

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND READINESS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA FOR INTEGRATION

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Within the process of the European integrations in the sphere of defence, the Republic of Serbia is expected to adapt to the Common security and defence policy of the European Union regarding strategic and planning, and normative and legal conditions, as well as the construction of appropriate operational capacities for completing the tasks in the EU joint operations. This paper analyses the EU defence policy, the compatibility of The Republic of Serbia's defence policy with that of the EU, and the capabilities of the Serbian Armed Forces to meet the challenges of the current European integrations. It is assumed that Serbia has mostly adapted its planning and legal framework in the field of defence to the EU acquis, and that the Serbian Armed Forces have the resources which can meet the challenges of the European common defence. This paper is based on the analysis of the content of regulatory documents, the papers which had covered this topic, and comparative analysis of certain statistic indicators. It is evaluated that the European Union has not achieved the desired level of development of defence policy and capabilities, whereas Serbia can now largely meet the needs of European integrations in the field of defence.

Key words: The Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union, the defence policy of the Republic of Serbia, the Serbian Armed Forces

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The views expressed in the article reflect the author's personal opinion, not the views of the institution where he is employed.

Introduction

Due to the long-term determination of the Republic of Serbia to join the European Union (the EU), and the fact that the Common security and defence policy (CSDP) is being created and applied in the EU's foreign policy for a long time now, and whether the new members will join the EU depends on their acceptance of the CSDP, it can be concluded that potential achievements of the European integrations depend on the defence policy of the Republic of Serbia, and the capabilities of the Serbian Armed Forces to meet the needs in this field. So far, the CSDP has gone through different normative and institutional changes for the purpose of creating conditions for better coordination and more efficient realization of measures and tasks of the EU member states' armed forces. Serbia has certain historical continuity regarding strategic and normative and legal regulation of the national security policy and the defence policy. Besides, the experiences of both military and police forces, as well as other bodies, is certainly at high level, considering the years of working in turbulent, and even war environment.

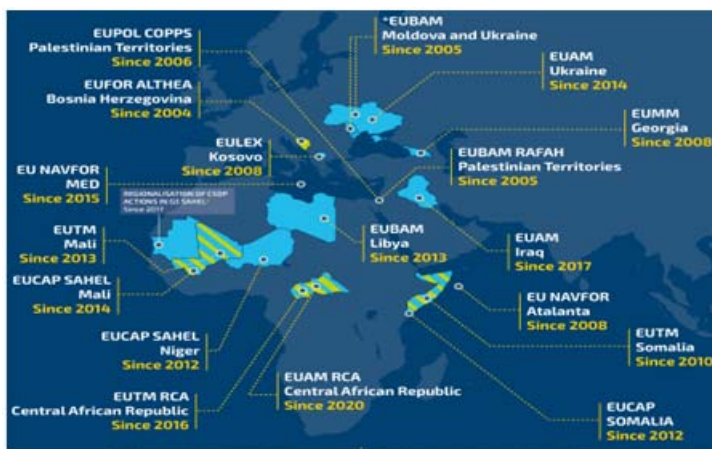
The aim of this paper, which is based on the premises stated earlier, is to analyze the current situation in the EU in the field of defence, as well as current level of capabilities of Serbia to join the EU Common security and defence policy and complete the tasks which will be set before our country on the European integrations path.

The content and application of the Common security and defence policy of the European Union

The Common security and defence policy of the European Union has been created since the end of 1990's and the beginning of the 21st century until nowadays, in conditions of various security challenges, risks, threats, even the wars in the EU close surroundings. Starting with The Maastricht Treaty from 1992, and later with the other EU legal documents which introduced certain changes, the field of foreign policy and security was developing, and within it, permanent political and military structures were founded in the EU, and specific jurisdictions and obligations of the common bodies and the EU member states were established. By adopting strategic documentation in the field of foreign policy and security such as The European Security Strategy: A Secure Europe in a Better World in 2003, and the Global Strategy for the Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union: Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe in 2016, the planning conditions for operationalization of the EU defence policy were created. The European Union founded the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in December 2017, among 25 member states with focus on the areas of training, strengthening of the capacities and operational readiness. The last among many activities within the field of defence was adoption of "military strategy", hierarchically speaking, compared to the Global Strategy of the EU. In March 2022, the EU adopted a document named "Strategic Compass" whose role is to define the priorities, at strategic level, and strengthen and direct the military capacities of the EU and its member states towards common defence.

