THE IMPACT OF THE COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION ON THE SECURITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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The answer to transnational and asymmetric threats that are a topical issue on the world geopolitical stage can be found in the integration of national security systems, strengthening multilateral forms of security and the collective system of international security, as the key factors in providing peace, stability and democratic development of modern countries. In such circumstances, the need for a cooperative approach in preserving and improving security, based on cooperation and pooling of security capacities of nation states, is strengthening. This paper views the current achievements of the European Union (hereinafter EU) in terms of implementing its own security policy, primarily in the Western Balkans, in a broader sense, and the specific impact of such a policy on the security of the Republic of Serbia, in a narrower sense. Having in mind the extensive and complex context of the discussed topic, the paper considers, in the authors' opinion, an essential part of this issue, through the analysis of the position of the Republic of Serbia in such context, reviewing the genesis of the EU-Serbia relations and identifying current issues in these relations, and also through the possibilities of progress of cooperation and greater involvement of the capacities of our country in the current EU security policy in this region and beyond**.**

Key words: *European Union, security policy, international security, integration, national security*

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Introduction

The European Union represents a model of joint security action of member states by which they protect their own interests. The European integration began as a project to ensure economic and political cooperation, and today it includes rather intensive cooperation in the field of security and defence. The EU fulfils its interests in security and defence through the implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy (hereinafter CSDP).

Under the auspices of the CSDP implementation, the EU exerts a significant impact on the European countries that are not its members. This impact is most intense on the Western Balkan countries including the Republic of Serbia. In respect of the current situation in international relations, Serbia has a pro-European foreign policy orientation, which implies intensive political dialogue and practical cooperation with foreign partners on the protection of common values, articulation and planning of joint actions to eliminate the possibilities of international misunderstandings and conflicts. The preservation of national values and achievement of national interests is possible only through the economic stability of the state, which is necessary for the fulfilment of the national security goals of the state. Economic development is also conditioned by external factors, which is reflected in the fulfilment of preconditions for accession and integration into the EU and active participation in the international economy and regional arrangements, which can be considered through the conditionality policy, which is an integral part of the EU CSDP in this area.

The Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union on the Security of the Republic of Serbia

Since its establishment until today, the EU has experienced several enlargements and a withdrawal from its membership in 2020, when Great Britain officially left this organization. The candidates for the EU membership are Serbia, Turkey, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania. The EU member states are shown in Figure 1.

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Figure 1 – *EU member states*[1]

Until the Treaty of Lisbon,[2] the European Union could be figuratively presented through the three pillars of cooperation between the member states (Figure 2).
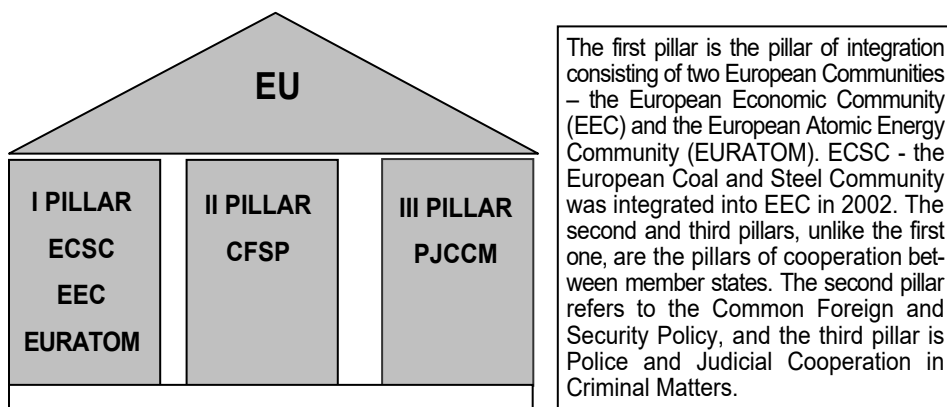

EU

| I PILLAR ECSC EEC EURATOM | II PILLAR CFSP | III PILLAR PJCCM | The first pillar is the pillar of integration consisting of two European Communities – the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM). ECSC - the European Coal and Steel Community was integrated into EEC in 2002. The second and third pillars, unlike the first one, are the pillars of cooperation between member states. The second pillar refers to the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and the third pillar is Police and Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters. |

Figure 2 – *Pillars of cooperation within the EU*

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[1] https://sr.wikipedia.org/sr- ec/Државе_чланице_Европске_уније, 17/05/2020.

