipline.

Briefly, mostly positive expectations in regard to the Bulgarian accession into NATO predominate among the military. They are directly connected with the improvement of the conditions for professional realisation and tend to be unchanged and stable compared with the expectations of the military registered in our survey from March 1998.

When the Bulgarian military expect the country to become a full-right NATO member-state?

The most optimistic expectation, according to the November 1998 survey, is that Bulgaria will join the Alliance until 2000. This expectation is shared by a small deal of the military –8 percent. More than one-fourth of the COs and NCOs (28%) believe that Bulgaria will join NATO until 2005. About one-fifth (18%) expect to see our country the Alliance member-state until 2010.

In summary, the predominant part of the Bulgarian military share optimistic expectations in regard to the accession of our country into NATO and believe that it will become a NATO-member state before 2010.

The rest of the Bulgarian military could be divided into two subgroups. The first subgroup, which comprise about one fourth (26%), suppose that it is reasonable to expect Bulgaria to join NATO after 2010. The second subgroup, which comprises one-fifth (20%) of the respondents, does not expect Bulgaria to become a NATO member-state at all.

The most important difficulties accompanying the Bulgarian way to NATO membership according to the military are predominantly connected with the economic development of the country (80% of the respondents). In addition, about 10% of the surveyed think that the long-lasting process of synchronisation of the Bulgarian national legislation with the European one will become a handicap for our accession into NATO. Almost the same is the share of the military that believe the level of the organised crime in Bulgaria will prevent our joining the Alliance.

In regard to the conditions in the Bulgarian Armed Forces, the predominant share of the military (55%) expects that the shortage in the military budget and the supply of the BAF will become a serious obstacle for the Bulgarian accession into NATO. In addition, more than one fourth (28%) expect that the armament and logistics technical conditions will add new problems in this respect. Finally, less than one-fifth (17%) expect difficulties regarding the change of the BAF organisational structure to be interoperable with the NATO forces.

The Bulgarian COs and NCOs do not expect the military educational system and the level of their education and training to become a serious obstacle in regard to our accession into NATO.

Our respondents rated the main difficulties they expect in regard to BAF's preparation for NATO-membership in the following way:

- Achieving interoperability according to NATO STANAGs in regard to logistics and supplies;
- Achieving interoperability in command, control, communications and intelligence systems;
- Education and training of cadre to work in multinational staffs in NATO Head Quarters;
- Military units training for participation in CJTF.

An important question in regard to building consistent policy of the Bulgarian accession into the Euro-Atlantic security and defence structures is: “In what way our country could overcome the difficulties and the problems in respect to our accession into NATO”. The Bulgarian military rated the successful strategy in the following way:

- To get the support of the European NATO-member states (63.3%);
- To get the support of the United States (52.6%);
- To get the support of the NATO member-states on the Balkans (44.3%);
- To continue the efforts for improving the military co-operation in South-Eastern Europe (35.4%);
- To study and apply the experience of Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary (32.3%);
- To start dialogue with Russia (29.6%)
- To co-ordinate the policy for accession into NATO with Romania and Slovenia (6.6%)<sup>27</sup>.

The expectations of the aged Bulgarians with regard to the integration of the country in NATO and EU are presented on table 13.

**Table 13**  
**Expectations Bulgaria to become a full-right NATO and EU member**  
*(April, 1999, NOEMA Ltd., N=985, in %)*

Statements	NATO	EU
Up to 1 year	7.9	8.0
Up to 5 years	22.9	24.6
Up to 10 years	9.6	15.1
Up to 15 years	2.9	5.2
Up to 20 years	4.3	4.1
Bulgaria will never become a NATO/EU member-state	11.9	7.2
Don't know	40.5	35.9

The results show that the expectations of the Bulgarians for NATO and EU membership are more than optimistic. About one third of the respondents expect Bulgaria to become both NATO and EU member country in the next five years. The larger part of the respondents (more than one third) can not judge, and therefore they give no answer to the question.

<sup>27</sup> The sum of the percentages exceeds 100% because the respondents have chosen more

The evaluation of the advantages and the disadvantages of a possible membership of the country in NATO gives additional information in regard to the expectations of the Bulgarians (Table 14).

**Table 14**  
**Evaluation of the advantages and the disadvantages**  
**of a possible Bulgarian membership in NATO**  
*(Civilians, April 1999, in %, N=985, in %)*

N	Statements	I agree	I don't agree	I don't know
1.	NATO military bases would provide jobs for the local population	34.2	25.1	40.7
2.	Bulgaria would find it easier to join the process of European integration	37.8	22.5	39.7
3.	Bulgarian reputation in the world would grow	39.5	31.0	29.6
4.	Military security of Bulgaria would be strengthened	44.0	27.2	28.8
5.	Bulgarian armed forces would have better access to modern weapons	49.2	17.7	33.0
6.	NATO military bases would be a threat to the environment	49.6	14.2	36.2
7.	It would mean more money for the defence budget	63.8	8.7	27.5

Two kind of opposite expectations can be differentiated, analysing the data in the table 14.

The first type is connected with the armed forces modernisation and enhancing the Bulgarian national security as well as joining the EU. The statements that describe this attitude are “Bulgarian armed forces would have better access to modern weapons”, “Military security of Bulgaria would be strengthened”, “Bulgarian reputation in the world would grow” and “Bulgaria would find it easier to join the process of European integration.”

The second type of expectations is connected with the rising of the defence budget and environmental problems. Two statements describe this attitude: “It would mean more money for the defence budget” and “NATO military bases would be a threat to the environment”.

In summary, the expectations of the Bulgarians in regard to a possible NATO membership of the country are split up between pragmatic and stereotype way of thinking. On the one hand, they expect guarantees of the national security and the economic prosperity of the country, on the other hand, the stereotypes of “unaffordable economic costs” as well as “ecological threat”, appear again. The high share of “don't knows”, is a certain indicator of lack of reliable information among the Bulgarian people to make the proper assessment. In addition, this situation is one of the most important factors for growing up of stereotypes and wrong images.

### **3.4 Expectations of the Bulgarians in Regard to the Future Relations with the Neighbours and Russia**

What are the expectations of the Bulgarians from a possible membership of the country in NATO and its effect on our relations with the neighbouring countries and Russia?

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than one option.

To answer this question three sets of data are utilised concerning the assessments of the professional military, the aged Bulgarians and the young people.

The attitudes of the adult population are close to those of the COs and NCOs concerning the expected improvement of the relations with out neighbours -NATO members and the worsening of the relations with Russia as a result of a possible Bulgarian accession into NATO.

Almost two thirds of the military and over half on the aged civilians consider that the accession of Bulgaria to NATO will affect positively the relations with Turkey and Greece as member countries of the Alliance. At the same time, more than two-thirds of the military and more than half of the civilians expect worsening of the Bulgarian relations with Russia as a result from our integration in NATO. The expectations of the COs and NCOs as well as civilians in regard to the relations with Yugoslavia are similar. A small change may be expected in our relations with Romania and FYROM resulting form a possible accession of Bulgaria to NATO, according to the surveyed people. If such a change should occur, it would be rather positive.