The Common security and defence policy of the European Union is a part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU (CFSP), and it can be considered an instrument of “hard” power, compared to its foreign policy which is a manifestation of “soft” power. Through the CSDP, the European Union is making an effort to improve common military capacities and get the opportunity to conduct missions outside the EU. One of the main goals is to maintain peace and security on the territories of member states, as well as to gain capability to manage crises in its surroundings as well, which is considered to be its “remit”, considering that it indirectly influences the safety in the EU. Mostly, those are humanitarian and peacekeeping missions, military or civilian in nature. The EU member states put a part of their forces at the EU’s disposal for such operations, which is always coordinated with the NATO, whose commanding structures are sometimes used for practical tasks in the EU missions.

Military missions and operations were the focus of the CSDP application in the EU since 2003, whereby 37 missions have been organized in total. Currently, 18 missions and operations of the EU are active (11 civilian and 7 military) in 12 countries (Picture 1). In the EU operations, approximately 5000 soldiers, police officers and other professional staff were engaged. The official mission goals are as follows: peacekeeping, conflict prevention, strengthening international security, the rule of law, prevention of human trafficking and maritime piracy. In the period from 2014 to 2020, the staff capacity in the missions was at 83%, compared to originally planned 90%, which shows that this aspect still needs more attention.¹

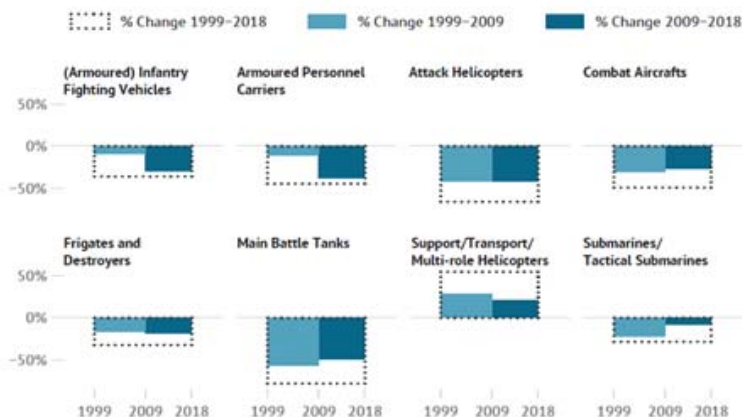


Picture 1 – Military and civilian missions and operations of the EU in the world.²

¹ More on the subject in: European Union External Action Service, *CSD Missions and Operations Annual Reports for 2016; 2017; 2018*; (europa.eu), accessed on 08.01.2022.

² European Union – External Action Service, *Military and civilian missions and operations*; https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/military-and-civilian-missions-and-operations/430/military-and-civilian-missions-and-operations_en, accessed on 16.01.2022.

Strengthening of operational capabilities is another goal of the CSDP, especially common ones, i.e. the available forces for the engagement in the missions and operations of the EU. It can be said that the EU failed in this area. Compared to the period of the Cold war, the majority of the EU member states have reduced their military capacities.



Graph 1 – The changes in military capabilities of the EU member states, 1998-2018.³

In the Graph 1, designed by Claudia Major and Christian Mölling, based on the data from the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, it is shown that the EU member states, depending on the type, have lost from 30% up to 80% of their resources since initiating the CSDP of the EU.

The number of the members of the armed forces of the EU member states was reduced from 3.557.200 in the 1990's to 1.910.000 in 2019.⁴ According to the data of the European Defence Agency (EDA), there is an upward trend in the funds allocated for the purpose of defence and investments. The overall budget of the 26 EU member states, after the exit of the Great Britain, was 186 billion of Euros, which is 1.4% of their GDP, and 2.9% of the budget expenditure. Compared to 2018, that is an increase of 5%, with continuation of an upward trend since 2015.⁵ When it comes to ranking the countries in order of military power, the EU member states are not at the top on a global level, expect perhaps from France as a nuclear power, then Germany, Italy, Greece, Spain, Poland which are the backbone of the NATO in Europe, besides the USA.

