

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHOICE OF FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR BILATERAL MILITARY RELATIONS

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In a complex system of international relations and current geopolitical and security architecture at the global level, states, in accordance with their economic, military and other potentials, choose foreign policy strategies. In that regard, small states have a specific challenge making that choice given their limited capacities. Notwithstanding numerous classifications of small state foreign policy strategies that exist in the scientific community, they can essentially be reduced to two: the choice of a protector (in a form of an alliance or a powerful state) or the declaration of political/military neutrality. The different choice made by small countries in this matter can often be one of the obstacles in the development of their mutual bilateral relations, bearing in mind that choosing a certain foreign policy strategy implies actions that are often opposed to the interests of other countries. This particularly refers to the development of bilateral relations in sensitive foreign policy segments of small states, such as defence and security.

The subject of the paper is the very analysis of this phenomenon on a concrete example, i.e. the examination of the impact of the different choice of foreign policy strategies of Serbia and Montenegro on the development of their mutual bilateral military relations, in the period after the dissolution of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. The aim of the paper is to determine possible connection between the non-complementarity of foreign policy courses of Serbia and Montenegro and the dynamics in the development of their bilateral military relations. The basic hypothesis is that Montenegro's choice of protector strategy through NATO membership and Serbia's strategy of military neutrality represent a serious obstacle in the development of their overall and especially bilateral military relations. Using content analysis, discourse analysis and comparative methods, the paper tried to prove the existence of a link between the oscillations in the bilateral military relations between Serbia

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and Montenegro and the dynamics in the choice of their foreign policy strategies. The paper is going to show that the actions undertaken by Montenegro within the framework of profiling its foreign policy strategy and efforts to become a member of NATO directly affected the weakening of the dynamics in the strengthening of bilateral military relations with Serbia, and that Serbia's neutral military policy and its shift away from Atlantic integration make it difficult to improve those relations.

It can be concluded that the relations determined in such a way will remain dominant in the upcoming period as well, regardless of occasional publicly expressed intentions by both countries of mutual improvement of bilateral military relations, and especially in the circumstances of the current polarization in the relations between great powers after the beginning of the war in Ukraine in early 2022.

Keywords: international relations, foreign policy, foreign policy strategies, bilateral military cooperation, small states, Serbia, Montenegro, military neutrality, NATO.

Introduction

The segment of international relations theory that deals with foreign policy analysis, pays specific attention to the choice of foreign policy strategies of small states. Their position is even more difficult having in mind that small states do not possess a great power, and, as such, they must find other ways to protect their national interests. Often the states that belong to the corps of small states also have numerous internal problems that make their already unenviable position in international environment even more difficult, such as secessionism, ethnic and religious conflicts, border disputes with their neighbours and alike. Depending on geopolitical circumstances, their positions in regional environment, open internal issues and other factors, small countries choose foreign policy strategies that protect their national interests in the best way. Each of them chooses the most adequate strategy - from the protection by means of membership of an alliance, choosing a powerful protector through strategic partnerships, through political and/or military neutrality, neutralism, nonalignment and similar. In regions burdened by troublesome historical legacy, conflicts and open identity issues, such as the so-called Western Balkans, different choice of foreign policy strategies can considerably influence the development of mutual relations among the states, especially in the circumstances of strict polarisation among great powers.

The dissolution of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in May 2006 led to the formation of two states, which, according to generally accepted criteria in the international relations theory, can be classified as small states. In line with new circumstances, both Serbia and Montenegro faced the challenge of determining their foreign policies in accordance with geopolitical circumstances at that time. Serbian foreign policy strategy, oriented towards Euro-Atlantic integration since the so-called "fifth-October changes", lost its momentum in 2007 amid the resolution of the so-called "Kosovo issue" and it gradually began taking shape of the policy of neutrality. On the other

hand, Montenegro adopts a steadfast Euro-Atlantic course, which eventually resulted in its full NATO membership in June 2017. Such different choice of foreign policy strategies, against the backdrop of numerous open issues between the two states, only hindered the normalisation of the overall relations between Serbia and Montenegro.

The aim of this paper is to analyse to what extent the different choice of foreign policy strategies influenced the development of mutual relations between Serbia and Montenegro in a particularly sensitive field of bilateral relations - the field of defence.

The question of the research was if, and to what extent the non-complementarity of foreign policy strategies of Serbia and Montenegro influenced the development of their bilateral military relations. The goal of the analysis is to perceive any specific causalities between the phases of stipulating their foreign policy strategies and the dynamics in the development of their bilateral military cooperation.

