



THE BULGARIAN REGIONAL DIPLOMACY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NATO ENLARGEMENT TOWARD THE BALKANS

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ABSTRACT

This policy paper is analysing the Bulgarian strategy to join NATO and it pays a special attention to its efforts for developing of good-neighbourly relations. The aim is to demonstrate the importance of the active regional diplomacy for the membership in NATO and the dependence of the way Bulgaria, as an applicant for membership, conducts its regional diplomacy from the general foreign policy priorities. The activities of the Bulgarian regional diplomacy will be presented in comparison with the diplomatic behaviour of its neighbour Romania in the context of the NATO's enlargement toward the Balkans. The paper consists of two main

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parts, the first one is analysing the ratio behind the process of the NATO's enlargement toward the Balkans and the challenges and trends that are connected with this process. This part is ending with an elaboration on the NATO's admission requirements. The second part is taking a closer look on the developing of bilateral relations between Bulgaria and its immediate neighbours.

LA DIPLOMACIA REGIONAL BÚLGARA EN EL CONTEXTO DE LA AMPLIACIÓN DE LA OTAN EN LOS BALCANES.

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza la estrategia búlgara de adhesión a la OTAN, con especial atención a los esfuerzos realizados para conseguir unas buenas relaciones con sus países vecinos. El objetivo que aquí se persigue es demostrar la importancia de una diplomacia regional activa para el proceso de adhesión y la dependencia que Bulgaria tiene su diplomacia regional de las prioridades de política exterior generales. Las actividades de la diplomacia regional búlgara se presentan en comparación con el comportamiento diplomático de su vecina Rumanía en el contexto de la ampliación de la OTAN en los Balcanes y los retos y vías que están vinculados a este proceso. Esta primera parte termina con una elaboración de los requisitos solicitados por la organización atlántica. La segunda parte se centra en el desarrollo de las relaciones bilaterales entre Bulgaria y sus estados vecinos.

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INTRODUCTION

This policy paper is analysing the Bulgarian strategy to join NATO and it pays a special attention to the efforts for developing of good-neighbourly relations. The aim is to demonstrate the importance of the active regional diplomacy for the membership in NATO and the dependence of the way Bulgaria, as an applicant for membership, conducts its regional diplomacy from the general foreign policy priorities. The main hypothesis is that once the foreign policy priority (integration in NATO) is recognised, the foreign direct and indirect pressure (NATO's conditionality) and motivations (promises) become the main driving motives staying behind the Bulgarian regional diplomacy.

The main indicator for the hypothesis lies on the analysis of the behaviour of Bulgaria towards specific problematic issues of the bilateral relations before and after the official and factual recognition of the membership in NATO as a main foreign policy priority. Another indicator is the specific type of bilateral relations between Bulgaria, as an applicant, and non-applicants / rivals of the Alliance and the shift after the last ones improve their relations with NATO (the case of FR of Yugoslavia). If NATO conditionality has an impact on the foreign and domestic policy of the aspirants, then they are expected to change their position in response to NATO demands. An indicator of such an impact can be the analogy between the type of behaviour supported by NATO and the one supported by the Bulgarian government. Important contributions in this respect are the cases, in which Bulgaria is behaving in a way, which satisfies NATO's requests despite the opposition of the domestic public opinion.

The activities of the Bulgarian regional diplomacy will be presented in comparison with the diplomatic behaviour of its neighbour Romania in the context of the NATO's enlargement toward the Balkans. In the present analysis of the motives of NATO's enlargement mainly the American point of view will be presented here, because is crucial for any important decision in the enlargement process.

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I. NATO'S ENLARGEMENT TOWARD THE BALKANS

• Ratio

The perceived importance of the Balkans has radically changed the US attitude towards the Balkan conflicts during the last decade. For much of the early 1990 US policy makers believed that the region was of peripheral relevance to them. This view was best depicted in the memorable comment by James Baker, the then US Secretary of State "...[Washington] does not have a dog in this fight"ⁱ. But at one point at the middle of the decade, partially because of the preys of EU to give a hand in order to stop the proliferation of conflicts and immigrants from Bosnia, the US was already fully involved in the Bosnian conflict. As it is widely known, the involvement creates commitment, and once already in the conflicts, the US was not able to get out, without seriously damaging its authority. In order to justify the military involvement in front of the American voters and the international community, the US politicians were using a lot of moral arguments. When Milosevic started the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo he faced US and NATO with the same problem that brought them in during the war in Bosnia. In order to preserve their authority, especially when the widely accused of usefulness after the end of the Cold war Alliance, was approaching its 50th anniversary, they step in again. On this way at the end of the decade, the American perception of the importance of the region was changed to the extent to allow the first military intervention by NATO—the bombing campaign against FR Yugoslavia. ⁱⁱ This new approach reflected NATO's 1999 *Strategic Concept*. The *Concept* identifies the security of member states in a broad fashion: (...)[The] risks include uncertainty and instability in and around the Euro-Atlantic area and the possibility of regional crises at the periphery of the Alliance, which can evolve rapidly". ⁱⁱⁱ

After the September 11 2001 terrorist attacks on the USA, the foreign policy priorities of the American administration, if not radically changed, has been seriously reconsidered. The terrorist attacks and the war in Iraq have nevertheless fuelled the Bush's administration intention to withdraw most of the American troops from the Balkans. The new situation underlines again the necessity of reconsidering of a US-EU "division of labour". As Condoleezza Rice, Bush's National Security Adviser, put it: "(...) the United States is the only power that can handle a showdown in the Gulf, mount the kind of forces that is needed to protect

Saudi Arabia, and deter a crisis in the Taiwan Strait. And extended peacekeeping distracts from our readiness for these kinds of global missions".^{iv}

In fact, there is no military mission for which the US really needs NATO for reasons different than legitimisation of its endeavours.^v Nevertheless, to a very large extent NATO can be described as an instrument of American presence in Europe.^{vi} The real issue for US foreign policy is how to maintain a strong presence and leadership in a unifying Europe, while at the same time substantially reducing its military contribution to NATO's operations. NATO eastern enlargement can be considered as a way to address this issue. By its support for the enlargement the US facilitate stability in the Balkans by encouraging the countries to restrain from conflicts and by sharing with the NATOs' future members, the political, military and financial burden for this pursuit for stability. At the same time with the inclusion of some Balkan countries in NATO US strives to gain virtually unlimited access to strategically important territories around the Black Sea.

In the enlargement process NATO is trying to create a new security framework in the area that would guarantee predictability in the region known as a "volatile powder keg". NATO essentially sees the enlargement towards the Balkans as a powerful instrument to impose desired changes in this region. In the text bellow I will try to analyse the effect of this instrument on the aspirants' and particularly to the Bulgarians' regional diplomacy.

NATO is using the wider shared aspirations by the former communist states for long-term security to encourage them to make the transition from authoritarianism to democracy.^{vii} And, of course, using this shaping strategy NATO is trying to achieve its own interests. As then-Secretary of State Madeline Albright put it: "The very promise of a larger NATO made Europe more stable by giving aspiring allies an incentive to solve their own problems. This is the kind of progress that can ensure outside powers are never again dragged into conflict in Central and Eastern Europe".^{viii} As we have recently seen in Iraq, the US politicians are very reluctant to pay the political price for any American casualties in a mission abroad. That is way they prefer stability in the Balkans, a condition, that will not prevent them to risk the lives of their soldiers in a region, which is not ranking high in the priorities of the American voters.