³ Claudia Major and Christian Mölling, "The EU's military legacy – Over institutionalised, under-equipped and strategically divided", in *The CSDP in 2020 – The EU's legacy and ambition in security and defence*, ed. Daniel Fiot, EU Institute of Security Studies, Luxembourg, 2020, p.43.

⁴ The World Bank, *Armed forces personnel, total - European Union*; <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.TOTL.P1?locations=EU>, accessed on 18.03.2022.

⁵ European Defence Agency, *Defence Data 2018-2019 – Key findings and analysis*, ed. Elisabeth Schoeffmann, Publication office of the EU, Brussels, 2021, p.4.

A question arises – how the available resources influence the application of the EU CSDP and whether the EU can meet the set goals. In 2018, the International Institute for Security Studies analyzed the capability of the EU to complete the scenario for engagement outside of its borders.

- peace enforcement (big common operation) up to 4.000km from Brussels,
- conflict prevention (small common operation) up to 6.000km of distance,
- stabilization and support (small operation) up to 8.000km of distance
- rescue and evacuation (small operation) up to 10.000km of distance
- providing humanitarian aid up to 15.000km from Brussels.

The analysis has shown, inter alia, that the EU, with currently available resources, is not capable of conducting more than one mission within the scenarios. Also, only the scenarios of rescue and evacuation (up to 10.000km) and providing humanitarian aid (up to 15.000km) can be supported with currently available resources, whereas, upon the exit of Great Britain from the EU, the shortage of naval resources became prominent. Besides, the needs for assets in the first three scenarios would show significant shortage of resources, including the shortage of high-ranking officers who are not a part of the NATO. Similarly, for the purpose of conducting 7 small operations simultaneously, according to the ambitions of the EU within the CSDP, a significant shortage of resources would arise in all categories and branches, meaning that only one third of the demands, or even less, could be completed.⁶

In 2018, the European Union Committee of the House of Lords in the Parliament of the United Kingdom published the Report on security and defence missions and operations of the EU. The following conclusions were drawn regarding the missions of the EU: a) they are limited in scope compared to the missions of the UN and the NATO; b) they are focused on construction of security capacities, reform and training; c) they are relatively slow when it comes to achieving results, especially in less stable areas, such as Kosovo and Metohija, Somalia; d) they are contributing to the EU foreign policy; e) sometimes they were not strongly supported by all member states; f) they are facing the problem of providing sufficient resources and properly qualified personnel.⁷

The European Union is still burdened with the role of the NATO in Europe, regarding the primacy it has in defence of the EU member states. Also, the EU is limited when it comes to strengthening supranational defensive power due to individual countries' interest to keep strong independent defence capabilities for themselves. The economic factor also has a certain role, as well as dissatisfaction of the countries with the allocation of funds for common defence.

⁶ Douglas Barrie et al, *Protecting Europe: Meeting the EU's Military Level of Ambition in the Context of Brexit*, The International Institute for Strategic Studies and German Council of Foreign Relations report, London, 2018, p. 2.

⁷ European Union Committee, *Brexit: Common Security and Defence policy missions and operations, 16th Report of Session 2017-09*, House of Lords, London, 2018, pp. 31-32.

Adapting the defence policy of the Republic of Serbia to the CFSP of the EU

The defence policy is a part of the national security policy of the Republic of Serbia. Its content is defined by the highest strategic documents in the field of security and defence of our country, i.e. by the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia and the Defence Strategy of the Republic of Serbia. When the aims of the national security policy are being analyzed (32 in total) and compared to the aims or priority segments of the Global strategy for foreign and security policy of the EU (25 in total), it can be concluded that they mostly concur with each other. Both Serbia and the European Union have set the following goals as a priority: quality level of security and defence, combating contemporary security threats, positive influence on the security of external environment (both regional and global), the interest in enlargement of the EU/the interest in integrating Serbia into the EU, preventive peace and conflict resolution (participating in peacekeeping operations), economic development and prosperity, partnership, etc.