**Table 15**  
**According to you, what would be the effect of the Bulgarian membership in NATO on the relationships with the following countries?**  
*(COs & NCOs, November 1998, Aged population, February, 1999, in %)*

N	Country/ Expectations	Positive		It will not change		Negative	
		COs & NCOs	Civilians	COs & NCOs	Civilians	COs & NCOs	Civilians
1	Turkey	62.1	57.0	34.3	39.6	3.6	3.4
2	Greece	59.7	54.0	37.0	42.2	3.3	3.8
3	Yugoslavia	15.9	24.5	38.5	45.3	45.6	30.1
4	Romania	35.7	38.8	57.1	53.5	7.2	7.7
5	FYROM	30.1	37.7	52.7	48.3	17.2	14.0
6	Russia	9.7	11.0	19.0	31.3	71.3	57.7

As far as the assessments of the young people are concerned, they also expect improvement of the Bulgarian relations with Greece and Turkey as a result of a possible Bulgarian accession into NATO as Alliance member-countries. In regard to our relations with Russia, they are less worried about worsening in comparison with the aged population. (Table 16.).

**Table 16**  
**According to you what would be the effect of Bulgaria's membership in NATO on the relationships with the following countries:**  
*(Soldiers and Students, November 1998, in %)*

N	Country/ Expectations	Positive		It will not change		Negative	
		Soldiers	Students	Soldiers	Students	Soldiers	Students
1	Turkey	52.7	45.9	38.2	42.3	9.0	11.8
2	Greece	52.2	50.7	38.5	41.9	9.4	7.4
3	Yugoslavia	27.9	18.2	43.9	37.2	28.2	44.3
4	Romania	34.7	30.7	52.5	57.4	12.8	11.9
5	FYROM	33.8	27.4	50.4	52.3	15.8	20.3
6	Russia	23.9	21.1	35.4	31.1	40.7	47.9

This fact deserves a special attention because it reflects a wrong impression, which inhabits the public conscience from the very beginning of the debate on the Bulgaria integration in NATO. It reflects the compulsory dilemma in front of which some politicians and mass media try to pose the Bulgarian citizen: either with NATO or Russia. It is worth mentioning these differences between the assessments of the young people and the aged population, which is probably due to the age differences and the different type of socialisation.

### **3.5 Attitudes of the Bulgarian Military and Citizens towards the Participation of the Bulgarian Armed Forces In Operations Other than War**

Under the new security environment after the end of the Cold War the BAF become increasingly involved in Military Operations Other than War (MOOTW), they have never been educated and trained for before. In this regard, the issue of adoption of new roles and performance of new missions by the BAF is a problem, which deserves a special attention. It has two aspects. On one hand it is the role perception by the military, on the other - the level of public support for the participation of the BAF in MOOTW.

#### **3.5.1 The Attitudes of the Military towards the Bulgarian Armed Forces Participation in Military Operations Other than War**

The analysis of the attitudes of the Bulgarian military concerning the new tasks is made on two levels. The mass attitudes of the Bulgarian officers towards the possible future tasks of the BAF are analysed on the basis of a representative sociological survey among the military on the first level. The attitudes of another purposively chosen group of Bulgarian officers, defined as experts on the basis of their experience in international operations, is examined on the second level. The comparison of the perceptions and the attitudes of these two groups gives an idea about the influence of the PSOs practical experience on the role perception of the military.

The data presented in table 17 gives an opportunity to compare the mass attitudes of the Bulgarian officers towards the traditional military mission- the protection and defence of the national territory and the new missions - participation in MOOTW. In addition, the attitudes of the Bulgarian officers as a whole and these of the expert group on participation of the Bulgarian Armed Forces in PSOs are compared.

The respondents answered to what extent they approve the fulfilment of different tasks by the Bulgarian armed forces using a four-point Likert type scale. The answers are “I

would strongly approve” (1); “I am prone to approve “(2); “I am prone not to approve“ (3), and “I would not approve at all “(4).

**Table 17**  
**Approval of some probable tasks of the Bulgarian Armed Forces**  
*(Comparison between a representative sociological survey among the Bulgarian officers/ April 1998, N=983, and an expert judgement survey, April 1999, N=28, in %)*

<b>Probable tasks of the Bulgarian Armed Forces/ The level of Approval by the Officers</b>	<b>Percent of approval</b>	
	<b>All officers</b>	<b>Experts</b>
Protection and defence of the national territory	98	-
Help in case of civil disasters in the home country	96	-
Humanitarian missions	90	95
International arms control missions	85	95
Peacekeeping operations under the UN flag	84.5	100
Protection of the environment	86	-
Struggle against international terrorism	82	-
Struggle against organised crime and drug trafficking	82	-
Help in case of civil disasters abroad	84	-
Internal territory control	79	-
Peacekeeping operations in coalition with other countries	75	82
Assistance in policing state borders (especially in case of mass immigration)	72	-
Military actions under the supreme command of the UN	58	95
Ceremonial functions	43	-
Peace enforcement of the UN resolutions (as in the Gulf War)	43	65
Building civil infrastructure	41	-
Replacement of civil workers in case of strike	19	-

Referring to the data in the table 17, we can see that the traditional mission of the Armed Forces, “the protection and defence of the national territory”, remains the priority task for the Bulgarian officers. In addition, they are highly supportive for tasks as “military assistance in case of civil disasters” both at home and- to a slightly less extend- abroad. The same can be said for the task “protection of the environment.”

It is not surprising the broad agreement about the fulfilment of the so-called police tasks such as “struggle against organised crime, and drug trafficking“, “internal territory control”, and “struggle against international terrorism”, given the situation in the country in 1998 concerning the rapid rise of criminality.

The bottom of the rating is occupied by the task “replacement of civilian workers in case of strike.” Obviously, this task is unacceptable for the Bulgarian officers.

Comparatively low is the level of approval by the Bulgarian officers of the tasks like “building of civil infrastructure”, and “performance of ceremonial functions”.

There is practically broad agreement among the surveyed personnel with regard to the deployment in an international theatre. The highest is the support for the participation of the BAF in “humanitarian missions”, followed by the “participation in peacekeeping forces under the UN flag” and the “participation in Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) in coalition with other states”.

The level of approval lowers when the respondents are asked to rate tasks like “Military actions under the supreme command of the UN” and “military enforcement of the UN resolutions such as the Gulf War”.

Some important differences can be found comparing the mass perceptions of the Bulgarian officers with the attitudes of the experts towards the participation of the Bulgarian Armed Forces in PSOs.

There is absolute experts’ support for such task as “participation of the Bulgarian servicemen in PSOs under the UN flag”. Almost all of the experts supported the Bulgarian Armed Forces participation in “humanitarian operations”, “international missions for control over armament” and “Military actions under the supreme command of the UN”. The experts’ degree of approval slightly decreases when asked to rate a task “participation in PKOs in coalition with other states”. The lowest the experts’ support is for the Bulgarian Armed Forces participation in “peace enforcement of UN Resolutions”.

Comparing the mass attitudes of the Bulgarian officers and the attitudes of the experts towards the Bulgarian Armed Forces participation in PSOs, we found the main difference when enforcement measures were considered. As a whole, the experts are more supportive for the Armed Forces participation in PSOs, including these accompanied with enforcement measures. In addition, they are more supportive for participation of the Bulgarian Army contingents in PSOs, carried out by ad-hoc coalitions with other countries. The explanation they gave for this opinion is that participating in PSOs the Bulgarian military acquire new skills and knowledge in the real-like situations training of forces. In addition, they stated that the Bulgarian participation in multinational PSOs is directly associated with the realisation of the Bulgaria priorities in the foreign policy, which means a rapid integration of Bulgaria into the Euro-Atlantic security structures. Finally, according to the experts, the participation of the BAF in PSOs would lead to the acquirement of the NATO member-states experience, and the achievement of a high degree of interoperability.

The differences between the experts’ attitudes and the mass attitudes of the Bulgarian officers can be explained by the lack of traditions as well as lack of knowledge about the new missions of the Armed Forces among the Bulgarian military. It means that further efforts should be put on the enlargement of the support for the Bulgarian Armed Forces participation in MOOTW, and particularly in PSOs, from the expert’s level towards the general public.