[2] The Treaty of Lisbon was published in the Official Journal of the European Union on 17th December 2007, C 306, and its consolidated text in the Official Journal of the European Union on 9th May 2008, C 115/22.

Although the three pillars cover different fields and mechanisms of cooperation, they have a unique institutional framework. The consequence is that the same institutions can act both in the domain of communities and in the fields of common foreign and security policy and police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters. Their procedures and responsibilities are different for each of the three pillars.[3]

One of the EU pillars is the Common Foreign and Security Policy - CFSP. The main role, objectives and tasks of the EU CFSP are defined by the foundation Treaty of the European Union from Maastricht, in a special section, Chapter V - "Provisions on the Common Foreign and Security Policy". The key definition of the CFSP is given in Paragraph 1 Art. J.4. of the Treaty on the EU: "The Common Foreign and Security Policy covers all issues related to the security of the European Union including the long-term definition of a common defence policy that could, at the appropriate time, lead to common defence".[4]

Following the security events in Europe and its surroundings, in the late 1990s, and the demonstrated EU security inability to significantly influence crises with the existing institutions and resources, on the one hand, and the growing interests of the powerful Union, on the other one, have had a decisive impact on the EU members to establish a unique security and defence policy and strengthen its security capabilities. The initiative to strengthen the EU security capacities and capabilities was launched by France, and was supported first by Germany (the Franco-German Declaration of Potsdam of 1 December 1998), then by the United Kingdom (Franco-British Summit in Saint-Malo, 3 and 4 December 1998), followed by the other members. This idea soon grew into a general initiative for the establishment of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The first joint decision of the EU members on the establishment of the ESDP within the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union – CFSP and the intention to develop military and civilian capacities for the implementation of the ESDP, was made at the European Council meeting in Cologne in 1999. The further development of the ESDP was done successively, based on several decisions of the European Council (Helsinki in 1999, Feira in 2000, Nice in 2000, Laken in 2001, Brussels in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2008, etc.).

As the final phase of intensive negotiations between the European Union members on the establishment of the joint ESDP, in the period 1999-2000, a new EU Treaty was adopted on February 26, 2001 in Nice[5], which essentially revised the previous EU Treaties with regard to the provisions of the CFSP, formalized the establishment of a single European Security and Defence Policy – ESDP, identified objectives, institutions, mechanisms, forces, instruments and other elements to strengthen the EU security capabilities.

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[3] Zarka Žan-Klod, *Osnovi institucija Evropske unije*, Institut G17, Beograd, 2004, p. 23.

[4] *Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty)*, Maastricht, 1993.

[5] Nice European Council, 7-9 December 2000. Annex VI: *The Presidency Conclusions*, *Presidency report on the European Security and Defence Policy,* source*:* https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/the-parliament-and-the-treaties/treaty-of-nice.

A key moment in the institutional organization of the EU armed forces took place at the Franco-British Summit in Tuque on February 3, 2003, when the Battlegroup Concept[6] was formulated, forces that would enable the Union to respond urgently to crises. This concept meant the establishment of battalion-size units with about 1,500 soldiers, from one or several member states, which would be ready to be deployed anywhere in the world within 5 to 10 days, and could secure an area for a maximum of 30 days, possibly up to 3 months.[7]

The Treaty of Lisbon concluded an era of the EU transformation. The greatest changes have been made in the Common Foreign and Security Policy, which accounts for as much as 50% of all amendments to the EU Treaty[8], but it still remained the field of intergovernmental cooperation outside the main body of the EU law and outside the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, with unanimity as the main way of decision-making (with certain exceptions). Furthermore, the Treaty of Lisbon replaced the name European Security and Defence Policy – ESDP with the current name of the Common Security and Defence Policy – CSDP.