Within the interests in the field of defence, which are determined by the Defence strategy (6 in total), one is directed towards accepting the CSDP and the European integrations. "Improving of national security and defence through the process of the European integration." For its realization, the following goals are being set: a) strengthening cooperative security with the EU, b) participation of Serbia in the activities of the CSDP, c) reaching the level of capabilities for participating in the CSDP civilian missions, and d) improvement of scientific and research and military and economic cooperation with the EU.⁸

Regarding the national security policy and defence policy, Serbia opted for cooperation with all the relevant factors in the regional and global environment, and opted for conducting the policy of military neutrality. Serbia has been active on its path of neutrality through different forms of institutional cooperation with the UN, the EU, the NATO, the OSCE and the Russian Federation.

Since 2006, Serbia is a part of the programme "The Partnership for Peace". Since 2015, Serbia regularly adopts the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) as a framework and instrument of stronger cooperation. Also, Serbia participates in the work of various different committees, work groups and the NATO cooperation programmes.

Serbia is a member of the South-East Europe Defence Ministerial (SEDM) and the Balkan CHODs Conference, and it also participates in the activities of the Centre for Security Cooperation (RACVIAC).

Within strengthening of cooperative security with the EU, since 2010, Serbia established the Military Representative Office of the Mission of the Republic of Serbia to NATO in Brussels, which, besides advocating the defence interests of the Republic of Serbia in the NATO and participating in the work of the NATO units, performs activities related to military cooperation with the EU. The representatives of the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces participate at the meetings of the EU Military Committee since 2012.

⁸ „Стратегија одбране Републике Србије”, *Службени гласник РС* 94/19, Београд, 2019, р. 14.

Serbia cooperates with the EDA since 2013 when the agreement was signed, enabling participation of Serbia in the projects and programmes of the Agency. The aim is to improve interoperability with the EU member states, to strengthen the defense industry and research and technological potentials of Serbia.

The defence policy of Serbia is a part of negotiating process with the EU, within the chapter 31 – Foreign, security and defence policy. The talks are held for the purpose of adapting to the CFSP, and within it, to the CSDP as well. The Chapter 31 has not been opened yet. The focus is on harmonizing Serbia with the foreign policy decisions, directives and attitudes. In 2021, the EU issued 85 foreign policy declarations in total, asking the membership candidates to support the declarations. Serbia accepted with 52 declarations which is the rate of 61%. Throughout the previous years the situation was similar. The main reason is the issue of Kosovo and Metohija and the wish of Serbia to maintain good relationships with the countries which support its sovereignty. The major part of the declarations which Serbia did not accept is directed against countries which do not recognize the independence of so called “Republic of Kosovo”, namely Russia (17), Belarus (4), China (3).⁹

The readiness of Serbia for integration in the field of defence has mostly been positively evaluated by the European Commission. In its report from 2020, the Commission positively evaluated that Serbia adopted new strategies in the field of defence and security. The European Union expects the adoption of action plans for carrying out these strategies in the future.¹⁰ In the report from 2021, the European Commission assessed that Serbia is *moderately prepared* in the area of the negotiating chapter 31, which is quantitatively expressed with grade 3 (mostly because of failing to harmonize with the EU foreign policy). It was assessed that Serbia joined almost all the key agreements on non-proliferation of weapons, on disarmament and arms control promoted by the EU, that it has continued to actively cooperate with international organizations, especially the NATO, even though it kept its military neutrality policy. Also, Serbia continued to actively participate in the missions and operations of the EU, specifically in the missions for training in Somalia and the Central African Republic and in the EU NAVFOR “Atalanta”.

The capabilities of the Serbian Armed Forces for participating in the application of the CSDP of the EU

The Serbian Armed Forces are the main armed force and the pillar of defence of the Republic of Serbia. The Serbian Armed Forces are a respectable force in the region with the resources by which it can measure up to the majority of the countries in the EU.