### **3.5.2 Attitudes of the Citizens towards the Bulgarian Armed Forces Participation in Military Operations Other than War**

The data on the attitudes of the Bulgarian citizens towards the possible new missions of the BAF is analysed in this paragraph. In addition, a comparison on the attitudes of the aged civilians with these of the military (both the COs and NCOs) is made. The table 18 presents data collected both from COs and NCOs and the civilians.

The questions and the measuring scales are the same for both the military and the civilians, so methodologically the comparison of the results in both samples is possible.

**Table 18**  
**Approval by the military and the citizens of**  
**some probable missions of the Bulgarian armed forces, April 1998**  
*(Mean scores, min approval =4, max approval=1)*

N	Probable Missions of the Bulgarian armed forces	The citizens, (arithmetic mean) N=1171	The military (arithmetic mean and rating) N=1563	
1	Protection and defence of the national territory	1.15	1.13	<b>(1)<sup>28</sup></b>
2	Help in case of civil disasters at home country	1.28	1.22	<b>(2)</b>
3	Humanitarian missions	1.32	1.49	<b>(3)</b>
4	Protection of the environment	1.36	1.59	<b>(4)</b>
5	Struggle against organised crime and drug trafficking	1.43	1.69	<b>(8)</b>
6	Help in case of civil disasters abroad	1.46	1.66	<b>(6)</b>
7	Assistance in policing state borders (especially in case of mass immigration)	1.50	1.99	<b>(12)</b>
8	Struggle against international terrorism	1.51	1.64	<b>(5)</b>
9	Ceremonial functions	1.55	2.35	<b>(13)</b>
10	Building civil infrastructure	1.58	2.35	<b>(14)</b>
11	Internal territory control	1.72	1.68	<b>(7)</b>
12	Peacekeeping operations under the UN flag	1.82	1.77	<b>(11)</b>
13	Peacekeeping operations in co-operation with other countries	1.96	1.75	<b>(10)</b>
14	International arms control missions	2.10	1.72	<b>(9)</b>
15	Military actions under the supreme command of the UN	2.58	2.40	<b>(15)</b>
16	Military enforcement of the UN resolutions (as in the Gulf War)	2.79	2.71	<b>(16)</b>
17	Replacement of civil workers in case of strike	2.84	3.33	<b>(17)</b>

There is a full consent between the citizens and the military about the main mission of the armed forces – the protection and defence of the national territory. Both groups rate this mission as a priority one. The other point of full consent between the citizens and the military is in the bottom of the table- rating mission “Replacement of civil workers in case of strike”.

The civilians like the military, rate highly such missions as “Help in case of civil disasters at home country”, “Help in case of civil disasters abroad” “Humanitarian missions” and “Protection of the environment”. Obviously, the Bulgarians tend to support the Armed Forces participation in socially acceptable missions, i.e. - missions connected with help and support of civil society.

<sup>28</sup> The numbers in the parentheses represent the rating of the possible missions of the BAF made by the military

The agreement between the citizens and the military on the Armed Forces participation in so-called police tasks is considerable. As we pointed out above, this fact is not surprising having in mind the criminality rise in the country after 1989, and the low approval of the police and juridical system.

The only difference among the civilians and the military in rating the probable future tasks of the BAF we found as far as the performance of ceremonial functions and building up civil infrastructure is concerned. On the whole, the civilians tend to approve participation of the military in such missions, while the COs and NCOs definitely do not approve either of them. It is understandable having in mind the willingness of the military to give rid of all functions that are not directly associated with to pure combat activities. On the other hand, the civilians used to rely on the military in performing non-combat activities like building up civilian infrastructure in the years before 1989.

The perceptions and the attitudes of the citizens on the BAF participation in PSOs, as one of the most probable MOOTW deserve a special attention. Starting with the rating of different kind of PSOs, we can say that the mission “participation in peacekeeping forces under the UN flag” is the most acceptable mission among the civilians. “Participation in peacekeeping operations in co-operation with other countries” and “international arms control missions”, are second and third in this rating. The level of approval lowers when the respondents are asked to rate “Military actions under the supreme command of the UN” and “Military enforcement of the UN resolutions”.

The assessment of the Bulgarian citizens for the readiness of the BAF to take part in PSOs is predominantly positive. More than one third of them (34.9%) think that the preparedness of the Bulgarian army to take part in PSOs is “excellent” and “good” and 16.3% define as “satisfactory”. Less than 10% of the surveyed citizens point out, that the preparedness of the Bulgarian army to participate in PSOs is “not satisfactory”. It is important to emphasise on the considerably high percentage (39.6%) of respondents who have no opinion on this issue, which is another indicator of low popularity of PSOs as new mission of the Bulgarian Armed Forces among the civilians.

The responses to the questions concerning participation in such missions of their close relative and the rising of the budgetary expenditures in regard to participation of the BAF in PSOs give more precise information about the attitudes of the Bulgarian citizens towards the participation of the military in PSOs.<sup>29</sup> The data shows that the predominant part of the surveyed (57.4%) will not interfere, if some of their close relatives decide to volunteer for PSO. Less than one-third (27.5%) will be against, and about 15% will approve the decision of their relatives.

The opinions of the citizens, concerning the financial dimension of the Bulgarian participation in PSOs, are split almost equal between the declared readiness to pay more taxes (27.9%) for the military budget, and the unwillingness to do so (32.5%). And again more than one-third (39.5%) declare they have no opinion on the issue.

To summarise, booth the military and the civilians tend to support:

- The traditional mission of the BAF –the protection and the defence of the national territory
- The missions associated with help to the civil society

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<sup>29</sup> The questions were: “What would be your reaction if some of your close relations decide to volunteer for peacekeeping operation like SFOR in BiH?” and “Would you approve of the rise of military expenditures in connection with the participation of Bulgarian Army in peacekeeping operations like SFOR in BiH?”

- International missions accompanied with low risk for the military personnel, which are associated with the “traditional peacekeeping missions”.

Both the military and the civilians do not support missions accompanied with high risk for the military personnel. In addition, the military do not support missions that are not of pure combat character.

## CHAPTER 4

### The Kosovo Crisis - Lessons Learned in Regard to the Public Perceptions on the Use of Military Force in the International Relations

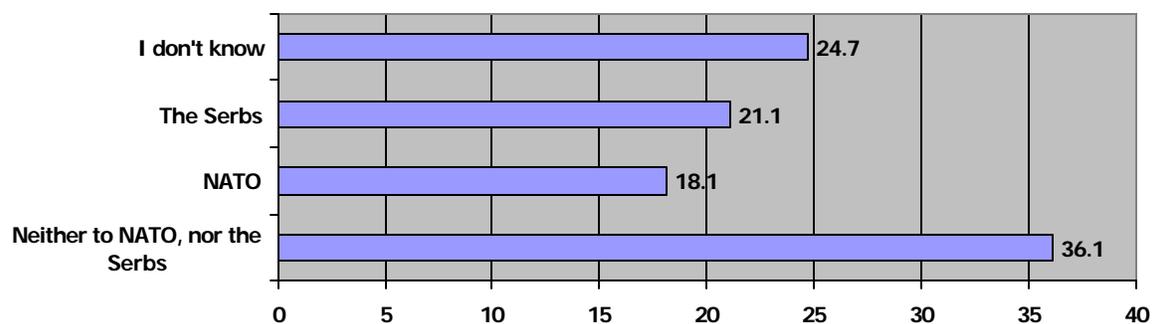
#### 4.1 Attitudes towards the Kosovo conflict and the Use of Military Force in the International Relations

The Kosovo crisis provided an opportunity for us to assess and to distinguish between the public perception of NATO as a “civilisation choice”, i.e. – the Bulgarian integration in the Euro-Atlantic defence, political and economic structures and NATO as a defence organisation acting in a real crisis situation. In addition, it gave us the opportunity to assess the attitudes of the Bulgarians towards the use of military force in the international relations.