Thus, NATO poses numerous requirements to the applicants for membership, which are supposed to shape the political environment in the Balkans to an extend that satisfies the interests of US ant its NATO allies. On the one hand, NATO's environment shaping strategy is to some extend based on the proverbial "carrot and stick". The inducement of membership (the carrot) as an instrument to encourage a peaceful transformation of the social and political systems of the aspirant member countries. On the other hand, NATO's transformation into a conflict-management and management organisation provides the coercive component (the stick) that can be used to enforce peace and deter aggression in and around Europe.^{ix}

However, before proceeding with the analysis of NATO's requirements posed to the applicants and their influence on their political behaviour I shall point out the most problematic characteristics of this process of re-shaping of the political and security framework in the Balkans. The consideration of these challenges (both from the point of view of NATO and from the point of view of the aspirants), as well as the terrorist attacks on the US, have made possible a fundamental change of the process of NATO enlargement toward the Balkans.

• Challenges

Bulgaria, as well as the rest of the Balkan applicants, is paying a high price in order to satisfy the NATO accession requirements. These include – higher unemployment because of the downsizing of the armed forces (from 120 000 during the Cold War to less than 45 000 in the near future), higher percent of the GDP spend for defence purposes (for 1999 it reached 6.69% of the state budget). These reforms, undoubtedly, are necessary, but the numerous difficulties discourage the Balkan countries from implementing them effectively. In addition, during the Kosovo crisis the governments of Southeastern Europe, having responded positively to NATO's call for cooperation-in most cases against their own public opinion-have incurred substantial economic losses as a result. For example, the costs of the war are estimated between \$700 million and \$1 billion for Bulgaria, and over \$900 million for Romania.^x

Supporting NATO was at times hardly a popular policy. According to a survey of one of the Bulgarian opinion polls institute MBMD, at the end of 1997 the supporters of Bulgarian membership in NATO were 52%, against only 24% who were opposing it. But during the Kosovo crises the overall picture was significantly changed, 44% of the population living in the cities were for and 44% against the integration in NATO. The results were confusing in a way, because although 44% were for joining NATO, only 28% would have agreed to give permission to NATO to use our air-space with military purposes.^{xi} The results of another opinion pool institute BBSS “Galup” showed that 63% of the people living in the cities were against allowing NATO's military airplanes to pass the Bulgarian air-space.^{xii} According to the quoted survey of MBMD $\frac{3}{4}$ of the population thought, that if the Parliament approves the agreement with NATO for using the Bulgarian air-space, there is a significant risk the country to be involved in the war. This definitely made the Bulgarian public opinion very sensitive on the support for the NATO operation in Kosovo. Less than a week before the National Assembly voted on the agreement, a NATO racket accidentally hit a house in the suburbs of Sofia. Fortunately the racket did not explode and there were no human casualties. The decision of Constitutional court that the agreement does not contradict the Constitution provoked 14 meetings in the capital, some of them were pro- and other anti-NATO. Similar situation happened on the next day – 4th May 1999, while the MPs were voting the agreement there were pro- and anti-NATO meetings if front

of the Parliament for eight hours. The division in the Bulgarian society on this issue could be depicted with the postures shown by the crowd, for example, on one of them was written “Peruchtchica municipality for NATO” and on another one the text was “Peruchtchica says No to NATO”.

The BSP won grudging respect among segments of the Bulgarian public by demanding that a public debate in the parliament occur on this issue before the government gives its approval. The governing Union of Democratic Forces authorities nevertheless gave this permission to NATO and then obtained a vote of parliament approving their decision afterwards. The BSP claimed that this action violated the Bulgarian constitution's requirement that use of Bulgarian territory by foreign military forces requires approval by the Bulgarian parliament first. The BSP authorities claimed the Bulgaria did not gain any concrete benefits from acquiescing to supporting NATO. The situation gave a major opening to the opposition groups trying to undermine domestic political support for the government. However, these attempts were not entirely successful. There could be pointed out different reasons why the main opposition party at that time Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), the former Bulgarian Communist Party, were not able to capitalise the strong anti-war attitudes of the population. One of them could be, that the crises in Kosovo happened less than two and a half years after the BSP government fall down after a very serious economic crises and a high number of anti-government protests all around the country, and especially in the capital, where the protesters tried to storm the building of the Bulgarian Parliament. The leaders of the opposition did not possess the authority to lead the popular anti-NATO protests.

Another reason could be, that as it appears from the quoted surveys, the results were not as much based on anti-NATO sentiments, but rather on the fear that the use of the Bulgarian air-space could provoke an attack from Serbia. In fact few months earlier, on 28.02.1999, the Serbian vice-premier, the ultra-nationalist Voislav Seselj even threatened Bulgaria with war for its support for the NATO led operation. The NATO supporters were emphasising, along other things, that it was a high time for Bulgaria after all of the time joining the losing coalitions in military conflicts (First and Second world wars, the Cold war) to stay once with the winners. The hope that the Bulgarian stand and loses will be generously compensated by the NATO allies was another reason the anti-war attitudes to be calmed down and the main opposition party not to be able to get the best use of the situation.

With the end of the war, the pro-NATO public support rose again. A survey of another opinion pool institute, Alfa Research, which shows a support for the Bulgarian accession to NATO during the war as 46%, estimates it at the end of the year as 54 %.^{xiii} According Lydia Yordanova, Director of the National Center for Studies of Public Opinion, affiliated with the Parliament of Bulgaria, the public opinion towards NATO has passed through three stages in the period after the end of 1989: Between 1989 and 1992 many people had a disposition towards NATO as “the prospective partner”. The period of 1993-1999 could be defined as a pragmatic

stage of cognisance. The sympathisers of the NATO membership idea increased and fluctuated from one-third to half of the respondents. Public attitudes were still quite volatile and were affected by the unfavourable situation globally, in Europe and in the region. She describes the third period, as a completion of the process of irreversible increase of public support for NATO membership.^{xiv}

Since the beginning of 2002, it has become clear that none of the Balkan countries are going to join the European Union in 2004.^{xv} The possibility that Bulgaria and Romania would have not be invited to join NATO at the Summit in Prague would have reflected negatively on their prospects. This concern was expressed by Gunter Verheugen, the European Union's Commissioner for Enlargement, in front of NATO's Parliamentary Assembly. He said that NATO should accept Bulgaria and Romania, which are unlikely to qualify early for European Union membership, in order to avoid the difficult situation that would result from a "double rejection." NATO Secretary George Robertson also underlined this problem: "Without enlargement, we would permanently frustrate the ambitions of countries of Central and Eastern Europe for inclusion in the transatlantic security and defence community."^{xvi} However, although the full NATO membership is already quite a visible perspective for Bulgaria and Romania, the situation is different with most of the other countries in the Balkans. A failure to enlarge soon could undermine the credibility of the "open door" policy and theoretically could have a negative impact on the prospects for reforms in these countries. In fact, they are quite familiar with their real prospects and cannot be affected significantly by the long waiting period. Of course, this does not mean that they will not use this argument in their lobbying campaigns.