⁹ Игор Новаковић, Натан Албахари, Јована Богосављевић, *Анализа усклађености Србије са спољнополитичким декларацијама и мерама Европске уније од 1. јануара до 31. децембра 2021. године*, ISAC, Београд, 2022, р. 2.

¹⁰ Европска комисија, *Република Србија – Извештај за 2020. годину*, Брисел, 2020, р. 127; The reports are available at: <https://www.mei.gov.rs/srp/dokumenta/eu-dokumenta/godisnji-izvestaji-ek>.

As one of the indicators of the capabilities of the Serbian Armed Forces, first of all, it is necessary to mention perennial participation in the military missions of the UN and of the EU. At the moment, the Serbian Armed Forces are engaged in 5 UN missions and 3 missions of the EU, with 293 members in total.

1. Lebanon – “UNIFIL”, 177 members, staff officer, military observers, patrol members and infantry platoon, since 2010;
2. The CAR – “MINUSCA”, 72 members, military observers, staff officers, staff of the military hospital level 2, since 2014;
3. Cyprus – “UNFICYP”, 3 members, staff officers, since 2010;
4. Congo – “MONUSCO”, 8 members, headquarters group, medical evacuation team, since 2003;
5. The Middle East – “UNTSO”, 1 member, military observer, since 2012;
6. Somalia – “EUTM”, 5 members, staff officer, medical team, since 2012;
7. Somalia – “EUNAVFOR – ATALANTA”, 16 members, headquarters group, autonomous team for vessel protection, since 2012;
8. The CAR – “EUTM RCA”, 7 members, medical team, personnel for training, counselor, since 2014.¹¹

Back in 2011, the Republic of Serbia and the EU signed the agreement which establishes the framework for participation of the Republic of Serbia in the EU crises management operations. For the last 10 years, more than 5000 members of the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces participated in the operations all around the world, and currently, approximately 550 members of the Serbian Armed Forces are being rotated annually. What lies ahead, is creating conditions for participation of the civilians in peacekeeping missions, which requires adopting legal framework and forming administrative framework and preparation mechanisms.

In 2015, Serbia joined the Concept of the EU Battlegroup, and in 2017 it became a member of the EU Battlegroup “EU HELBROC” led by Greece.¹² For the purposes of engagement in the EU Battlegroup, the Serbian Armed Forces provided a military police platoon, a civil and military cooperation team, up to 5 staff officers and national support element. The evaluation of the Serbian Armed Forces’ units showed high level of competence for participation in the potential Battlegroup tasks within the CSDP.¹³

¹¹ It is necessary to mention that besides the abovementioned three active missions of the EU, the Serbian Armed Forces participated in three more completed missions of the EU: “EUMAM RCA” and “EUFOR RCA” in the CAR, and in “EUTM” in Mali. (Министарство одбране, *Актуелне мултинационалне операције*; <https://www.mod.gov.rs/lat/4366/aktuelne-multinacionalne-operacije-4366>, accessed on 17.01.2022).

¹² The Battlegroup is also named “The Balkan Battlegroup”, and it got its name “HELBROC” after the acronym of its first member states, namely HEL for Greece (Hellas), Bulgaria, Romania and Cyprus. It comprises the military units of the stated countries and Serbia and Ukraine. The EU Battlegroup has 1500 members, mostly at infantry battalion level with assigned support units.

¹³ Министарство одбране, *Посета команданта борбене групе „EU HELBROC”*, published on 03.07.2019; <https://www.mod.gov.rs/cir/14142/poseta-komandanta-borbene-grupe-eu-helbroc-14142>, accessed on 19.03.2022.