An important distinction should be made between the attitudes the Bulgarians towards the Kosovo crisis on one hand and towards NATO air strikes and the use of military force in the international relations, on the other.

The public perception of justice in the conflict was neither on the part of NATO, no the Serbs. (Figure 10)

**Figure 10**  
**The Justice in the Kosovo Conflict was to the side of:**  
*(The Civilians, April, 1999, in %)*



More than one-third of the surveyed (36.1%), thought that the justice in the Kosovo conflict was neither to NATO nor the Serbs according to a nation-wide representative public opinion poll carried out by NOEMA Ltd. in April 1999. About one fifth (18.1%) thought that the justice in the conflict was on the side of NATO and 21.1% thought that the justice in the conflict was on the side of the Serbs. About one-fourth of the respondents (24.7%) were not able to give an answer to the question because of the lack of proper information to decide.

A correlation on several dimensions was found analysing the factors related to the different attitudes of the people:

- Place of residence (V=0.152)

The respondents living in villages were more frequently sympathetic to the Serbs compared to the people living in towns and cities. They more frequently chose the answer “I

don't know" or more frequently answered "the justice in the Kosovo conflict was on neither of the sides".

- Gender (V=0.127)

The women more frequently thought "the justice in the Kosovo conflict was on neither of the sides" and more frequently chose the answer "I don't know" compared to men.

- Education (V=0.116)

The college and university graduates most frequently chose the answer "the justice in the Kosovo conflict was on neither of the sides" or "the justice in the Kosovo conflict was on NATO". The respondents with primary education thought "the justice in the Kosovo conflict was on the Serbs".

- Ethnic affiliation (V=0,122)

The Bulgarians more frequently choose the answer "the justice in the Kosovo conflict was on neither of the sides" compared to the Bulgarian Turks who mostly thought, "the justice in the Kosovo conflict was on NATO".

- Age of the respondents (V=0.104)

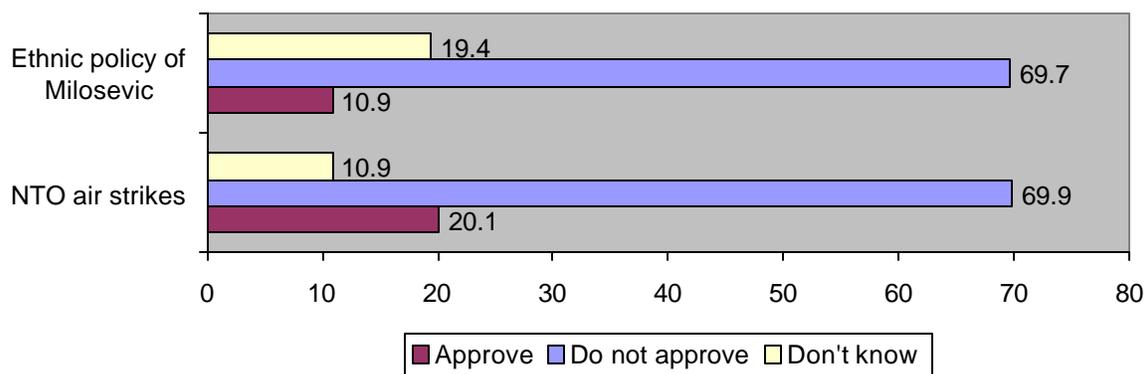
The people above 60 years of age mainly supported the statement that "the justice in the Kosovo conflict was on the Serbs" while the respondents aged between 35-55 most frequently supported the statement that "the justice in the Kosovo conflict was on neither of the sides".

- The last group was formed by the hard core NATO supporters vs. anti-NATO adherents (V=0.356)

Those respondents who did not support the integration of Bulgaria in NATO chose either the answer "the justice in the Kosovo conflict was on neither of the sides", or "the justice in the Kosovo conflict was on the Serbs".

The attitudes of the Bulgarians towards the Kosovo crisis were equally split between the people who did not approve the NATO strikes against the FRY and who did not approve the ethnic policy of Milosevic. (Figure 11). At the same time, the share of the people approving the NATO air strikes were twice more than those approving the ethnic policy of Milosevic.

**Figure 11**  
**What are your attitudes towards NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia,**  
**and the ethnic policy of Milosevic?**  
*(April 1999, NPOPRC, N=1101)*



The level of approval of the NATO air strikes against the FRY varied about 20%, while disapproval varied about 70% according to different representative public opinion polls carried out in Bulgaria over the period April-May 1999.

Another important issue that attracted the public attention in Bulgaria was the possibility of sending NATO ground troops to stop the Kosovo conflict because of the perception of a direct threat to the Bulgarian security as a result of a ground war next to our border with the FRY. More than three-fourths of the Bulgarians (76.6%) were against sending NATO ground troops and the involvement of NATO in a ground war in the FRY. This idea was supported only by 18.0% of the aged population, while 5.4% had no opinion on the question.

At the same time, the Bulgarians shared slightly different attitudes when asked about their approval of sending NATO ground troops to maintain peace in Kosovo. The predominant part of the population (56.6%) did not approve such an action, but one-third was in favour of sending NATO ground troops as peacekeeping forces to establish and maintain the peace in Kosovo. Every tenth respondent (10.1%) did not have an opinion on the question.

These differences in the attitudes of the Bulgarians towards NATO ground invasion in the FRY can be explained by the different perceptions of *war* in the first case, and *PSO* in the second.

The attitudes of the Bulgarians towards the Government's Policy, and especially the decision of providing air corridor to NATO planes was the third point of research interest in regard to the Kosovo crisis.

More than one-half of the respondents (54.9%) did not approve the Bulgarian Parliament decision to provide an air corridor to NATO planes according to representative public opinion polls carried out in Bulgaria in May 1999. About one-fourth (24.6%) supported the Bulgarian policy on the crisis, while 22.8% of the respondents declared that they had no enough information and were not able to make a decision. Finally, 5.3% of the people did not give an answer to the question.

These results, especially the lack of information are striking as they reveal the great confusion in the Bulgarian public leading to a misunderstanding of the official Bulgarian policy concerning the Kosovo crisis.

Correlation patterns close to those described above were found analysing the factors related to the attitudes of the Bulgarians towards NATO air strikes, the possibility of sending NATO ground troops to stop the conflict in Kosovo and the Bulgarian Parliament decision to provide an air corridor to NATO planes. These attitudes depend on the following factors:

- Political affiliation (V=0.248-0.316);
- Job occupation (V=0.179-0.188);
- Level of education (V=0.164-0.182);
- Gender (V=0.145-0.177);
- Place of residence (V=0.138-0.175);
- Age of the respondents (V=0.130-0.141).

To summarise, the opposition against the NATO air campaign in the FRY can be explained by several factors:

- The Bulgarian public was strongly concerned about the involvement of the country in the war on the Balkans. About two-thirds of the Bulgarians (62%) expected a military threat for the country as a result of the Kosovo crisis development according to the data from a public opinion poll carried out in April 1999. More than three-fifths (84%) stated they were concerned about the ecological problems resulting from the war. In comparison, only 10% of the Bulgarians expected a military aggression towards Bulgaria just before the

war in FRY at the beginning of March 1999.