If the ambitions of the Balkan applicants for joining NATO are "frustrated" it is theoretically possible for nationalistic and populist anti-NATO accession parties to come to power and change the course of these countries' foreign policy. As the presidential elections in Romania at year 2000 showed, a nationalistic rhetoric could reappear in politics.^{xvii} If such a development occurs, it will make Balkan countries unpredictable. If they do not want to become integrated in NATO (the "giving up scenario"), NATO will have lost its main instrument for channelling the transition in the Balkans. This would be the worst-case scenario for NATO's strategy and of course for the Balkans.

In fact, with the case of Bulgaria and Romania the possible "double rejection" probably would not have been a step towards the "giving up scenario." The process of integration in NATO in the end of 2002 (the Prague Summit of NATO, where Bulgaria and Romania were invited to join the Alliance) had already penetrated fundamental aspects of the political environment in the candidate states, and had become a compulsory part of the political programs of the major political players. The best way to depict this evolution is the almost radical ideological shift of BSP. From a political party with half a century long anti-NATO tradition it became a firm supporter of Bulgaria's membership in the Alliance. The leadership of the BSP realised that in order to gain the moral and financial support of Western

democracies as a potential governing party, it should support this process. As the deputy-chairmen of the parliamentary fraction of BSP Rumen Ovcharov put it: “Our manifested denial of NATO could hardly gain us supporters in the West...The question is can we govern in case, that we declare a negative stand toward USA, Germany, France, Greece, Turkey. Who are we going to govern with?”^{xviii} There was a serious debate within BSP on this issue. One of the main argument against the ideological shift was that the party leadership is risking to alienate a significant part of its the hard electorate. The pragmatically oriented leader of the BSP, Georgi Parvanov, succeeded to impose the pro-NATO posture. The BSP stated in March 2000 that it also approved of Bulgaria’s accession to NATO. Soon after this transformation Parvanov, surprisingly, for a lot of political analysts, became the first elected socialist president of Bulgaria. His explicit support for NATO membership was not the decisive factor in his election, but the ideological shift noted above, perceived as a sign of modernisation, made the candidacy of the leader of the ex-communist party more acceptable for the electorate.

Another danger associated with the enlargement policy lies in the fact that the attractiveness of NATO membership could cause. Membership has the potential to discourage the necessary regional cooperation, just as the attractiveness of EU membership sometimes discourages regional political and economic cooperation. Some of the Balkan countries have expressed a clear preference for bilateral ties with Western institutions or countries over ties of any kind with their neighbours. Any commitment to regional cooperation was initially seen by many as only postponing the aim of joining Euro-Atlantic structures, not as prerequisite for accession. When in 1994 NATO launched Partnership for Peace (PfP) initiative, the ironic comments of the applicants were that PfP stands for Partnership for Postponement. Statements to the effect that regional cooperation must not be allowed to be a substitute for NATO membership have been made trough out the Balkans.^{xix} Close to this is another conceptual and strategic dilemma that the aspirant countries face-collectivism versus individuality.^{xx} Countries of the region that look towards NATO and the EU must combine both principles. On the one hand, they should act together, in order to attract the interest of the Allies and better their chances for obtaining an early membership. On the other hand, each country is interested in building its own identity as an applicant. For example-NATO’s Membership Action Plan (MAP) stipulates that each country should develop an individual plan for achieving membership in consultation with NATO itself while remaining committed to mutual initiatives such as Partnership for Peace.

Up to the end of 2001, there was little enthusiasm within NATO for a major enlargement-the so-called “Big Bang”. Many Alliance members fear that accepting a large number of countries, especially ones whose qualifications are questionable, could overburden the Alliance, and weaken NATO’s military effectiveness. In this context NATO’s strategy was-shaping the new security and political framework in

the Balkans, while simultaneously trying to strike a proper balance between the need to keep the unprepared aspirants out, while at the same time allowing them enough motivation not to give up. In the initial period of NATO and EU accession the strategy of the aspirant member countries could be characterised largely as an individualised, "beauty contest" and mutual competition for membership.

• Changes

More recently the situation has changed due to the radical changes in the international environment after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, and to a reconsideration of the accession strategy by the aspirant member countries. In his historic address in Warsaw last June, U.S. President George W. Bush broadened NATO's enlargement agenda to cover the entire space between the Baltic and the Black Seas. NATO alone is in a position to guarantee that this region is not dragged back into its former condition of a "grey zone," fragmented and up for grabs by external powers. 11 September 2001 and its lessons have added to the urgency of treating this space as an indivisible unit, and bringing it into the Western Alliance system as soon as possible. Romania and Bulgaria have unexpectedly been catapulted into serious consideration for membership in NATO in its next round of expansion, because of the post-11 September 2001 strategic importance of the Black Sea. "The big bang is real," a diplomat from a NATO country commented, adding: "and I couldn't have imagined it possible because I couldn't imagine September 11." As Thomas Szayna wrote in the report sponsored by the US military: "The pace of enlargement would change, of course, if the security environment deteriorated rapidly and a military threat arose. Under such circumstances, military, rather than political, imperatives would become the important drivers of the process, possibly leading to quick accession of new members".^{xxi} In fact, the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks were the shock event, which changed the logic of NATO enlargement. Prior to these events it seemed that countries associated with minimal potential transaction costs for the enlargement, due to their good economic standing, stood the best chance of receiving an early invitation to join in almost total disregard to any strategic concerns. The process was essentially political. It doesn't stem from an elaborated threat assessment but, has rather based on an environment-shaping agenda of democratisation and integration. This outlook has meanwhile changed. Strategic concerns now tend to override political ones once again.^{xxii} Formally, NATO is still evaluating each country's membership candidacy individually. Each must fulfil a rigorous set of military, political and economic criteria, enshrined in the three-year Membership Action Plans (MAPs) developed with each candidate country separately. From a substantive point of view, however, while MAP performance remains the basis for evaluating the Baltic-states' candidacies, strategic location takes on greater importance with respect to Romania and Bulgaria the Black Sea western rim countries

The terrorist attacks drew more attention to the security and stability based motivations for enlargement. In view of this, there was not much that the Alliance could achieve by bringing in the Baltic States, especially since Russia's support in the anti-terror campaign had become so crucial. The Black Sea area now shares the spotlight of international politics, with the Caspian basin and Central Asia. The new international constellation, moreover, underscores the security linkages between the Black Sea's western rim countries and the region to their East. This unstable, resource-rich Eurasian heartland now looms large in the U.S. and allied planning. When Romania and Bulgaria join NATO, the Alliance will be better positioned to enhance its partnerships with the Ukraine and Georgia, promote strategic stability and development in the South Caucasus-Caspian area, and connect more effectively with Central Asia.^{xxiii}

The Black Sea currently serves as the main transit route for Caspian oil—a function illustrated by the recent commissioning of the pipeline from Kazakhstan to Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiisk, where from the super-tankers take the oil further to the European markets. The Black Sea country of Georgia forms the linchpin in the planned overland routes for Caspian oil and gas. The Black Sea basin and Georgia, moreover, form a major segment of "Traceca", the Europe-Central Asia transit corridor planned by the European Union and supported by the United States.^{xxiv} Another Black Sea country, the Ukraine, provides an indispensable air corridor for the US-led "antiterrorist coalition" operating in Central Asia and Afghanistan. From October 2001 to date, more than 1,400 American and allied military flights have used the route from NATO bases in Europe via the Ukraine, the Black Sea, Georgia and Azerbaijan, to reach their theatre of operations. The US and its allies, envisaging a military presence in Central Asia for as long as necessary, will need to continue using this reliable air route.