“Small states” and their foreign policy strategies

In scientific community there is a widespread discussion about criteria that determine whether a country belongs to the corps of small states. The greatest segment of the discussion refers to the definition of their so-called *smallness*. Vandebosch defines a small state as a country not capable of fighting against great powers under any equal terms, meaning that he underlines that its military weakness makes it diplomatically weak, which eventually results in it having no significant role in world politics (Vandebosch, 1964: 294). On the other hand, Keohane points out that small states are those whose leaders are aware that, acting alone or in a small group, they cannot have a significant influence on international system (Keohane, 1969: 296).

In this paper, the term “foreign policy strategy” will not be used in the sense of a document that explicitly defines priorities in the domain of foreign policy of a state, but in a higher degree of generality, in a sense that foreign policy can be defined both as a strategy or approach chosen by a national government to achieve its goals in relations with other entities (Smith et al., 2016: 14). There are many classifications of foreign policy strategies that small countries resort to. Wiberg identifies: a bilateral alliance with a great power, alliance of two or more small states, membership of a multilateral alliance around one or more great powers, non-alignment that is aimed at neutrality in any war, and non-alignment without any general commitments to neutrality (Wiberg, 1987: 343). On the other hand, Gajić classifies strategies in the following manner: balancing through an alliance that opposes the potential threat, joining a great power, proclaiming neutrality, or resorting to the so-called “hedging” strategy (Gajić, 2020, pp. 70-73).

One of foreign policy strategies that small states resort to is joining international alliances. According to Walt (Walt, 1985: 4), joining alliance is most often perceived as an answer to threats, because once they join an alliance, states can either balance as an ally for the purpose of protection against the main source of threat, or be an ally with the state that represents the major threat (so-called bandwagoning). Lake argues that subordinate states benefit from such political order in three ways: their security and territorial integrity are enhanced, property rights at home and especially abroad

are more clearly defined and protected, and general standards of international behaviour are adopted (Lake, 2009, pp. 8-9).

Contrary to that, some countries avoid joining alliances choosing one of strategies where they do not take sides in the competition of great powers, which we can in general terms call the neutrality policy. According to Novaković, recognition of the status of neutrality can be established formally by means of international treaties, bilateral agreements, through multilateral declaration or recognition by international bodies, or it can be informal based on the state foreign policy and values that it promotes (Novaković, 2011: 16).

Foreign policy strategies of the Republic of Serbia

After 2000, foreign policy course of the FR Yugoslavia, and from 2003 the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro had a pronounced Euro-Atlantic character. According to some authors, the period between 2000 and 2003 was, in a way, a one-of-a-kind breakthrough in the democratisation and opening of Serbia towards Western Europe, return to the United Nations (UN), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Council of Europe (Jagiello, 2016, pp. 165-185). Soon after the dissolution of the state union, Serbia became a member of the Partnership for Peace Programme in December 2006. Many predicted that, together with other Eastern Europe countries, Serbia would join institutions of the Euro-Atlantic community such as the EU and NATO (Vuksanović, 2021: 1).

However, because of the support of the political West to the unilateral proclamation of independence of the so-called "State of Kosovo", a halt in European integration ensued, as well as the drift from further Atlantic integration. In that context, in 2007, in the framework of the Resolution of the National Assembly on the protection of sovereignty, territorial integrity and constitutional order of the Republic of Serbia, in its one paragraph Serbia unilaterally proclaimed military neutrality (2007). Following the unilateral proclamation of independence of the so-called "State of Kosovo" in February 2008, and its recognition by the leading countries of political West, Serbia was compelled to try to redefine its foreign policy course. In that respect, a new concept was defined as a new foreign policy strategy dubbed the "four pillars of foreign policy" - EU, Russian Federation, USA, and China (Petrović & Djukanović, 2012, pp. 187-193).