- The public opinion was influenced by rumours that heavy guns were deployed on the border with Bulgaria to counter possible NATO ground invasion in the FRY announced by the FRY mass media. There were publications that the FRY will undertake terrorist acts to attack the Bulgarian nuclear plant in Kozloduj. In addition, articles about cancer-causing chemicals as a result of NATO bombing contaminating domestic food were published in some Bulgarian newspapers.

- Finally, the public was concerned about the possibility ethnic Bulgarians in the Western out lands to be killed or injured.<sup>30</sup>

- A NATO missile landed on Sofia suburb "Gorna Banja", destroying a house, during the parliamentary debates on NATO request for an air corridor. Fortunately there were no casualties. This fact posed the question about the accuracy of NATO operation and gave new arguments to the opposition to criticise the government.

- Bulgaria has suffered great economic losses since the beginning of the war in the FRY due to its strict keeping to the UN embargo. The losses caused by the Kosovo crisis are estimated to be between \$700 million and \$1 billion.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, no Western investments have been made in the Bulgarian economy. The Bulgarian public was strongly disappointed by the Western policy and it was very hard to convince it once again that Bulgaria had to support the efforts of the international community to end the conflict in the FRY.

The concerns about Milosevic's ethnic policy were also very strong both due to the solidarity with the suffering people in Kosovo and his approach to the leaders of Bulgarian minority in the Western out lands.

The comparison between the attitudes of the Bulgarians towards the Kosovo crisis and the use of military force against the FRY and those of some other neighbouring to the FRY countries in SEE shows that about 90% of the population in Greece opposed the NATO bombing.<sup>32</sup> These strong antimilitary attitudes can be explained both by the widespread feeling of Christian solidarity with the Serbs and the perception of a potential danger for destabilisation on the Balkans and involvement Greece in war. The Greece public was strongly concerned about possible refugee flow from Kosovo into the country.

The public opinion polls in Italy carried out at the beginning of the Allied Force Operation on 25 March 1999 showed that 50% of the population were against the air strikes and defined them as "unjustified". During the operation the opposition reduced to 46% (31 March 1999) and to 33% (24 April 1999). At the same time the share of people who thought that the NATO air strikes were "justified" grew from 25% (25 March 1999) to 37% (31 March 1999) and to 43% (24 April 1999).<sup>33</sup>

The widespread opinion at the beginning of the campaign that Italy "should be involved in the conflict only politically" (46%), reduced to 35% at the end of April 1999. On the contrary, the opinion that Italy "should be involved both politically and military", grew up from 30% at the beginning of the air campaign, to 51% at the end.<sup>34</sup>

A poll carried out in April 1999 showed that 76% of the Romanians were against NATO intervention in the FRY, while 69% did not agree with the Romanian government's

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<sup>30</sup> Serbian territory, close to the Bulgarian border, that was a part of Bulgaria until 1919 and now is largely populated with ethnic Bulgarians.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew J. Pierre, *Debalkanizing the Balkans, Security and Stability in South-Eastern Europe*, Special Report, United States Institute of Peace, 20 September, 1999, p. 3

<sup>32</sup> George Robertson, *War in Kosovo: Some Preliminary Lessons*, *Russi Journal*, Vol. 144/4, August 1999, p. 4

<sup>33</sup> Renato Manheiner, "La Nazione", 16 April, 1999 (Source: IPSOS)

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

decision to allow NATO planes to use the national airspace during the Allied Force Operation. This decision was supported only by 22% of the respondents, whereas 9% of them gave no answer.<sup>35</sup>

The Romanian analysts explained these results by several factors to:

- The wide spread fears of a military conflict outbreak in the area among the population. One fourth (25%) of the Romanians said they were worried about “spreading the conflict on the Balkans” and 21% said they were concerned about the possibility of “extension of the war to Romania” according to the data from a public opinion poll carried out in May 1999.

- The Orthodox-Christian solidarity, sympathy and long tradition of good relationships with the neighbours from Yugoslavia.

- “The instant adhesion of the Government in Bucharest to the intervention in Yugoslavia, without any public debate prior to the official declarations”.<sup>36</sup>

In summary, the public attitudes analysis in Bulgaria and in some SEE countries concerning the Kosovo crisis and the use of military force against the FRY lead to the following conclusions:

The public attitudes in Bulgaria, as well as in most of the SEE countries towards the use of military force against the FRY, were predominantly negative. A completely different picture is found when comparing the public attitudes towards the Allied Force Operation and SFOR. The fundamental difference is that the public in these countries was not convinced that the Allied Force Operation was legitimate as military force was used against a sovereign country without a particular United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR). This situation was completely different for IFOR/SFOR, which had the image of a traditional peacekeeping operation (PKO) in the public perceptions.

The next important factor that have influenced the public opinion especially in Bulgaria was the lack of public debate on the political decisions, probably due to the short time in which they had to be taken. A contradiction existed between the extraordinary public interest in the development of the conflict and the official information from the political leadership. This situation made possible the spreading of rumours, which additionally produced fears and anxiety among the population. As a result, the public reacted emotionally against the bombing - based on religious affiliation, former good relations and common traditions with the Serbian people, and the fear that the war can affect the home country.

#### **4.2 The Kosovo Crisis and the Attitudes of the Bulgarian Citizens towards NATO: a Year Later**

The important question “Has the Kosovo crisis changed the attitudes of the Bulgarians towards NATO?” needs a special attention. If yes, in what aspect? What attitudes’ components have been influenced? How these changes can be measured? Are they important? What are the reasons for the changes?

The comparison between the attitudes of the Bulgarians before during the Kosovo crisis and a year later can give an idea about the changes of the attitudes of the Bulgarian citizens towards NATO.

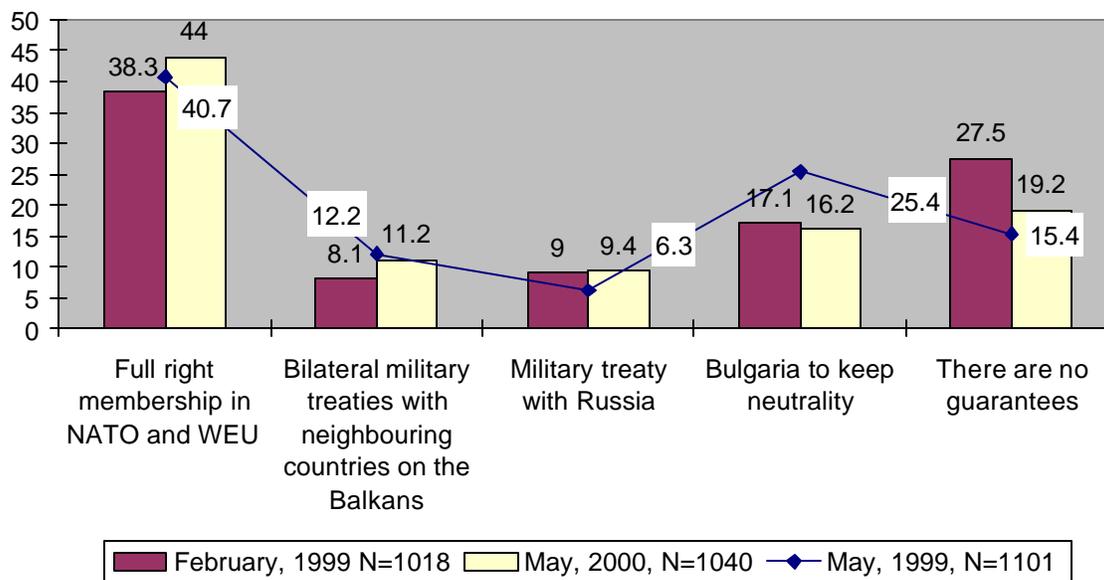
Figure 12 presents the answers to the question: “What could serve as the best foreign political guarantee for the Bulgarian national security?” This was the question we have started with our analysis.