Until now, NATO's presence in the Black Sea has been confined to Turkey, which is situated on southern rim. Turkey was among the first country in NATO to argue even before the 2001 terrorist attacks that the Alliance needed to secure the Black Sea's western rim permanently by admitting Bulgaria and Romania as members. With Hungary in NATO since 1999, the inclusion of Bulgaria and Romania would not only geographically connect NATO's European members with Turkey and Greece at long last, it would also provide the Western alliance with the most convenient access to the Black Sea and the South Caucasus.

• Admission requirements

The criteria that the prospective NATO members are to meet prior to full accession are outlined in the Study on NATO Enlargement:

1. Resolution of disputes with neighbouring countries and a commitment to solve international disputes peacefully;

2. Democratic civil-military relations;
3. Treatment of minority populations in accordance with the OSCE guidelines;
4. The achievement of a functioning democratic political system, and a market economy;
5. Ability and willingness to provide a military contribution to the Alliance and a willingness to take steps to achieve interoperability with other alliance members. ^{xxv}

In their strategy for achieving NATO membership Bulgaria and Romania have consistently emphasised the progress they have achieved mainly focussing on four areas:

- (i) Development of a military interoperability with NATO through a comprehensive defence reform;
- (ii) Qualifying as a reliable partner of NATO;
- (iii) The two countries strategic importance
- (iv) Good-neighborly relations.

(i) Bulgaria and Romania are engaged in implementing a comprehensive defence reform which is envisaged to be “a result of one of the top foreign policy priorities”, the Euro-Atlantic integration.^{xxvi} The aim of these reforms is to create a credible defence instrument, an Armed Forces that are “capable of accomplishing their essential functions in the defence and safeguard of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country”.^{xxvii} Bulgaria's 2004 force plan envisions a reduction in the size of the armed forces from 82,000 to 40,000 military and 5,000 civilians.^{xxviii} Romania's governmental plan "Army Reform 2004" envisions a reduction of the size of the armed forces from 150,000 to 112,000 active military personal and 28,000 civilian personal by 2004.^{xxix}

In addition to downsizing of the forces the Bulgaria and Romania working to achieve a streamlined military structure, similar to those of many Western armies. This means to continue to operate consistent reductions in the number of officers in order to complete a pyramidal structure of the army based on the Western model. Both of these processes are facing strong opposition from the senior military officers. Such a direction of reform presupposes a pyramidal command structure. With few members on the top and progressively more lower-level officers acting as unit commanders towards the base of the pyramid. Most Balkan armies have inherited army structures with excessive numbers of generals, while at the same time legging back in the number of qualified, well trained and fully available Lieutenants, Captains and Majors. The aim of the "pyramid" reform is to adapt the armies to the post-Cold War realities.

The performing of a comprehensive defence reform is closely connected with the defence budget. Prior to 1989 the Bulgarian defence budget was a State secret. For the period 1990-1996 the defence budget averaged slightly over 3 % of the GDP. During the sharp economic crisis in 1997-1998, the defence budget share also strove reduction to just over 2 %. In 1999, it was much better off, getting 6.69 % of the state budget. Looking at its components, one sees that the personnel and sustainment costs predominate, taking almost 90% of the total.^{xxx} Along with the downsizing, the transparent military budgeting demonstrates a will for good-neighbourly relations and reduces the risk of provoking of the security dilemma between neighbouring countries. Transparency of a military budget is perceived as a message about the country's defence goals and the ways to achieve them.^{xxxii} Transparency is especially important when neighbouring countries increase the percentages of their GDPs earmarked for military purposes, in order to modernise their armed forces and make them interoperable with NATO. Unless such defence budget increases are made transparently, they may be perceived as a threat to the neighbouring countries, which could trigger a security dilemma. Bulgaria and Romania have additionally addressed the issue formally stating a foreign policy principle that their national security is not to be built against the security of third countries or at their expense.^{xxxiii}

As other proof of the peaceful intentions of Bulgaria and Romania one of the basic principles of their foreign policy is that the national security is not built up against third countries or at their expense. A second advantage of downsizing is that it releases additional funds from staff salaries and related expenses that can be used for the purpose of new equipment and the pursuit of a technological compatibility and interoperability with the NATO armies.

(ii) Reliability is a fundamental prerequisite for membership. Thus, the lobbying campaigns of Bulgaria and Romania are focused on proving their political commitment to undertake the obligations incurred by NATO membership.^{xxxiiii} Practically, both countries have already proved their commitment. Bulgaria and Romania have supported politically and with their military infrastructure and troops the operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. A very important strategic and symbolic act was the closing of Bulgarian and Romanian airspace to Russian air transports at a crucial moment, which probably saved NATO from an acute confrontation with Russia in the final stages of the operation in Kosovo. In addition, all of the influential political parties, and the majority of the population are supporting the objective of joining the North Atlantic Alliance.

The credibility requirement presupposes that the process of integration is irreversible.^{xxxv} However, this hypothesis does not permit the applicants to use openly in their accession campaign one of the most convincing aces-the threat of the "giving up scenario" in case their wish is not satisfied.^{xxxvi} Bulgaria has already used a similar instrument of pressure. The chairman of the parliamentary Commission for Foreign and Integration Policy, trying to attract attention to his country's request to be

excluded from the "black" Schengen visa list, intimated that Bulgaria would leave the Stability Pact for South East Europe. The effect of this statement is still not very clear, but finally the Bulgarian request was satisfied. Lately, the aspirants have been looking for more refined measures of pressure. Prime Minister Nastase told members of the Romania-NATO Action Committee that if Romania was not accepted into the Atlantic Alliance soon, the responsibility would have to be placed on the Prime Minister. This would mean the resignation of the pro-NATO government and a probable governmental crisis, a development not desired by NATO. The combination of pressure and intimidation can bring some benefits, but it can not significantly change an applicant's status, and if it is too direct, it can seriously damage its political credibility and prospects for accession.