Since 2008, by opting for the concept of military neutrality, Serbia has been trying to pursue a balanced foreign policy, endeavouring to reconcile the requirements of the country in terms of economic development through the process of European integration and the cooperation with the leading countries of political West, with the preservation of the status of the AP Kosovo and Metohija in it, as well as with secure supply with energy commodities and development of infrastructure through the cooperation with the Russian Federation and China. It should be noted that the military neutrality of Serbia does not imply permanent neutrality, which, as a legal concept of international law has to be founded on an international agreement, but this is a unilateral political decision stemming from state sovereignty. It can be stated that it is essentially an improvisation on the so-called concept of "four pillars of foreign pol-

icy". A portion of scientific community believes that, in line with certain foreign policy developments, the arrangement of these foreign policy pillars often changes in a way that some of them were over(stressed) in accordance with given international foreign policy situation (Djukanović, 2020: 127). When we talk about the limitations of Serbia in terms of the deeper integration into EU common defence structures, some authors believe that they are in part linked to political and economic conditions, and to a smaller degree to the operational capabilities of the Serbian Armed Forces (Cvetković, 2022: pp. 11). Serbia has continued the cooperation with NATO so in 2011 the North Atlantic Council (NAC) approved the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). On the other hand, though the European Integration has still remained the strategic goal of Serbia, in certain periods there was evident strengthening of bilateral cooperation with the Russian Federation, such as the signing of the declaration on strategic partnership between the two countries in 2013, Russia's blocking of the UN SC resolution in 2015, which was intended to condemn Serbia for the genocide in Srebrenica, donation and procurement of military equipment from the Russian Federation for the requirements of the Serbian Armed Forces in 2018, execution of joint military exercises and other (Baranov i Rašković-Talović, 2019: pp. 205-206). Also, in 2013, Serbia obtained observer status in the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). Apart from that, in the period from 2012 there has occurred a strengthening of bilateral cooperation between Serbia and China in the field of economy and infrastructure in the framework of the Chinese project Belt and Road and 16+1 format. A part of scientific community shares the opinion that Serbia, together with Hungary, has become a country that geopolitically and economically supports the expansion of Chinese influence in the South East Europe (Proroković, 2023: 300). Some authors believe that the military neutrality of Serbia was defined in detail in 2019 in the Strategy of National Security and Defence Strategy (Radojević, Knežević i Bojanić, 2023: pp. 22).

The conflict in Ukraine, in the beginning of 2022, caused the deterioration of relations between the political West and the Russian Federation which presented a new challenge for the maintenance of the consistency and multi-vector course of Serbian foreign policy. Although Serbia joined the UN resolution that condemns the "Russian aggression" against Ukraine, the political West, chiefly the USA and EU member states, still insist on imposing sanctions on the Russian Federation. The failure to impose the sanctions resulted in the reduction in the percentage of harmonisation of Serbian foreign policy with the EU Common foreign and security policy, which represents a serious obstacle to further dynamics of European integration that is the strategic foreign policy goal of Serbia.

Foreign policy strategies of Montenegro

After the dissociation with Serbia in 2006, it could be predicted that Montenegrin foreign policy course would be oriented towards European integration. In the initial period of the constitution of the new state in 2006, it seemed that Montenegro would somewhat try to maintain the balance between the great powers, having in mind that the Russian Federation recognised the independence of Montenegro as early as eight

days after its proclamation. Also, immediately after gaining its independence, Montenegro underwent the phase of the so-called "investment boom" where there was a great influx of Russian capital in the form of purchase of businesses and immovable property, and investments (Gardašević, 2018: 65). However, no later than 2006, Montenegro clearly took Euro-Atlantic course in its documents that defined its foreign policy strategy. In the document "Foreign Policy Priorities of Montenegro" of 2006, it defined the EU and NATO integration as its first priority (2006). Furthermore, in its first Constitution from 2007, it expressed its clear commitment to European and Euro-Atlantic integration (2007). Some authors believe that foreign policy defined precisely in this way was one of the fundamentals of Montenegro even since 1997 (Djukanović, 2019: 135).

Political relations between Montenegro and the Russian Federation started to deteriorate more seriously after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, when Montenegro joined the EU sanctions, and especially when it started the final phase towards its membership of NATO". Another culmination in the relations took place after Montenegro accused the Russian Federation of being behind the so-called "coup d'etat" in Montenegro in 2016.

In June 2017, Montenegro became a member of NATO, although no referendum was held on such an important issue. Also, according to a survey of Montenegrin public opinion conducted by the Centre for Democracy and Human Rights in June 2017, such decision did not enjoy the support of most of the population, meaning that 39.8% was against, in comparison to 38.7% in favour of joining NATO, with 21.5% of undecided (2017). In line with its membership of NATO, Montenegro has taken a series of actions aimed at its further affirmation within the alliance. In 2018, immediately after joining NATO, members of the Armed Forces of Montenegro commenced their engagement in NATO Multinational Battle Group in Latvia, as part of Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP), and within KFOR in the AP of K&M, and in NATO mission in Iraq. It should be noted that, in the period between 2010 and 2020, Montenegrin soldiers were deployed to NATO mission even before the official membership of the said alliance, more precisely in Afghanistan (ISAF and "Resolute Support"). The war in Ukraine has brought new commitments to Montenegro in the framework of the strengthening of the eastern wing of NATO, so that members of the Armed Forces of Montenegro have been engaged since 2023 as part of a Multinational Battle Group for Enhanced Vigilance Activities (eVA) in Bulgaria. In its annual report on the overall status in the Ministry of Defence of Montenegro in 2023, proposing priorities for 2024, Montenegro expressed its dedication to the system of collective security in the framework of NATO membership through the continued engagement in the Multinational battle group in Latvia, as part of NATO enhanced forward presence in the East (eFP), and Battle group for Enhanced Vigilance Activities (eVA) in Bulgaria, and missions in Iraq and AP K&M (2023).