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<sup>35</sup> George Tibil & Nicu Sava, Romania’s Road Towards NATO: From Enthusiasm towards Realism, Paper presented at the international conference “NATO at 50 and in the Future: Public Opinion in the East and the West”, Sofia, June 24-25, 1999

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 7

**Figure 12**  
**What could serve as the best foreign political guarantee**  
**for the national security of the Republic of Bulgaria?**  
*(Nation-wide public opinion polls,*  
*February 1999, May 1999, May 2000)*



No changes in the public attitudes towards a possible full-right membership of Bulgaria in NATO and WEU are found comparing the answers of the aged population before and during the Allied Force operation in Kosovo. The difference of 2.4 points is statistically insignificant ( $P=0.1584$ ). About 40% of the respondents preferred Bulgaria to become a full-right member country of the Euro-Atlantic defence structures to guarantee its national security in both stages of the study. At the same time, the share of the neutrality idea supporters has grown with 8.3 points ( $P=0.000$ ) and the number of people who thought, "there is no guarantees to the Bulgarian national security" has fallen with 12.1 points ( $P=0.000$ ).

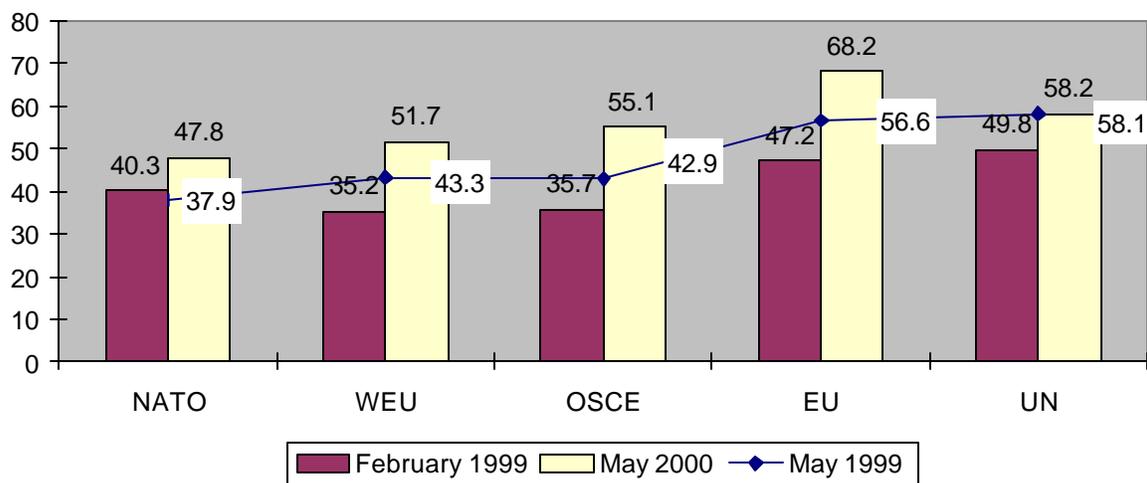
Significant increase of 5.7 points is found comparing the data from February 1999 and May 2000 in regard to the adherents of a full-right NATO/WEU membership as "the best way to guarantee the Bulgarian national security" ( $P=0.057$ ).

At the same time, the neutrality idea level of support is close to this from February 1999, the share of the respondents lowering with 0.2 points.

Finally, the number of people, answering "There are no guarantees" has slightly increased with 3.8 points in May 2000, but their share is considerably smaller in comparison to February 1999.

The trust in the main international institutions, which build the new Euro-Atlantic security architecture, was the next indicator to assess some possible changes in the attitudes of the Bulgarian population towards Bulgarian Euro-Atlantic integration. (Figure 13)

**Figure 13**  
**Trust in the main International Institutions**  
**as stability factor in Europe**  
*(Nation-wide public opinion polls,*  
*February 1999 –May 1999, May, 2000, in %)*



A considerable difference between the results concerning the dimension trust-mistrust in NATO as a factor of security and stability in Europe are registered before and during the Allied Force Operation, in February and in May 1999. The trust in the Alliance was the same (the difference of -2.4 points is statistically insignificant ( $P=0.3457$ )), but the mistrust increased with 12.9 points. ( $P=0.0000$ ). At the same time, the share of the “don’t knows” decreased with 17.2 points. ( $P=0.0000$ )

Both, an increase of the trust in WEU with 8.1 points ( $P=0.0002$ ) and increase of the mistrust with 10.1 points ( $P=0.0000$ ) was registered. The same is the trend in regard to the attitudes of the respondents concerning the role of the OSCE as a factor of security and stability in Europe: increasing of the trust with 7.2 points ( $P=0.0010$ ) and mistrust with 6.1 points ( $P=0.0003$ ).

The biggest is the increase of the trust in the EU over the two stages of our survey in 1999 (9.4 points –  $P=0.0000$ ), and at the same time the decrease is the lowest among all the institutions (4.2 points) ( $P=0.0123$ ).

An increase with 8.3 points ( $P=0.0002$ ) and a slight decrease with 5.6 points ( $P=0.0020$ ) is registered as far as the trust in the UN as a factor of stability and security in Europe is concerned.

To summarise, a decrease of the trust in NATO and WEU was registered over the period from February to April 1999 probably is due to the involvement of NATO in the Kosovo crisis and the use of military force against the FRY.

The image of NATO and WEU has obviously different meaning in terms of the US and European responsibilities in crisis prevention and management in Europe in the public perceptions. The significant rise of the trust in the EU, as a stability and security factor in Europe is probably due to the respondents view that Europe have to take more responsibility for its own security.

We can interpret the increasing trust in the UN as a result of the widespread belief among the Bulgarians that military force can be applied against sovereign country only under a particular UNSCR.

The comparison among the first two stages of our study over 1999 revealed that the issues of international security and defence have become prominent in the public opinion.

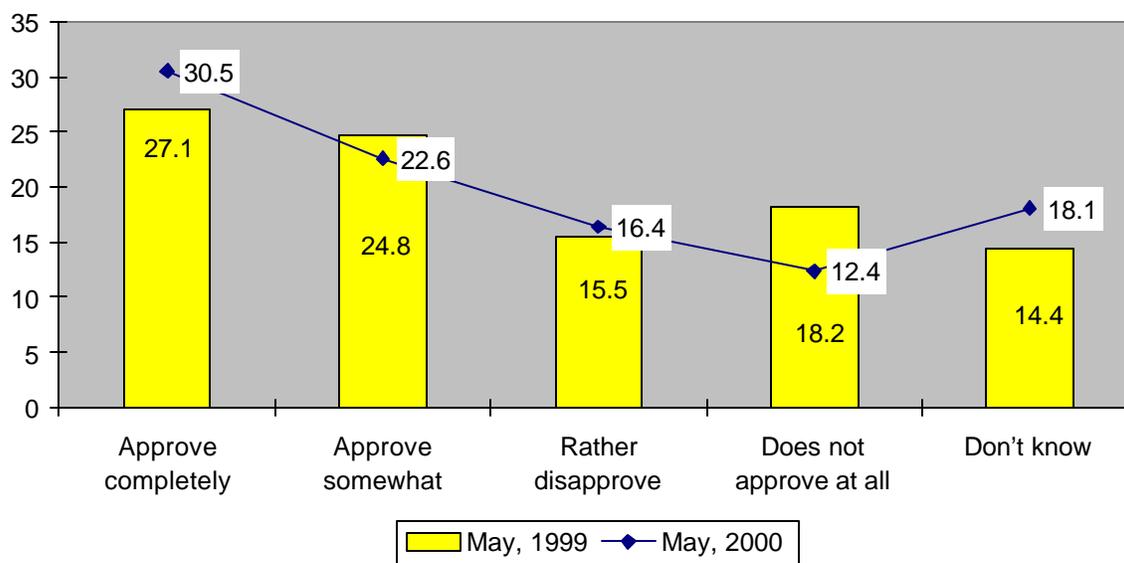
The proof is the lowering part of the respondents in the subsequent polls in April and May 1999, which could not give answer to the questions.