When it comes to interoperability of the Serbian Armed Forces with the armed forces of the EU member states, above all, it develops through the “Partnership for Peace” programme with the NATO, whereby highest level of cooperation is carried out via sub-programme “The Operational Capabilities Concept – Evaluation and Feedback”. In the period from 2009 until 2015, Serbia provided 4 units of the Serbian Armed Forces for participation in multinational operations as follows: a motorized infantry company, a military police platoon, a CBRN platoon, and an engineering support company, with 401 members in total.¹⁴ Besides, bilateral and multilateral exercises conducted annually in large numbers by the Serbian Armed Forces are significant for interoperability development, also conducting training for the preparation of units for multinational operations, as well as various courses in the country and abroad for the members of the Serbian Armed Forces.

The capabilities of the Serbian Armed Forces should be evaluated through the number of personnel, the budget, and the evaluation of its military strength, for the purpose of comparison with the other EU member states of similar size.

According to the last publication of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London “The Military Balance 2021”, the Serbian Armed Forces have 28.150 active members and 50.150 soldiers in military reserve force, with the following active forces’ structure: Ground forces – 13.250, Air Force and Air Defence – 5.100, Training Command – 3000, Guard – 1.600, Ministry of Defence – 5.200.¹⁵ The Organization “Global Firepower” evaluates military capabilities of the world countries, and it published similar data on its website stating that Serbia has approximately 30.000 of active personnel and approximately 50.000 in reserve force.¹⁶

Compared to the former republics of the SFR Yugoslavia, Serbia has the most numerous armed forces. The rest of the countries mostly publish their data publicly; Croatia with 16.884 active members and 18.184 personnel in reserve forces, Bosnia and Herzegovina with 9.556 personnel, Slovenia with 8.227 personnel, North Macedonia with 7.591 personnel, and Montenegro with 1.980 personnel.¹⁷ Compared to similar states in the region which are either EU member states or on their way to join the EU, the numbers of active personnel are as follows: Bulgaria 36.950, Hungary 27.800, The Czech Republic 24.900, Austria 22.050, Slovakia 15.850, Albania 8.000.¹⁸ The data point out to that Serbia, based on the number of personnel, has a prerequisite for engaging a part of its forces in the EU common missions.

¹⁴ More on the subject in: Марија Игњатијевић, *Значај изградње интероперабилности Војске Србије за учествовање у мултинационалним операцијама*, ВСВР, Београд, 2018.

¹⁵ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2021*, London, 2021, p.139; <https://hostnezt-.com/cssfiles/-currentaffairs/The%20Military%20Balance%202021.pdf>, 08.01.2022.

¹⁶ The number of personnel in the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces is classified information with classification marking of “confidential”, pursuant to subsection 3 of “The Decree on information classification marking in the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces” (The Official Military Gazette 5/16), and the abovementioned data are obtained from public sources and should not be taken for granted.

¹⁷ Александар Радих, „Brojnost vojski Srbije, Hrvatske, BiH, Crne Gore i Severne Makedonije u 2021”, *Balkanska bezbednosna mreža*, 28.12.2021; <https://www.balkansec.net/post/brojnost-vojski-srbije-hrvatske-bih-crne-gore-i-severne-makedonije-u-2021>, accessed on 08.01.2022.

¹⁸ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2021*, op. cit.

While evaluating the military strength of Serbia, the evaluations of the organizations that rank armed forces on a global level were used (Table 1).

Table 1 – *The position of Serbia according to different indices of military power*¹⁹

“Global Firepower Index” (2021)	“Military Watch Magazine” (2021)	“Global Militarization Index” (2020)
Romania (40)	Poland (29)	Greece (11)
Portugal (51)	Sweden (34)	Cyprus (12)
Denmark (53)	The Netherlands (40)	Montenegro (18)
Hungary (54)	Denmark (50)	The USA (26)
Finland (55)	Serbia (52)	Finland (28)
Slovakia (57)	Belgium (57)	Lithuania (31)
Austria (58)	Chile (58)	Romania (35)
Serbia (59)	Cuba (59)	Serbia (37)
Croatia (61)	Argentina (60)	Bulgaria (39)
Bulgaria (66)		North Macedonia (41)
Belgium (67)		Croatia (43)
Slovenia (87)		Poland (45)

“The Global Firepower Index” positions Serbia above the EU member states such as Croatia, Bulgaria, Belgium, and Slovenia. “The Global Militarization Index” ranks the countries in order of a specific militarization index, which observes the ratio between military expenditure and GDP and health care expenditure, the ratio between the number of servicemen and the country’s population, and as well as percentage of heavy weaponry compared to the country’s population.