Commitments of Montenegro stemming from its membership of NATO, and the harmonisation of its foreign policy with EU Common foreign and security policy, essentially stipulated the foreign policy course in relation to the Russian Federation after the beginning of the war in Ukraine. Montenegro condemned the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and joined all EU sanctions. It sent assistance to

Ukraine in arms and equipment during 2023 (2023) thus bringing the political relations with the Russian Federation to the lowest level. Montenegrin dedication to the support to Ukraine in its war against Russia was also demonstrated during the visit of Admiral Bauer, the Chair of NATO Military Committee to Montenegro in January 2024, when Minister of Defence Krapović stated that military and political support of Montenegro to Ukraine would continue as long as it was necessary (2024).

Hindrances to the strengthening of bilateral military relations between Serbia and Montenegro because of different choice of foreign policy strategies

Mutual relations between Serbia and Montenegro immediately before, and especially after the referendum in 2006, were burdened by numerous outstanding problems, the most complex among them being the identity issues while building post-referendum Montenegrin state.

When analysing bilateral military relations of the two countries one should have in mind that both Serbia and Montenegro, after 2000, within the FR Yugoslavia and State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, and since 2006 as separate states, chose their foreign policy strategy of protection through the membership of an alliance, and in this case the EU and NATO. However, the departure of Serbia from Atlantic integration, caused by the first rate internal and foreign policy issue, more precisely the unilaterally proclaimed independence of the so-called "State of Kosovo", and the gradual turn to the policy of military neutrality after 2007, in relation to extremely pronounced Atlantic orientation of Montenegrin foreign policy, have slowed down the dynamics of the development of bilateral military cooperation between the two countries. Defence cooperation in the period that ensued was of technical character. Bilateral military relations were insignificant, which is supported by the statement of then Acting Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces of Montenegro Vice Admiral Samardžić, given in October 2008, that the cooperation with the Serbian Armed Forces was poor, and that the Armed Forces of Montenegro desired much better cooperation than it had been until that moment (2008).

At the same time when Montenegrin Acting Chief of General Staff expressed his desire for the enhancement of cooperation with the Serbian Armed Forces, a significant worsening of relations between the two countries occurred after Montenegro recognised the unilaterally proclaimed independence of the so-called "State of Kosovo" in October 2008. Such action of then Montenegrin political elites, although taken without the support of the majority of the population and expected referendum given the importance of this issue, was understood as "stabbing Serbia in the back" as it was described by then Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs Jeremić (2008). A part of the public believed that Montenegro made such decision to speed up its admission to NATO, in line with chosen foreign policy strategy and under pressure exerted by the USA (2008).

Regardless of the deterioration of relations caused by Montenegrin recognition of the unilaterally proclaimed independence of the so-called "State of Kosovo" in 2008, the Serbian foreign policy strategy left room for the further development of cooperation with Montenegro. A positive signal that the relations between the two countries were heading towards normalisation, in military sphere as well, was the visit from then Minister of Defence Šutanovac to Montenegro in February 2009. The return visit to Serbia from Minister of Defence of Montenegro Vučinić was carried out in April 2010. The first official visit to Serbia by then Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces of Montenegro, Vice Admiral Samardžić took place in September 2009. Then Chief of General Staff of the Serbian Armed Forces Lieutenant General Miletić paid the return visit to Montenegro in October 2010. The revival of bilateral military cooperation between the two countries started cautiously, which can be deduced from the topics that dominated the talks between chiefs of general staffs of the two countries, which, predominantly, referred to regional cooperation.