(iii) The aspirants' diplomacies are closely following the U.S. and NATO policy priorities and other international developments, trying to benefit from them. This approach can be best described by the statement of the Bulgarian Foreign Minister, commenting on the post-11 September 2001 environment: "Romania and Bulgaria are making the best use of this tragic opportunity."^{xxxvi}

Bulgaria and Romania are trying to portray themselves in a way that could attract the attention of US and NATO. They have reshaped their image from "front-line states" during the wars in Yugoslavia to states that are the "necessary linkage to consolidate NATO's southern flank and project stability to Central Asia in light of the anti-terrorism campaign."^{xxxvii} In order to emphasise their strategic potential and solidarity, they increased their contributions to SFOR and KFOR, thus backing up NATO positions and helping free Allied assets for other missions. They also made a modest contribution to the international forces in Afghanistan. Making the best use of the moment, Bulgaria and Romania announced the modernisation of their military airports in order to be able to support the NATO air forces for anti-terrorism operations. Should bases or access to airspace over Turkey or Greece be unavailable, the value of Bulgaria and Romania for NATO operations will increase.^{xxxviii}

The two states do have a strategic importance for the Alliance, but in some cases this significance is slightly exaggerated. I am referring here to the NATO war against the Milosevic regime. In fact, except for refusing to allow Russian air-transporters to pass through their air space, Romania and Bulgaria did not contribute significantly in a military-strategic sense. Their contribution was more valuable in political terms. Their political support was important because it portrayed the military operation not as a unilateral act of NATO and the U.S., but as an unavoidable development supported by all the neighbours of the Milosevic regime.

(iv) Bulgaria and Romania use every opportunity to express their will to contribute to regional stability. On every possible occasion they proclaim their intentions to "become a security generator in the neighbouring area", to be a "security provider", etc.^{xxxix} Both countries have declared "no territorial, border, ethnic or religious

disputes with any of their neighbours”.^{xi} They have also declared that they are committed to overcoming any bilateral differences in line with European standards. All these statements are enshrined in the basic national security documents of Bulgaria and Romania. ^{xli} The next part of the paper is committed to the case by case study of the bilateral relations of Bulgaria with all of its immediate neighbours.

II. BULGARIAN REGIONAL DIPLOMACY

As it was stated above the accent in this paper is on the first criteria – good-neighbourly relations. An aspirant country has to contribute to the stability and security in its own region, in other words, to become a factor of regional stability. The states to be invited in the next round of enlargement will be those that can show that they contribute to building stability in the East and South of Europe – “stability that will lessen the likelihood of needing US military intervention”.^{xlii} Being perceived as having become such a regional factor of stability is the best that the aspirant country can do in order to become member.

NATO (as well as the EU) stresses that good-neighbourliness, in the interests of regional stability, an essential criterion for membership.^{xliii} Good-neighbourly relations include a number of conditions. Namely, parties to refrain from the threat or use of force, be it directed against the territorial integrity or political independence of the other states, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the UN and with the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. Countries develop good-neighbourly relations through various types of cooperation – political, economic, cultural, security cooperation (including both hard and soft security). According to their Euro-Atlantic aspirations, one of the most relevant types of cooperation is the hard dimension of security cooperation, in particular regional military-political cooperation^{xliv}.

Both Bulgaria and Romania participate in the same group in the regional stratification. Accordingly, they have very similar problems. There is also a similarity in the interdependence between the foreign and defence policy in Bulgaria and Romania. The vital necessity of ensuring national security and an insufficient potential for this determines the strong desire of Bulgaria and Romania to receive security external guarantees. In the present historical and geopolitical realities NATO is the only political and military power that is which is capable of supplying such guarantees. Consequently, Bulgaria and Romania have made membership in NATO one of their two major foreign policy priorities, alongside by this way security policy describes foreign policy in these countries. They two consider membership in NATO as a major step towards an EU membership, because they feel that a NATO membership will guarantee them a stable environment for

economic development, and a partnership with the richest countries globally. In this way, foreign policy describes defence and security policy of Bulgaria and Romania.

Military-political cooperation in South Eastern Europe has the potential to contribute, directly and indirectly, to the fulfilment of several NATO requirements. For example, improvements in the force interoperability with NATO military structures are facilitated by the Balkan countries' participation in common military exercises with NATO countries. However, the most important result of regional military-political cooperation it is the political statement that the countries send through their participation in such cooperative efforts.

The approach to such cooperation is based on the understanding that it is to contribute to accelerating the process of the region's integration in to the Western institution, and most of all in to NATO, as well as provide additional security within the region.^{xlv}

Regional military-political cooperation, the basis of which was established at the beginning of the 1990-s, appeared as a completely new complex of relations. It was a result of the new interpretation of the geopolitical realities and the will of the Balkan countries for integration in the Euro-Atlantic structures and achievement of regional stability. The participants univocally proclaimed that the aim of this cooperation was to ensure the regional security, and through this to guarantee their national security.^{xlvi} But in spite of these statements, even if they were to gradually improve their good-neighbourly relations and military capabilities, they would still not be powerful enough to guarantee the national sovereignty and territorial integrity. For the Balkan countries, participation in NATO appeared to be the only viable and sufficient guarantee of their national security.

After the beginning of the democratic "transitions" in South-East Europe in 1989 an entirely new image of the region was shaped. Bulgaria and Romania have since established completely new set of relations with their neighbours especially in the field of security and defence. It was one of the clearest manifestations of a changing nature of the bilateral relations in South-East Europe. The activation and dynamisation of the military diplomacy in the region after the end of the Cold War has followed tendencies arising from the new foreign policy orientations of these countries. It is impossible to consider regional military-political cooperation outside the context of the region's countries' international relations and, in particular, their foreign policy course. As a subsystem of the system of international relations, military-political cooperation is strongly affected by its foreign policy context.

If one takes a closer look at the dependence of military-political cooperation on the Balkan countries' foreign policy during the Cold War, one may notices similar tendencies then. For most of this period, Bulgaria's strictly defined relations with the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact limited its relations with the military establishments of the other Balkan countries. In the 1970s and 1980s, Bulgaria also established military contacts with a few developing countries in the Middle East and

Africa, because of their relations with the Soviet Union. Until the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Romania had few military ties to countries outside the Warsaw Pact. After the crises between Romania and the USSR in 1968, Romania looked towards the West, China, and the Third World countries for military cooperation in all areas. ^{xlvi}

The policies of bilateral relations that Bulgaria has adopted, aims at:

- (i) A further development of relations with NATO and EU member-countries;
- (ii) Reviving of relations with countries with which Bulgaria and Romania used to have traditionally good ties in the past;
- (iii) Establishment of productive bilateral relations with newly established states and a dynamic participation in regional integration process in the Balkans. ^{xlvi}

• Bulgaria – Romania

Romania is the only former Warsaw Pact Bulgaria's ally in the Balkans. Through out the communist era, bilateral relations between Bulgaria and Romania were affected quite considerably by Romania's relationship with the – USSR relations. During the 1968 "Prague Spring", tensions between Romania and the USSR escalated, as Romania refused to join the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia or to allow the Bulgarian forces to cross its territory to intervene in Czechoslovakia. Later in August 1968, major troop movements along Romania's borders with the Soviet Union, Hungary and Bulgaria indicated a similar threat of intervention in Romania. Throughout the 1970s and during the 1980s, Romania preserved this course, and it consolidated and further developed its autonomous position vis a vis the Warsaw Pact. Romania's decisive stance against the use of its territory by allied forces effectively isolated Bulgaria geographically from the other Warsaw Pact countries leaving it only air or sea options for communication.