The budget allocations for the needs of defence should be mentioned. According to the data from the Law on the final budget account of the Republic of Serbia, in the period from 2008 to 2019, the budget of the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces was approximately 800 million USD.²⁰ The similar data can be seen in the report of the International Institute for Strategic Studies.²¹ The data from other sources point out to higher amounts allocated for defence in the last several years. “The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute” states that, in 2020, Serbia allocated 1.121 billion USD, and in 2019, 1.143 billion USD for the military budget.²² For 2022, the planned amount for the military budget is 136.029.908.000,00 dinars (RSD) or 1.152

¹⁹ Sources: Military Watch Magazine, *National rankings by military strength*; <https://militarywatch-magazine.com/-forceapp/countries/>; Global Firepower Index, *2021 Military Strength Ranking*; <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countri-eslisting.php>; and Bonn International Centre for International Studies, *Global Militarisation Index 2020*; <https://www.bicc.-de/publications/publicationpage/publication/global-militarisation-index-2020-1024/>, accessed on 25.12.2021.

²⁰ Министарство финансија, *Закони*, <https://mf.gov.rs/propisi/zakoni>, accessed on 26.12.2021.

²¹ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2021*, op.cit. p. 139.

²² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Military Expenditure Database*; <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>, accessed on 08.01.2022.

billion of Euros (EUR).²³ In addition, in April 2021, by budget rebalancing, Serbia drastically increased the military budget for 44%, thus amounting to 1.257 billion of Euros (EUR) in 2021, out of which over 600 million of Euros was spent for weapons purchase.²⁴ Those are significant increases during the last two years, invested in the procurement of weapons from abroad and from domestic manufacturers.

In 2020, the countries in the region which allocated the highest amounts of money are as follows: Romania – 5.5 billion \$, Hungary – 1.8 billion \$, Bulgaria – 1.2 billion \$, Serbia – 1.036 billion and Croatia – 970 million \$, whereas the countries which allocated the lowest amounts are Montenegro – 97 million \$ and North Macedonia – 165 million \$.²⁵ Compared to the European countries, Serbia belongs to the group of countries which do not allocate large sums of money for defence, but the amount is higher than or similar to the amounts allocated by the countries in the region.²⁶

When it comes to the limitations that Serbia faces regarding better integration in the common defence structures of the EU, it can be said that they are partly connected to political and economic conditions, and less with the operational capabilities of the Serbian Armed Forces. The political factor is in relation to the attitude of the EU towards Kosovo and Metohija and the limitations set before Serbia on its European integration path regarding this part of the Serbian territory. The new challenge is the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, thus the sharp political and economic course of the EU towards Russia, and the same is required of the EU membership candidates like Serbia. The economic factor affects the inability of larger procurement of weapons and equipment from the manufacturers from the EU and the USA, for the purpose of compatibility and strengthening combat capabilities, even though the significant improvement has been made in that direction in the last couple of years, since the assets were obtained from the manufacturers from Germany, France, Belgium, the USA, and Spain. The operational capabilities of the Serbian Armed Forces have been limited up to a certain extent due to current modernization process and the time required for training on the new systems, even though the previous data show that Serbia is already above the certain EU member states. In its report for 2021, the International Institute for Strategic Studies states that the Serbian Armed Forces are focused on territorial defence and inner security and that they are in modernization process in order to compensate for the lack of operational capabilities and personnel. As the main problem, they emphasized the level of necessary recruitment of new personnel and the lack of the qualified personnel from technical field for management and maintenance of complex systems.²⁷

²³ „Закон о буџету Србије за 2022. годину”, Службени гласник РС, број 110/21, Београд, 2021.