The data comparison between the two surveys from May 1999 and May 2000 shows the following trends:

- There is a trend of increase of the trust and decrease of the mistrust in the most of the main international institutions as stability factor in Europe. The biggest is the increase of the trust in OSCE (12.2) points, followed by EU (11.6) points, NATO (10.9) points and WEU (8.4) points. As regard to the decreasing of the mistrust, the biggest is the decrease as far as NATO is concerned (12.1) points. Follows WEU (9.2) points, OSCE (7.9) points and EU (7.2) points.
- There is no changes in the levels of trust/mistrust in the UN over the period May, 1999-May, 2000.

The following two figures (14 and 15) present the comparative data on the Bulgarians attitudes towards NATO and EU membership over the period May, 1999-May, 2000.

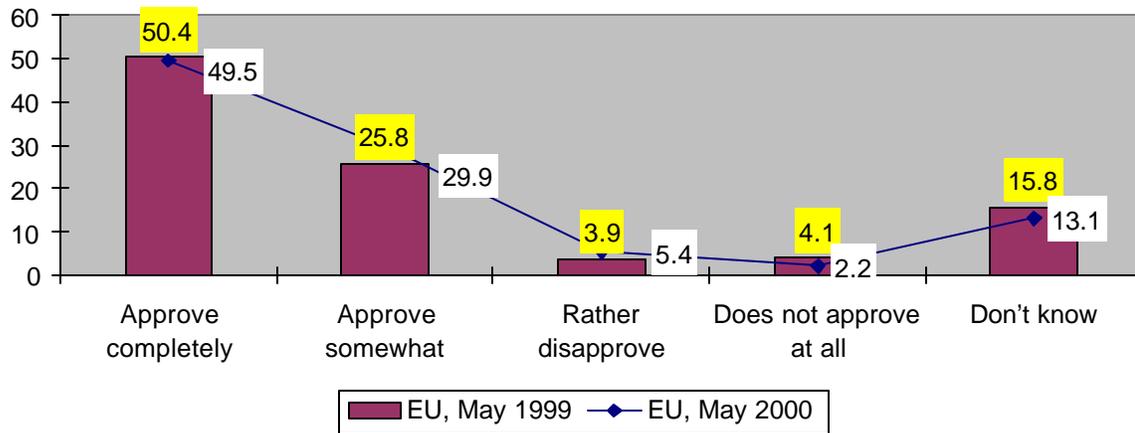
**Figure 14**  
**Are you in favour or against the NATO membership of Bulgaria?**  
*(May, 1999, Vitosha Research, N=1081, May 2000 ACG, N=1040, in %)*



The data comparison between May 1999 and May 2000 surveys shows that there is a slight lowering (with 4.9 points) of the share of people with anti-NATO attitudes and lowering of the share of the people who have no opinion on the question with 3.5 points (P=0.0147). At the same time, the share of people with pro-NATO attitudes did not change. A little more than half of the Bulgarians is in favour of the Bulgarian NATO membership.

There are no changes in the public attitudes towards the Bulgarian EU membership over the period 1999 - 2000. The Bulgarians traditionally highly support the accession of the country into EU (Figure 15).

**Figure 15**  
**Are you in favour or against the EU membership of Bulgaria?**  
*(May, 1999, Vitosha Research, N=1081,*  
*May 2000 ACG, N=1040, in %)*



To summarise, the Kosovo crisis and the involvement of NATO in the air strikes against the FRY had obviously affected the attitudes of the Bulgarian citizens towards NATO and EU membership of the country. After a significant increase of the mistrust of the Bulgarians in NATO during the Allied Force Operation in April-May 1999, there is a certain increase of the trust and stabilisation of the share of the Bulgarian NATO membership supporters one year latter. This shows that the emotional component of the attitudes was mainly affected. Another important result shown by the surveys is that there is an increase of the public awareness on the Bulgarian NATO membership.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS

Two years ago, we have started our study with the belief that both the Bulgarian and the NATO audience need a better understanding of each other living in the considerably changed environment of the post-Cold War world.

Our main hypotheses was that the Bulgarian public as well as part of the Bulgarian political elite lacks an understanding of NATO as a political- military organisation. In our view, this was one of the main reasons for many lost years in regard to the Bulgarian integration into the Euro-Atlantic defence structures.

We believe our study will help promoting a better understanding of NATO both among the Bulgarian people and the political elite. In addition, we hope to help the NATO audience to understand better the aspirations and believes of the Bulgarians on the way to integration into the Euro-Atlantic economic, political and defence structures.

In this concluding chapter we will try to summarise the results of our study and to give some ideas for improving the understanding of NATO that might be of use in the future.

**One of the most important results from our study concerns the issue of the public awareness in regard to the defence and security matters, and the Bulgarian policy towards the Euro-Atlantic defence structures integration.**

A lack of information on the defence and security policy of Bulgaria and the activities connected with the Euro-Atlantic security structures integration exists among the military and the civilians. These issues are not among the priorities considered by the Bulgarian citizens. The Kosovo crisis and NATO Allied Force Operation in the FRY, when people worried about the conflict development, was the only exception because of the perception of an immediate threat to Bulgaria.

The situation of informational deficiency and obscurity creates possibilities for speculation with the public opinion based on the fear of everything that is new and unknown. This situation can easily generate stereotypes and prejudices.

The insufficient public awareness on the security and defence matters and the Bulgarian Euro-Atlantic integration can be explained by the following factors:

*First*, many problems of immediate importance exist, such as high level of unemployment, poverty, crime etc., which are of high priority for the population.

*Second*, a lack of genuine public debate on defence and security issues, and particularly on the Bulgarian policy towards the Euro-Atlantic defence structures integration. The lack of public awareness results in wide spread stereotypes among the Bulgarian population and among the military, to some extent. Some of most important stereotypes are:

- Counterpoising the policy of the Bulgarian Euro-Atlantic defence structures integration with the Bulgarian-Russian relations. Some politicians and mass media representatives are trying to present the situation as a compulsory choice “either with NATO or Russia”;

- Great economic and social costs of the Bulgarian integration into NATO, which our country can not afford;

- A mandatory deployment of NATO military forces in Bulgaria and engagements of the country to defend another NATO member-state in accordance with Article 5 of the Washington treaty when Bulgaria joins NATO.

To achieve a better understanding of NATO among the Bulgarian population and the military, it is useful to concentrate the future efforts in the following areas:

- A large scaled and positively oriented communication policy in regard to the Bulgarian accession into the Euro-Atlantic defence structures is needed. This policy should be oriented towards the following activities:

- Wide and open dialogue on the security and defence issues among the political and the military experts;
- People oriented information based on the main principles of NATO as a political-military organisation, the history of the Alliance, the main current and future tasks, the new defence structure, the present and the future Bulgarian role in NATO, etc.
- Active mass media involvement in the information exchange process, broaden of the dialogue and improvement of the mutual understanding among the different ideas supporters concerning the Bulgarian national security and defence issues.