Reflections of the Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union on the Western Balkans

The term Western Balkans is of a more recent date; at the beginning it was used in informal communication, and it quickly became generally accepted as an official name in international politics, and even in some international documents.[9] Predrag Svilar interprets this term as "a practical methodological and classifying means of naming societies in the Balkans, which are outside the framework of the European Union".[10] Ultimately, this term, as Vuletić states, "was introduced by the European Union, defining its strategy through a special programme of economic, political, financial, expert and other assistance to that part of the Balkans"[11]. He also states that the Western Balkans is neither a geopolitical nor a geostrategic category, but exclusively a political-economic term, i.e. a common definition for a part of the countries of the Southeast Europe region.[12]

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[6] www.eurocorps.org/readiness/european-battle-group/, 11/04/2020

[7] *Borbene grupe Evropske unije*, Pojmovnik, Centar za civilno vojne odnose, Beograd, 2009.

[8] Miščević Tanja, „Izazovi za Zajedničku bezbednosnu i odbrambenu politiku Evropske unije", *Izazovi evropskih integracija*, br. 15/2011, Beograd, 2011, p. 15.

[9] Vuletić V. Dejan, *NATO i Zapadni Balkan,* Vojno delo 7/2018, Medija centar „Odbrana", Beograd, 2019, p. 41.

[10] Svilar Predrag, Zapadni Balkan – politički kontekst i medijska upotreba, Sociološki pregled, Filozofski fakultet, Novi Sad, 2010, p. 503.

[11] Vuletić V. Dejan, *NATO i Zapadni Balkan*, Vojno delo 7/2018, Medija centar „Odbrana", Beograd, 2019, p. 41.

[12] Ibid.

The attitude of the European Union towards the crisesin the former Yugoslavia

From the very beginning, the war in the former Yugoslavia threatened neighbouring countries and questioned their security. All of them suffered extensive damage, especially due to the blockade of trade and traffic through the region, as well as because of the economic blockade of the newly formed FR Yugoslavia at that time. This situation was a serious test for the EU, which was supposed to prove itself in its territory as a significant world actor and confirm the first objective of the European integration process "to organize Europe so that, on the one hand, it is the area of peace, freedom, security and prosperity, and on the other hand to be world factor of global peace, freedom, security and prosperity".[13] However, in its first international engagement, the EU failed to impose itself and experienced political and military marginalization by the United States and NATO.

The greatest practical problem of the EU was that it could not solve or take the lead in resolving the crisis in the Balkans, neither in the beginning, nor in the middle and at the end of the 1990s. Although the beginning of the 1990s was announced as "European hour", which meant that the US assistance was not needed, it was obvious that the EU could not solve the problem in its immediate neighbourhood.[14] Political divisions among major European actors have been significant, primarily in terms of the nature of the conflict and military and diplomatic solutions. Germany, Britain and France, each for the sake of their aspirations, as the leading EU states, failed to act as one, because, as Toje states, "for the EU as an actor, values occupy the space that is usually occupied by national interests in states".[15]

This, in the beginning peaceful role of the EU in the war in the former Yugoslavia showed that this organization had the ambition, but not the strength to act independently in international security policy. This is proved by a clear indicator that the NATO appeared in all military interventions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, from 1992 to 1995. This was the case during the air strikes in 1995 and the deployment of 60,000 NATO members within the ISAF operation, whose mandate was to guarantee the implementation of the Dayton Accords. The last demonstration of force was the NATO intervention in Kosovo and Metohija in 1999.[16] The result and epilogue of the Yugoslav crisis show that the Union did learn a lesson, but did not know how to apply the acquired knowledge.[17]

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[13] Etinski Rodoljub i dr., *Osnovi prava Evropske unije*, Pravni fakultet, Novi Sad, 2010, p. 1.