²⁴ Живојин Банковић, „Војни буџет Србије за 2022. годину 1.123 милијарде евра”, *Tango Six*, 11.11.2021.; <https://tangosix.rs/2021/11/11/vojni-budzet-srbije-za-2022-godinu-1123-milijard-e-avra/>, accessed on 08.01.2022.

²⁵ Уреднички тим, „Србија највише улаже у одбрану на Западном Балкану”, *Balkanska bezbednosna mreža*, 07.12.2020.; <https://www.balkansec.net/post/rumunija-ma%C4%91arska-i-srbija-u-2020najvi%C5%A1e-izdvajali-za-odbranu-cg-i-s-makedonija-najmanje>, accessed on 08.01.2022.

²⁶ See more in: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2021*, op.cit. p. 72.

²⁷ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2021*, op.cit. p. 139.

Conclusion

The current state in the field of the CSDP of the EU shows that the EU still has not reached the level of common operational capabilities, coordination and readiness for pursuing interests and application of the objectives expressed in strategic and planning framework. The process is complicated by the delicacy of the issue of defence which "invades" the area of national sovereignties, the majority of countries being members of the NATO which still has primacy in the field of defence of its member states, and probably the need for higher allocation of funds for armament and equipment in the conditions of constant economic challenges.

The above-presented aspects of the CSDP of the EU and Serbia's defence policy point out to a significant degree of complementarity of principles, interests, and aims in the field of defence presented in the strategic documents. The normative and legal neatness of the field of defence is also at a high level in Serbia, and mostly in accordance with the European standards. All this is comprehensively expressed through the EU's evaluation, within the negotiation chapter 31, which is positive.

The Serbian Armed Forces advance on its modernization path; higher state's allocations in the last few years will certainly influence the reputation and ranking of Serbia in the field of defence with the EU countries, with whom Serbia was already competing. Increasing the capacities of the active personnel and the reserve force as well, has been recognized as a potential problem, so undertaking adequate measures regarding this issue is expected.

Taking into account all the above-mentioned, with significant experience of the Serbian Armed Forces, it can be concluded that Serbia is largely prepared for accepting the challenges of the CSDP of the EU at strategic, planning, normative, and operational level.

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Summary

The subject of this short research has been the Common Security and Defense Policy of the European Union, its content and possibilities, on the one hand. On the other hand, the past attitudes and activities of the Republic of Serbia in the field of defense have been analyzed, as well as the possibilities of the Serbian Armed Forces to meet the needs of integration with the EU defense forces.

The European Union has been promoting, developing, harmonizing and strengthening the Common Security and Defense Policy for many years, as a part of the foreign and security policy. It has interests in a very broad environment that reaches Africa and the Middle East. So far, it has failed to develop strong common military capacities, for a number of different reasons. One of the greatest is certainly still the dominance of the NATO as a supranational institution that is responsible for defending the majority of the EU member states. The EU's goals in the field of defense are particularly important and are experiencing the test of time now that an open armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine is taking place in the immediate vicinity, and energy and economic crisis is looming on the horizon.

Serbia, as a country that has been culturally, economically and militarily one of the pillars in the southeast of the European continent for centuries, has been trying to fulfill the criteria and standards of the European integration and become a member of the European Union for many years. Among other things, it adapts its security and defense policy, strengthens military capacities, participates in several different forums, establishes cooperation with the EU and the NATO and tries to contribute to the common humanitarian goals of all the countries in Europe. The material resources of the Serbian Armed Forces are in the process of modernization and development. The strategic-planning and normative-legal framework in the field of defense meets world standards and it is positively evaluated by international actors. Through its experience in peacekeeping operations, the Serbian Armed Forces have demonstrated the enviable level of discipline and ability to respond to challenges.

Through the research of the strategic documents of Serbia and the EU in the field of defense, the human, material and operational resources of the Serbian Armed Forces, the past cooperation and the contribution of Serbia to the Common Security and Defense Policy of the EU, the conclusion has been reached that Serbia largely fulfills the conditions to be integrated in the field of defense with other members of the European community.

Key words: The Common Security and Defense Policy of the European Union, Defense Policy of the Republic of Serbia, the Serbian Armed Forces

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