- One of the primary tasks in building a well-informed public opinion on the security and defence issues is the prejudice overcoming. An example of a typical prejudice is the above-mentioned understanding shared mostly by older people that the possible membership in NATO would lead to worsening of our relations with Russia. The impartial information on the relation between NATO and Russia, on the co-operation in providing security and stability world-wide and in Europe would be very beneficial for overcoming this stereotype.

- Probably the most important recommendation is to attain political and social consensus on the security and defence policy of Bulgaria, and particularly in regard to the Bulgarian accession into NATO. The Bulgarian politicians must give rid of politicising the defence and security matters, and to concentrate their efforts on the common issues based on the national interests of Bulgaria. There is no more time to waste following partisan approach towards defence and security matters and looking for political dividends.

**The next conclusion concerns the attitudes towards NATO as a “civilisation choice” and NATO as a military organisation.**

The analysis shows that both the Bulgarian military and the civilians have dual perception of NATO.

The first dimension is presented by the perception of NATO as a “civilisation choice” of the country. Most of the Bulgarian people perceives the accession into the Euro-Atlantic defence structures and the joining to the highly developed countries in economic, political and military sphere as the best foreign political guarantee for the Bulgarian national security. The expectations for an immediate accession in economic, political and military Euro-Atlantic structures are high and wide- spread among the Bulgarian public.

The second dimension is presented by the perception of NATO as a military organisation. The most striking example is the change in the attitudes of the Bulgarians towards NATO during the air strikes against the FRY. In this situation when NATO was undertaking the first military operation in Europe in its history, and the image of NATO as a military organisation was predominant, most of the Bulgarian people did not understand the need of the air strikes, and therefore did not supported them. Some NATO supporters even declared that “this was another NATO, not the NATO they would like to join”.

Comparing the attitudes of the Bulgarians towards NATO on these two dimensions, we can state that the public is prone to view NATO as a security organisation, rather than a military defence organisation.

**The third conclusion is also presented in two-dimensional space. The first dimension concerns the privileges, and the second dimension concerns the obligations in regard to the Bulgarian membership in a collective defence system like NATO.**

The aged civilians, and to some extent the military, tend to oppose most of the concrete engagements of the Bulgarian membership in a collective defence system. The result is striking because of the stated desire to be a part of a collective defence system and to make use of its advantages, and the unwillingness to share the responsibilities of this membership on the other hand.

With no doubt, this is one of the most important topics to be discussed in order to help a better understanding of NATO among the Bulgarian citizens and the military. The information policy on the Bulgarian accession into Euro-Atlantic defence structures should be aimed at achieving a better understanding of the balance between advantages and obligations of the country being a member of a collective defence system.

**The next conclusion concerns the public perceptions and attitudes towards the new missions of the BAF.** We found similar attitudes of the military and the civilians on the participation of the BAF in MOOTW. In addition, a broad consensus exists on the traditional mission of the Army – protection and defence of national territory being the priority one both for the civilians and the military.

In addition, the civilians and the military are highly supportive to the so-called socially acceptable missions such as humanitarian operations, help in case of natural and industrial disasters, environment protection, etc. Finally, both the military and the civilians support the employment of the armed forces in implementation of so-called police tasks.

Both the military and the civilians support one of the most probable missions of the BAF – the employment in PSOs. The level of public support depends on how close people perceive the mission is related to the national interests and security. The other factor related to the level of the public support is the threshold of the acceptable casualties and the financial cost of the operations. Finally, the level of public support is closely connected with the perceptions of success in PSOs.

The comparatively high level of support for the Bulgarian participation in SFOR can be explained by the widespread perception that the mission is closely related to the national interests of the country. The perception of success of the operation is high. Moreover, in the public opinion the SFOR is a PSO, which is associated with the missing casualties. Considerably different attitudes are shown towards the Bulgarian participation in the UNTAC, when Bulgarian soldiers were killed. Another reason for the high public support of the SFOR is the quite remote perception of the actual use of force among public opinion in Bulgaria.

**The final conclusion concerns the public attitudes towards the use of military force in the international relations.**

The analysis of the results from public opinion polls carried out during the Allied Force Operation in April and May 1999 shows that the Bulgarian public is very sensitive to the use of military force in the international relations and particularly in PSOs. A fundamental problem is that the public was not convinced the Allied Force Operation was legitimate, i.e. the force was used against a sovereign country without a particular UNSCR. This situation was completely different for IFOR/SFOR, which more or less had the image of traditional PKO in public perceptions. In this regard it is very important to create perception of legitimacy of the use force. Obviously, it is of great importance to win the “war on hearts and minds of the people”, but this war can not be won by “information campaigns” as sporadic activities. The politicians have to be aware they can not ignore public opinion. On the contrary, they must understand it and should try to change the public attitudes in a favourable direction and to convince the public that their decisions are in accordance with the national interests. An open dialogue with the public can only achieve this aim.

In the considerably different situation after the Cod War, we have to find a key to the legitimising the use of military force against a sovereign country whose government does not comply with the international law. This problem is important because the perception of PSOs legitimacy is crucial in the decision making process in the democratic societies.

This is probably the most difficult problem to solve when humanitarian intervention is concerned and therefore we suggest some ideas on the topic:

- The perception of legitimacy of the force use in PSOs grows when it is broadly supported by diplomatic activities to achieve peace agreement. People would understand that the force use is “the last resort”, and that the force is applied just to urge the political talks, not to win a war. In addition, it would be easier to convince the public on the need to apply force when non-lethal weapons are used.

- The coalition of willing, which is going to apply military force, should be as broad as possible. It should follow a consistent policy and perform the operation with resolve and accuracy, with zero or minimal collateral damages. The application of force should be timely to prevent conflict expansion causing problems to the neighbouring countries. In this regard it is important to consider the fact that the people expect immediate results, zero casualties, and no or minimum collateral damages, which in public opinion constitutes the perception of success. In addition, these variables constitute the image of the PSOs, differentiating them from a war.

## CLOSING REMARKS OF THE AUTHORS

Finalising our study on the public perceptions of the Bulgarians concerning the Euro-Atlantic co-operation in defence and security, we shall return back to some of the questions we have started with. What is the role of the public opinion polls on defence and security issues in defining the Bulgarian defence and security policy? How the researchers can help policy makers in their work?

Working on our study over the last two years we tried to overcome some of the existing problems in the research practice and to make the results from the public opinion polls useful for the political decision-making process. First of all, we tried to make the public opinion polls on defence and security issues systematic. In addition, our interest was attracted by the public awareness of the defence and security issues and studied the stability of the attitudes over time. We were interested in the interrelation between the public attitudes and the attitudes and the vision of the political and military elites. Finally, we realised the need of studying the influence of the mass media and interest groups on public attitudes.

At the same time, we are completely aware that our work is just a small part of the long way to be travelled to create a good co-operation between the researchers and the policy makers in our country. In this regard, we consider it is necessary to concentrate the future research on:

- Cross national, comparative surveys on the public opinion influence on the defence and security issues and the relevant policy formation. In this regard we are especially interested in the experience of the new NATO member-states.
- Trend surveys on the public perceptions of the armed forces new missions, attitudes towards the use of military force in the international relations, public perceptions of the security risks and guarantees, etc.

We shall conclude this report saying that a successful communication strategy in regard to the Bulgarian accession into the Euro-Atlantic defence and security structures has to be based on an integrated system including regularly carried out public opinion polls and expert judgement studies. This system should provide information both on the public perceptions and attitudes and the vision of the elites. The results can serve as a feedback for the political decision-makers, which have to work in close relation with the researchers. This relation has to be based on shared responsibilities. The researchers have to carry the professional and moral responsibility for the objectivity of the results from the surveys, while the politicians have to obtain the courage to accept the results despite whether they comply or not with their expectations.