[14] Wallace Hellen, *Interlocking Dimensions of European Integration*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2001, p. 223.

[15] Toje Asle, „Strateška kultura kao analitički alat", *Bezbednost Zapadnog Balkana,* broj 14, Beogradska škola za studije bezbednosti, Beograd, 2009, p. 17.

[16] Clark Michael, Cornish Paul, „The European Defence Project and the Prague Summit", *International Affairs*, no 78, London, 2002, pp. 777-778.

[17] Lindley-French Julian, „Chronology of European Security and Defence", 1945-2006, *Oxford University Press*, UK, 2007, p. 190.

In essence, the European Union, which was left to be a peaceful mediator at the beginning of the conflict, found itself in a kind of political and diplomatic blockade at the end of 1991, facing the threat that the newly defined principles of common foreign policy would be compromised, and its foreign policy credibility was called into question.

Strengthening the security role of the European Union in the Western Balkans

After the wars in the former Yugoslavia and the establishment of various forms of protectorate arrangements in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, the EU has influenced the post-conflict peacebuilding and normalization of relations between the newly formed states by providing assistance and support to broad institutional and political reforms. The key mechanism by which the EU influenced the process of changing security dynamics was the enlargement policy, expressed in the Stabilisation and Association Process.[18] Through providing various forms of assistance and support to the Western Balkan countries, it has led these countries to gradually adopt norms of acceptable behaviour in the European community. In a more general sense, it was a "conditioning" mechanism". In this way, by using incentives that change the behaviour or policies of the state, the countries in the region adopt "the norms of acceptable international behaviour".

Some authors view this initiative as a process of socialization of the Western Balkans and point out that this interest arises from the fear that potential conflicts in this territory could develop and spread to Europe. The process of socialization of the Balkan countries implies the use of two methods: direct conditioning or execution and instruction, i.e. the management of differences. Both methods aim to force countries to respect externally imposed rules.[19] Thus, the actors will be socialized enough to resolve conflicts peacefully. Since the Western Balkans is still in a security regime, socialization should have a positive effect on raising the capacity of state institutions and intensifying regional cooperation, in order for this subcomplex to become an elite security community.[20]

When analysing the EU enlargement policy, it can be noticed that, in addition to the established institutions, the countries aspiring to membership should invest continuous efforts to develop social cohesion, strengthen civil society and democratisation. The European Union clearly indicates a desire to continue to proactively influence this region. However, it has halted the admission of new members, making it clear that the Western Balkans will not be fully integrated into the European Security Community consisting of the EU member states for some time.

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[18] Kovačević Marko, „Uticaj izgradnje države na bezbednosnu dinamiku u okviru Teorije regionalnog bezbednosnog kompleksa", *Bezbednost Zapadnog Balkana 6(21)*, Beogradski centar za bezbednosnu politiku, Beograd, 2011, p. 57-58.

[19] Kavalski Emilian, *Extending the European Security Community: Constructing Peace in the Balkans*, Taurus Academic Studies, London, 2007, p.65.

[20] Ćurčić Milica, Dinić Jelena, *Uloga Evropske unije u transformaciji bezbednosti Zapadnog Balkana*, Zbornik radova sa međunarodne naučne konferencije „*ERAZ 2017*", Beograd, 2017, p. 659.

The Impact of the European Union through the Stabilisation and Association Process and the Policy of Conditioning

The Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP)[21] is a special type of the EU regional approach to the Western Balkan countries. It was proposed by the European Commission for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, the Republic of Macedonia and Albania on May 26, 1999, and it was established with the aim of strengthening the existing regional approach of the EU, primarily for the mentioned five countries of the Western Balkans region, through the establishment of special types of contractual relations (agreements).