Thus the Cold War and the differing relations between the two countries and their ideological sponsor, the Soviet Union, were the backdrop for cold and less than cooperative relations on a bilateral level until the fall of communism in the region. The ideological change and the Balkan "transition" process have modified the relations between Bulgaria and Romania, and today their bilateral exchange is dynamic and marked by strong and important common denominators.

After the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, Bulgaria and Romania continued to connect their bilateral relations with their general foreign policy courses with the orientation toward NATO. Since the year 2000, a strong tendency of gradual improvement in the bilateral relations between the two countries has been noticeable, and it has included the process of launching of a mutual strategy for

achieving NATO membership. These new signs of cooperation in the foreign policy field are a result of three main factors:

- i Governmental changes in Romania and Bulgaria at the end of 1996, beginning of 1997
- ii Conclusion that the so-called “beauty contest” did not bring the desired results; and
- iii 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks.

(i) The coming to power of Emil Constantinescu and the formation of the new government provided confirmation of the new direction of Romanian policy. The Euro-Atlantic commitment, including membership in NATO, has become a priority. A few months later, at the beginning of 1997 a new pro-NATO government came to power in Bulgaria. The caretaker government of the Union of Democratic Forces, with Prime Minister Stefan Sofiansky, officially declared its desire for full-fledged membership in NATO.^{xlix} This act, as it will be showed later, proved to be a decisive step towards new type of relations with NATO and the other aspirants for NATO membership.

(ii) Bulgaria and Romania are convinced that if they are not in the same group with the other Balkan aspirants for NATO membership (Albania and Macedonia), they have a better chance to achieve it. However the two countries were engaged in another, parallel process at the same time. They both endeavoured not only to exclude themselves from the group of the other countries from the region, but also to mutually distinguish themselves. This approach can be described as a beauty contest and it is still very current in Bulgaria and Romania *vis-à-vis* their candidature for EU membership. The underling logic of such a strategy in Romania and Bulgaria's wish not to be treated in the same way automatically, but rather according to their concrete achievements in the integration process. However, after Romania, contrary to expectations failed to be invited to join NATO at the Madrid Summit, in the same round as Hungary, both countries came to the realisation that they were in similar situations and unless they radically change something, they would miss the next round of NATO enlargement in Prague 2002. Following the example of the Baltic States, they started to lobby together and joined their efforts with the other aspirant in order to improve their chances for membership.¹

(iii) Both countries realised that in principle, despite their individual comparative advantages and disadvantages, they can best attract NATO's attention if they keep together and demonstrate an ability to work together towards a common goal. Besides, it is only in case both of them are accepted to NATO they can build a needed bridge between the new members from Central Europe and the southern members-Turkey and Greece, which is so critical for the pursuit of an effective American-led "war on terrorism".ⁱⁱ

• Bulgaria –Turkey

During the Cold War, Turkey was arguably the greatest threat to the Bulgarian national security. The assigned mission of the Bulgarian Peoples' Army under the Warsaw Pact was to defend the southwestern border of the Alliance. Located within what the Soviet General Staff called the "Southwest Theatre of Military Operations", Bulgaria would have confronted Turkey in case of a Warsaw Pact conflict with NATO. As indicated by several joint amphibious landing exercises undertaken jointly with the Soviet Union, Bulgaria's principal objectives would have been to control the Thrace area, and to help Soviet forces seize and hold the critical straits at the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, in case of a conflict with NATO.

Immediately after 1989, improvements in bilateral relations with Turkey were among the top Bulgarian foreign priorities. In November 1990, the Bulgarian General Staff sent a delegation to Turkey, signalling a decisive warming of relations with that traditional "enemy". Bulgaria received encouragement from the West in this initiative. During his visit to Bulgaria NATO General Secretary at the time – Manfred Wörner, said: – “Bulgaria should improve its relations with Turkey. NATO will help.”^{liii} As a result of the democratic changes, and especially because of the need to improve bilateral relations with Turkey, the new Bulgarian post-communist regime rejected the previous policies towards the ethnic Turks living in Bulgaria, as well, thus opening up the room for bilateral cooperation.^{liiii} Today Turkey firmly supports Bulgarian efforts to join NATO. The Turkish Parliament has been the only one in the world so far to have approved a law recommending its Council of Ministers an “open door” policy for NATO for South-East European countries. This law is of a particular concern to Bulgaria and Romania.^{liv}

Following the improvement of bilateral relations, a firm legal framework in the field of defence cooperation was developed between Turkey on the one hand, and Bulgaria, on the other. In particular, in March 1999 both countries signed an agreement against the use of land mines, including the undertaking to demine the mutual boundary. This act had a symbolic meaning for the new level of relations between Bulgaria and its former "enemy number one". A number of bilateral agreements in all fields of cooperation have been signed, including "The Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness, Cooperation and Security."

• Bulgaria – Greece

In 1991, a Bulgarian-Turkish pact of non-aggression was discussed, but Bulgaria feared that a bilateral treaty would damage its prospects for close relations with Greece. While maintaining good relations with Turkey, Bulgaria also pays special attention to maintaining the right balance with its other influential neighbor. Bulgaria is concerned with the development of relations with both of its NATO neighbors, and

has constantly declared that its military-political agreements are not against any third state.^{lv}

Accepting new members that could contribute to solving bilateral disputes within NATO is considered very valuable, and it improves the prospects of an applicant.^{lvi} This is the reason Bulgaria tries to transform this very sensitive topic into an advantage towards NATO integration. Bulgaria (as well as Romania) makes a positive contribution to the improvement of relations between Turkey and Greece by participating in trilateral meetings, and separately with each of them.

• Bulgaria – Macedonia

Bulgaria was the first country to officially recognise Macedonia as an independent state (January 16, 1991).^{lvii} At the same time Bulgaria recognised its neighbour under its constitutional name – Republic of Macedonia.^{lviii} But despite this, for many years, the development of Bulgarian-Macedonian relations was hampered by both historical and political factors. The inherited situation, of isolation, constant negative myth perpetuation and lack of contact between the two countries, turned out to be a serious obstacle to bilateral cooperation. In my opinion, the main reason for this level of relations was the strong will of newly independent Republic of Macedonia to defend this status. Realising that they shared a similar (or the same) history and language with its bigger neighbour, the Macedonian government undertook preventive actions to safeguard its identity, also claiming it for the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria and Greece. On the other hand, following the same preventive approach, Bulgaria did not recognise Macedonians as a nation and created a debate over language in order to neutralise the Macedonian claim for minority status on Bulgarian territory.^{lix} Stephen Larrabee explained the Greek attitude towards Macedonia in a similar way: "The emergence of an independent Macedonia has revived Greek fears that the new Macedonian state might raise territorial claims against Greece."^{lx}

The elections, in both Macedonia and Bulgaria, of governments with strong Euro-Atlantic orientations in 1997, led to new opportunities for the development of bilateral relations.^{lxi} The clearly expressed aspiration of Bulgaria and Macedonia for NATO membership turns the two countries into partners in the process of integration. The joint declaration signed by the Prime ministers of both countries in February 1999 practically settled the deteriorated historical and political disputes that had hampered current development of their relations. No less important than the settlement of the so-called "language problem" was the mutual minority claim waiver. This declaration earned encouragement from the Western observers and established the prerequisites for a new stage in the development of bilateral security cooperation.