The European Council confirmed the SAP in Thessaloniki (June 19-20, 2003) as the political framework for the EU course towards the Western Balkan countries, pending their future accession, and approved the Thessaloniki Agenda[22]. Serbia became a part of the SAP in November 2000, as one of the republics of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Since 2001, all measures and instruments of this process have become available to it. The negotiations with Serbia began in November 2005, but were suspended in 2006. Only on April 29, 2008, the SAP between the EU and Serbia was initialed.[23]

The latest version of the EU Accession Strategy dates back to February 6, 2018, from the Strasbourg (France) Summit called "Strategy for a credible perspective of enlargement and enhanced engagement of the European Union in the Western Balkans"[24]. This document confirms the perspective of the accession of the countries that make up the Western Balkans region to the European Union and for the first time provides a specific time framework in the form of an officially defined year (2025), after which the EU could be further expanded with the candidate countries from the region that the Strategy is related to if the criteria from Article 49 of the Treaty on the European Union, which include the Copenhagen Criteria, are met by the specified time.[25]

The Stabilisation and Association Process, in addition to a great number of incentives, primarily of an advisory and financial-material nature, sets certain economic, political and legal conditions. According to Philippe Schmitter's definition, conditioning is "the use of fulfiling requirements as a precondition for obtaining

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[21] *Proces stabilizacije i pridruživanja*, Vlada Republike Srbije – Kancelarija za pridruživanje Evropskoj uniji, available at:
www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/documents/seio/Proces_stabilizacije_i_pridruzivanja_06APR05.pdf.

[22] *The Thessaloniki agenda for the Western Balkans: Moving towards European integration*, available at:
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/76201.pdf.

[23] *Proces stabilizacije i pridruživanja,* Vlada Republike Srbije – Kancelarija za pridruživanje Evropskoj uniji,source:
www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/documents/seio/Proces_stabilizacije_i_pridruzivanja_06APR05.pdf.

[24] www.ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/eu-western-balkans-strategy-credible-enlargement-perspective_en, 22/03/2020

[25] *Pregled kriterijuma za proširenje/pristupanje EU*, source:
https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/glossary/terms/accession-criteria_en

economic assistance, debt relief, the status of the most privileged nation, access to credit subsidies or membership in desired regional or global organizations"[26] A certain reward follows the fulfilment of the set conditions, otherwise the policy of conditioning gives opportunities for penalty. This is exactly how the European Union uses the mechanism – *conditionality for membership.*

The greatest challenge for Serbia in terms of progress on the path to the EU is the attitude of this organization on the independence of its southern province of Kosovo and Metohija. Leading the diplomatic struggle against the recognition of the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo and Metohija and striving to remain capable of independent defence as a military neutral state, the Republic of Serbia needs a "balanced approach" to foreign policy. This need makes the negotiations on our country's accession to the European Union very complex, especially within Chapter 31 – Foreign, Security and Defence Policy.[27] The efforts of the EU and the US to regulate the status of Kosovo and Metohija by signing a legally binding agreement, with guarantees and supervision of external forces, would undoubtedly mean deviation from the norms stipulated by the valid Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. It would further imply additional revision of the National Security Strategy and the Defence Strategy, with the need for national and defence interests (as well as key security challenges) to be redefined again, in line with the new reality[28].

Some theorists point out that the role of the EU in resolving the crisis in Kosovo and Metohija in relation to other organizations and countries, primarily the NATO and the United States, is lukewarm[29] and that it went the furthest with the conclusions of the European Council from Cardiff, which supported the demands to stop military operations undertaken by the Yugoslav Army at that time[30]. Although there is no doubt that the EU is an attractive environment for Serbia in which it sees a chance for development and its future, it seems right to say that "the EU is a confrontational factor for Serbia at this moment, a conspicuous troublemaker, and not a lovely and nice protagonist of their resolution".[31]

It can be concluded that, through the Stabilisation and Association Process and the policy of conditionality, the EU exerts a significant impact on all countries in the region, and thus on Serbia, especially if we have in mind Serbia's strategic commitment to the EU membership. However, it is obvious that the EU policy in the

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[26] Petrović Jovan, Štap i šargarepa: Sve što ste želeli da znate o politici uslovljavanja, a niste smeli da pitate, *Bezbednost Zapadnog Balkana 2(04)*, Beograd, 2007, p. 55.

[27] Novaković Igor, *Vodič kroz poglavlje 31 pretpristupnih pregovora Srbije sa Evropskom unijom*, ISAC fond, Centar za međunarodne i bezbednosne poslove, Beograd, 2015, p. 14.

[28] Milutinović S. Milan, *Uticaj strategije proširenja Evropske unije za Zapadni Balkan na odbrambene interese Republike Srbije*, Vojno delo 4/2019, Medija centar „Odbrana", Beograd, 2019, p. 36.

[29] Christopher D. Cotts, *USAF, The Revenge of Europe _ NATO and the Transatlantic Relationship in the Era of the European Union*, The Walker Papers, Air University Press, September, Alabama (USA), 2005, pp. 5 and 43.

[30] Lindley-French Julian, gen. quote, p. 245.

[31] Knežević Miloš, *Prizma geopolitike*, Institut za političke studije, Beograd, 2013, p. 287.

Western Balkans has recently reached an impasse as a result of a number of factors such as: great promises (Thessaloniki agenda), increased costs, internal economic crisis and internal discord in the EU (Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic), so it is not yet clear when and whether Serbia will be admitted to the EU at all. Moreover, after the COVID-19 pandemic, the results will be summarized and a new perspective of the compromised and seriously shaken EU will be created, which will imply its future policy and seriously redefine the enlargement policy.

Conclusion

In the last decade, the European Union has developed a structure, an operational framework and increasingly meaningful actions in the field of security and defence. The progress made in implementing the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy and the involvement of European defence forces in solving security problems point to the EU increasingly important role in harmonising relations and interests of the European countries and taking a part of joint responsibility for creating European and global security.

The basis of the EU attitude to the Western Balkan countries, after the crises in the former Yugoslavia, was the introduction of the Stabilisation and Association Process. This process promotes stability in the region, supports closer ties between the Western Balkan countries and the European Union, and, ultimately, assists countries in preparations for the EU membership. However, the basis of the SAP is the EU conditionality policy. Setting conditions and fulfiling them is also a very strong mechanism for influencing countries that would like to join the EU. This policy has a very negative effect on the relations between the EU and Serbia. Our country does not want to remain isolated from the integration processes in the region, Europe and the world because one of its national interests is participation in international organizations and institutions. However, Serbia does not want to neglect its national interests that may be threatened by this process.

The Republic of Serbia expresses its readiness, in accordance with its strategic foreign policy orientation for the EU accession, as well as national security and defence policy, to accept the definition, legal structure, as well as organizational arrangements concerning the CFSP and CSDP of the EU. In accordance with the progress made in the process of joining the EU, Serbia is ready to make available its defence capacities in the function of implementing the CFSP and CSDP and actively participate in multinational operations of keeping international peace and security. It is committed to engage its defence potential on the basis of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, the UN Charter and the principles of international law.

However, what is perceived as a special problem and significantly complicates the relations between the EU and Serbia is the issue of Kosovo and Metohija. The recognition of Kosovo by certain countries in the immediate vicinity of the Republic of Serbia, as well as the majority of the EU member states, adversely affects the confidence-building measures and cooperation and slows down the stabilisation process in this area.

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[10] Lindley-French Julian, „Chronology of European Security and Defence", 1945–2006., *Oxford University Press*, UK, 2007.

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[13] Novaković Igor, *Vodič kroz poglavlje 31 pretpristupnih pregovora Srbije sa Evropskom unijom*, ISAC fond, Centar za međunarodne i bezbednosne poslove, Beograd, 2015.

[14] Petrović Jovan, Štap i šargarepa: Sve što ste želeli da znate o politici uslovljavanja, a niste smeli da pitate, *Bezbednost zapadnog Balkana 2(04)*, Beograd, 2007.