In 1999 the Ministries of Defence of Bulgaria and Macedonia signed an agreement for cooperation in the area of national defence and for a substantial donation of military equipment and ammunitions.^{lxii} Aside from the political rhetoric describing the will to enhance security, cooperation and trust in South Eastern Europe, the real goal was to send a clear signal that Bulgaria does not have any claims against its smaller neighbour. The Macedonian Prime Minister Georgievski expresses this in the following way: "Up to now I was asked a lot of times what are the secret thoughts of Bulgaria toward us? Now, when we come back with these weapons, which are quite important for us, nobody should ask me again."^{lxiii}

• Bulgaria - Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Following their foreign policy priorities, the candidates for NATO membership do not cooperate with neighbours that do not share the same political course. In this way, they lose an important diplomatic tool for improving their bilateral relations and the security in the Balkans. The weak points of this approach were visible in the case of the FR of Yugoslavia. The hostile relations between FR of Yugoslavia and NATO also affected the relations of the former with its Balkan neighbours. There was virtually no cooperation in any field between Bulgaria and Romania, on one side, and FR of Yugoslavia, on the other side. At that period FR of Yugoslavia was de-facto isolated from the ongoing processes of cooperation in the Balkans. In October 1997 in Sofia was organised a conference that was a part of the South-East European Defence Ministerial (SEDM) process. This initiative is still the most important development on the multilateral military-political cooperation in the region. In that session, the participant took the decision of forming the Multinational Peace Force in South-East Europe (MPFSEE). The government of FR of Yugoslavia showed interest to participate in this multilateral meeting. Bulgaria as a host country rejected FR of Yugoslavia's (as well as Russian) participation, due to political reasons. This was not a unilateral decision of the Bulgarian diplomacy, but was most probably based on consultations with the US.

Bilateral relations with FR of Yugoslavia were seriously damaged as a result of the Bulgarian and Romanian position toward NATO's military operation in Kosovo. In fact, they formally condemned the secession of Kosovo from FR of Yugoslavia. However, their solidarity with NATO actions and their readiness for logistic support worsened neighbourly relations. Romania had a more ambiguous position on the dissolution of FRY. Both countries share a common concern about Hungarian' irredentism. This shared interest worked to moderate Romanian reactions to the Serbian military offensive into Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. This overlapping interest, however, was insufficient to surmount Bucharest's evident desire to join NATO.

The low level of cooperation between Bulgaria and Romania on one hand and the FR of Yugoslavia on the other hand during the Kosovo war and the re-activation of the diplomatic contact between them after the fall of power of the Milosevic's regime, are eloquent examples for the logic of the regional cooperation. By describing the partners of the applicant countries, NATO puts additional pressure on its political opponents in the Balkans.

CONCLUSION

The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks modify the logic of the NATO enlargement. Strategic concerns tend to override once again political ones. The Black Sea appears to be a strategically important area. The US and NATO need the enlargement towards the Balkans in order to accomplish their own interests. Bulgaria, as well as the other Balkan applicants for membership, is trying to get the best use of this opportunity. For achieving the desired guaranties for its national security Bulgaria has being paying a lot of efforts to satisfy the NATO's accession criterions. Maintaining of good-neighbourly relations and achieving of a status of a regional factor of stability is perceived to be one of the most fundamental requirements. Achieving of this status has been taking a lot of efforts of the Bulgarian diplomacy to open a new chapter in the relations with its immediate neighbours and solve long-time existing bilateral conflicts. A very significant development in this respect was the rapprochement of Bulgaria with its neighbour Macedonia, which happened only after a full membership in NATO was recognised as a main foreign policy priority by the new Bulgarian government. The strategy of Bulgaria to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has been significantly changed with the end of the nineties, especially in respect to the relations with the other serious aspirant for NATO membership - Romania. Both of them have reached some level of political maturity and launched a common integration strategy. However, they continue to pursue their foreign policy interests through participation in regional security initiatives and cooperation, while being rather sceptical about the immediate results. The only result that is expected and desired is NATO membership. The process of integration in NATO has deeply penetrated the political environment in the both countries and even the ex-communist parties embraced the idea. Nowadays the political commitment for joining NATO seems irreversible no matter what kinds of governments are coming to power. Theses results, although rather modest, shows that so far the guided by NATO political transition which aims to shape the regional political environment seems to be successful.

- i Quoted in Nicholas Whyte, "L'Heure de l'Europe – enfin arrivée?", *IISS/CEPS European Security Forum*, Brussels, May 28, 2001, <http://www.eusec.org/whyte.htm>.
- ii See Ivo Daalder, *The United States, Europe, and the Balkans*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C. 2000. <http://www.brook.edu/views/papers/Daalder/useurbalkch.pdf>.
- iii The Alliance's Strategic Concept, April 24, 1999, paragraph 20; <http://www.nato.int/pr/1999/p99-065e.htm>.
- iv Quoted Michael R. Gordon, "Bush Would Stop U.S. Peacekeeping in Balkan Fight," *New York Times*, October 21, 2000, p. A1.
- v The military operation in Afghanistan proved this.
- vi Zbigniew Brzezinski once said: "Enlargement is ultimately about America's role in Europe and whether it will remain a European power". Quoted in Jacquelyn S. Path, "NATO enlargement is part of a gradual process", *Global Beat Issue Brief*, No 13, 25 April 1997.
- vii "The very prospect of membership has provided an incentive for reform in our country, acting as a stimulus for modernisation" Nadejda Mihailova, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria, *NATO Review* vol. 46, №1 Spring 1998, pp. 6-9.
- viii Madeline Albright. "Expanding NATO: Natural, Logical", *NATO Review* Vol. 46, №1 Spring 1998, pp. 21.
- ix See Szayna, *Ibid*, p. 9.
- x Andrew J. Pierre, *De-Balkanizing the Balkans: Security and Stability in Southeastern Europe*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, September 1999, <http://www.usip.org/oc/sr/990920/sr990920.html>
- xi Mira Janeva, "За първи път властта пред непопулярен избор", 24 часа, 23.04.1999.
- xii BBSS "Galup", Мнозинството българи: не давайте небето, рискуваме да валзем във война", *Сера*, 20.04.2003.
- xiii See www.aresearch.org.
- xiv Lydia Yordanova, "Public Attitudes To NATO Membership", in Ognyan Minchev (ed.), *Bulgaria for NATO 2002*, Institute for Regional and International Studies, Sofia, September 2002, pp. 356-372
- xv Slovenia is the only exception, but it does not consider itself a Balkan country.
- xvi Speech of George Robertson at the At the Hanns Seidel Stiftung, Brussels, "Towards the Prague Summit and beyond", 6 March 2002 <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2002/s020306b.htm>.
- xvii The two major candidates were an ex-communist (Ion Iliescu) and an ultra-nationalist (Corneliu Vadim Tudor).
- xviii An interview for the Bulgarian financial daily "Трип", 18.01.2000, p.3.
- xix Constantin Degartu, "Five Years in Partnership for Peace", *Romanian Foreign Affairs Review*, vol.5, 1999, p. 41
- xx Angel Angelov. "A New Security System for the Balkans: Military-Political Dimensions", in Georgi Tsekov (ed.), *Security and Reconstruction of Southeastern Europe - A Policy Outlook From the Region*. Institute for Regional and International Studies, Sofia, September 2000, pp. 20 - 30.
- xxi See Szayna, *Ibid*, p. 42
- xxii During the Cold War, NATO focused on collective defence, so the political imperatives behind the enlargement were secondary to the military contributions. This was the main reason why Turkey, which even today has a lot of unsolved political problems, was accepted into NATO.
- xxiii Vladimir Socor, "The post-Sept. 11 impetus for NATO enlargement" *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, 22-23 Mar 2002.
- xxiv The "TRACECA Program" was launched at a conference in Brussels in May 1993 which brought together trade and transport ministers from the original eight TRACECA countries (five Central Asian republics and three Caucasian republics), where it was agreed to implement a program of European Union funded technical assistance to develop a transport corridor on a west - east axis from Europe, across the Black Sea, through the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea to Central Asia. The EU offers this program as an additional route that would complement other routes. For more information on the "TRACECA Program" visit: <http://www.traceca.org/default.php>.
- xxv *Study on NATO Enlargement*, NATO Headquarter, Brussels, September 1995, paragraph 4 - 7 and 70 - 78, <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/enl-9501.htm>.
- xxvi See *Bulgarian Armed Forces in Times of Reform*. Bulgarian Ministry of Defence, Sofia, September 1998, p.8.
- xxvii See *Romanian Armed Forces Review*, Romanian Ministry of Defence, Bucharest, 1999, *ibid.*, p.18
- xxviii Bulgarian defence reforms are heavily influenced by US defence planning studies and personnel.
- xxix See Eugene Tomiuc, "Bucharest Steps Up NATO Military Reforms, But Political Reforms Just as Crucial", *RFE/RL*, 18 January 2002
- xxx Irena Mladenova and Elitsa Markova, "NATO's Enlargement and the Costs for Bulgaria to Join NATO", Final Report Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council-NATO Individual Fellowship 1999-2001, Economic Policy Institute, Sofia, Bulgaria.
- xxxi See Ivan. Ivanov, "Confidence and Security in the Balkans: The Role of Transparency in Defence Budgeting", *Research Report*, №6, Institute for Security and International Studies.