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[17] Ćurčić Milica, Dinić Jelena, *Uloga Evropske unije u transformaciji bezbednosti Zapadnog Balkana*, Zbornik radova sa međunarodne naučne konferencije „*ERAZ 2017*", Beograd, 2017.

[18] Clark Michael, Cornish Paul, „The European Defence Project and the Prague Summit", *International Affairs*, no 78, London, 2002.

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[20] Wallace Hellen, *Interlocking Dimensions of European Integration*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2001.

[21] *Pregled kriterijuma za proširenje/pristupanje EU,* source:
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[22] *Nice European Council, 7-9. December 2000. Anex VI: The Presidency Conclusions, Presidency report on the European Security and Defence Policy*, source:
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[25] *Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty)*, Maastricht, 1993.

[26] *Treaty of Amsterdam Amending the Treaty on European Union, Title V – Provisions on a Common Foreign and Security Policy*, Article 11, Official Jurnal C 340, 10 November 1997.

[27] www.ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/eu-western-balkans-strategy-credible-enlargement-perspective_en.

[28] www.researchgate.net/figure/South-East-Europe-marine-and-river-information-systems-http-wwwseemarinereu-It-was_fig1_301718625.

[29] www.sr.wikipedia.org/sr- ec/Државе_чланице_Европске_уније.

S u m m a r y

The answer to transnational and asymmetric threats that are a topical issue on the world geopolitical stage is the integration of national security systems, strengthening multilateral forms of security and the collective system of international security, as the key factors in providing peace, stability and democratic development of modern countries. In such circumstances, the need for a cooperative approach in preserving and improving security, based on cooperation and pooling of security capacities of nation states, is growing. In the last decade, the European Union (hereinafter referred to as the EU) has developed a structure, an operational framework and increasingly meaningful actions in the field of security and defence. The progress made in the implementation of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy and the involvement of European defence forces in solving security problems indicate the EU increasingly important role in harmonising relations and interests of the European countries and taking a part of joint responsibility for creating European and global security.

This paper is aimed at considering the current achievements of the EU in terms of implementing its own security policy, primarily in the Western Balkans, in a broader sense, and the specific impact of such a policy on the security of the Republic of Serbia, in a narrower sense. Throughout the history of the conflict in this area from the 1990s until today, the EU has positioned itself as an actor that strives to be a key protagonist of security in "its own European backyard". The current situation shows that the EU is not yet that and it is currently in a phase of stagnant development and

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planned transformation of its security and defence policy in the direction in which it was intended. In the current constellation of relations with the EU, the Republic of Serbia is in a very complex position, determined to join the EU, but hindered on such a path by various restrictions and conditions, which make the final starting point of the idea of the EU accession uncertain.

The greatest challenge for Serbia in terms of progress on the path to the EU is the attitude of this organization on the independence of its southern province of Kosovo and Metohija. Leading the diplomatic struggle against the recognition of the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo and Metohija and striving to remain capable of independent defence as a military neutral state, the Republic of Serbia needs a "balanced approach" to foreign policy. This issue is the greatest, but not the only challenge on the path of Serbia's accession to the EU. There are also issues of the relations between Serbia and the Russian Federation, arming Serbia with the Russian weapons, the relations between Serbia and China and many other issues in connection to regional relations. Despite all the abovementioned, the Republic of Serbia has been actively involved in the European security and defence policy through participation in certain EU programmes, and also the active participation of military and police forces in the HELBROC Battlegroup. This trend is likely to continue, as interests in both directions are such that there is the need for interoperability and integrated action by all European countries.

Having in mind the extensive and complex context of the discussed topic, the paper considers, in the authors' opinion, an essential part of this issue, through the analysis of the position of the Republic of Serbia in such context, reviewing the genesis of the relations between the EU and the Republic of Serbia and identifying current problems in this area, and also the possibility of progress and greater involvement of the Republic of Serbia in the current EU security policy.

Key words: *European Union, security policy, international security, integration, challenge, cooperation*