xxxii See "Bulgaria and NATO Enlargement After Madrid" *Position Paper* of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria distributed during the NATO Madrid Summit, 9 July 1997, www.natoinfo.bg/eng/archives/aftermadrid.html.

xxxiii "The future membership in NATO is not an issue of politics of the day but a matter of final civilisation choice.", *Position Paper* of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria, July 9, 1997.

xxxiv Adrian Nastase, the Romanian Prime Minister: "We Will Stay the Course Even If Our Moment Is Delayed," Speech at Columbia University, 1 February 2002.

xxxv Russia, for example, has a tendency to constantly use this blackmailing approach in negotiations with NATO, arguing that, if its interests are not respected, there is a danger of "Weimarization" of Russia.

xxxvi Quoted by Peter Finn, "Black Sea: New Focus of NATO Expansion," *International Herald Tribune*, 26 March 2002.

xxxvii See the lecture of the Bulgarian Foreign Minister, Solomon Pasy, "NATO Enlargement: America's Best Move in the Fight Against Terrorism," Georgetown University, Washington D.C., 12 March 2002.

xxxviii This was the case during the war in Kosovo, when NATO's access to Greek airspace was limited and hypothetically it can be the case if Turkey continues to be reluctant to participate in a military operation against Iraq.

xxxix Romanian Armed Forces Review, *ibid.*, p.21.

xl Mihailova, Nadejda, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria, Speech, NATO Review Vol. 46- №1 Spring 1998, pp. 6-9

xli The Romanian Parliament adopted the current *National Security Strategy* in June 1999 and *Romanian Military Strategy* in April 2000. The Bulgarian Parliament adopted a *National Security Concept* in April 1998, a *Military Doctrine* in April 1999, and the 2004 *Defence Plan* in October 1999.

xlii Alexander Vershbow, US Ambassador to NATO, Speech on NATO in Southeast Europe, Wilton Park Conference, Brdo Castle, Slovenia, 11 May 2000 (<http://www.usembassy.it>).

xliii Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, *Ibid.*

xliv One may distinguish five spheres of military cooperation: military-political, military, military-economic, information and military-technical. The analysis focuses on the military political dimension.

xlv "Moving towards NATO and the EU " Interview with Georgi Ananiev, Minister of Defence of Bulgaria for the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria, December 1997, <http://www.natoinfo.bg/eng/archives/ananiev.htm>.

xlvi Angel Angelov, *op.cit.*

xlvii See *Country Studies Area Handbook Series*, Washington D.C.: The US Library of Congress, http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cstdy:1:./temp/~frd_JCZ:

xlviii Nadezhda Mihailova, Bulgarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, "Lecture of Foreign Policy Priorities of Bulgaria", Helsinki, 26 March 1998

xlix Decision 192, *The State Gazette*, № 16, 21 February 1997, pp. 6 - 8.

l The ten European aspirant NATO member countries, demonstrated their unity of purpose at a specially convened summit meeting called "The Spring of the New Allies" 25-26 March 2002 in Bucharest. These countries, situated between the Baltic and the Black Sea, are collectively known as "the Vilnius Ten", after the Lithuanian venue of their founding conference.

li According to the research of the strategic costs and benefits to NATO from further enlargement a joint Bulgarian and Romanian accession would not be as costly as having Romania join alone. See See Thomas Szayna, *NATO Enlargement 2000-2015*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, 2001, p. 77

lii See Zhelev, Zhelju, В Голямата Политика, Trud, Sofia, 1998 г., p.68.

liii A big number of Bulgarians with Turkish origins were expelled from Bulgaria during the late 80s.

liv This is the content of paper 3 of the three laws, which the parliament voted on 21.10.1998 in the connection with joining of NATO from the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland.

lv A similar statement Bulgaria sent to Russia through its National Security Concept, art. 28: "The will expressed by it for NATO membership is with the purpose of guarantee of security and is not aimed against third countries."

lvi Szayna, NATO Enlargement, *Ibid.*, p.78.

lvii For more comments about recognition see the Bulgarian ex-president Zhelju Zhelev book - "В Голямата Политика", Trud, Sofia, 1998 г.

lviii UN recognises this state under the name Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)

lix Until 1997 Bulgaria did not recognise the existence of a Macedonian language and insisted that it is a dialect of the Bulgarian language.

lx Larrabee, Stephen, *The Volatile Powder Keg*, 1994, RAND, pp. XV

lxi With Prime Ministers Ivan Kostov (UDF) in Bulgaria and Lupco Georgievski in Macedonia (VMRO-DPMNE).

lxii The donation included: 94 T-55A tanks and 108 M-30 122 mm artillery cannons, 94 combat ammunition packages for T-55A tank and 108 combat ammunition packages for M-30 122mm artillery cannons.

lxiii April 16, 1999, interview for the Bulgarian National Radio.