With a view to obtaining membership of NATO as quickly as possible, Montenegro took certain moves that did not have a positive effect on the confidence building between the two countries, such as the visit from then Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces of Montenegro Vice Admiral Samardžić to the so-called "State of Kosovo" in July 2013. Despite outstanding issues, there were attempts at maintaining the continuity of development of bilateral military relations between the two countries so then Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces of Montenegro Vice Admiral Samardžić visited Serbia in December 2014. In 2016, members of the Armed Forces of Montenegro participated in the first multinational exercise in Serbia dubbed "Platinum Wolf 16".

The Montenegrin obtaining of the membership of NATO in June 2017, formally confirmed its choice of foreign policy strategy of protection in the form of alliance. That implied the obligation of Montenegro to fully implement NATO policy, which was often against vital national interests of Serbia. Hence, the engagement of members of the Armed Forces of Montenegro within KFOR in AP K&M provoked harsh reactions by Serbian officials. Another in a row of controversial actions was the attendance by defence attaché of Montenegro at the commemoration of the so-called "Croatian Day of Victory" in August 2018 in Knin, Croatia (2018). Also, then Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces of Montenegro General Dakić visited the so-called "State of Kosovo" in May 2019 (2019). All those events looked like the attempt of Montenegro to affirm itself within NATO community after becoming its member.

Following parliamentary elections in Montenegro held in August 2020, it was expected that more serious betterment of the overall relations between the two countries would ensue to a certain degree. As expected, Montenegro did not change its foreign policy strategy, and yet it was predicted that the two countries would find a way both to strengthen their mutual relations, and bilateral military cooperation. A visit from then Prime Minister of Montenegro Krivokapić to Serbia in November 2021, as well as two donations of vaccines during the pandemic of virus infection COVID-19 from Serbia to Montenegro in the same year, along with the meeting of then Prime Minister of Serbia Brnabić with Krivokapić in Podgorica in the same year, gave an impulse for the further development of the overall relations of the two countries. Even then Minister of

Defence Stefanović had a series of meetings with Minister of Defence of Montenegro Injac. In the same year, Serbia opened its Office of Defence Attaché in Montenegro, which was a strong message from Serbia that it was open for the strengthening of bilateral military cooperation with Montenegro. However, the political crisis in Montenegro did not allow for a more serious change of course towards Serbia.

New presidential and parliamentary elections in Montenegro, in March and June 2023, arouse new expectations that the relations between the two countries would improve. Montenegro maintained its hitherto foreign policy orientation, without opening sensitive issues in relations with Serbia, such as the withdrawal of the recognition of the so-called "State of Kosovo" or disengagement from KFOR. New President of Montenegro Milatović visited Serbia in July 2023. Notwithstanding the fact that after the formation of the new political government in Montenegro there were no concrete steps towards the development of bilateral military cooperation between the two countries, certain statements of new Minister of Defence Krapović, in the context of the affirmation of Serbia-Montenegro relations, left room for its enhancement. Hence, in January 2024, Montenegrin minister of defence stated that he believed that there was no malign influence from Serbia in Montenegro (2024). Also, Minister Krapović, stated that Podgorica was ready to deepen the cooperation with Serbia during his participation in the NATO member states ministerial meeting in Brussels, in February 2024 (2024).

Regardless of the gradual change of the rhetoric about Serbia, which creates conditions for building relations between the two countries, the different choice of foreign policy strategies of Serbia and Montenegro, as small states, will remain a serious obstacle for the strengthening of cooperation, including the field of defence. This is supported by the statement of Minister of Defence Krapović at the said NATO member states ministerial meeting that he respected the path of neutrality of Serbia, but he, on the other hand, expected that the decisions of Montenegro as NATO member would be respected as well (2024). The foreign policy strategy of Montenegro will continue to imply making decisions in line with leading NATO states, which will often be against national interests of Serbia, especially in the context of the resolution of the so-called "Kosovo issue". The choice of such strategy will eventually adversely affect the dynamics of the cooperation in the field of defence between the two countries. That is especially prominent in the conditions of the deterioration of relations between great powers at the global level, particularly after the start of the conflict in Ukraine. Although foreign policy strategy of military neutrality of Serbia leaves room for the strengthening of bilateral military cooperation with Montenegro, the chances are that the political West will not allow the rapprochement between the two countries in this sensitive area of mutual relations. Hence, in such a constellation of relations, the cooperation between Serbia and Montenegro in the field of defence will predominantly continue developing like it has been so far, through joint participation in the work of regional initiatives or through the realisation of lower intensity activities, such as the participation in short courses, seminars and similar.

Conclusion

The overall political relations between Serbia and Montenegro, following the dissolution of the state union in 2006, have not managed to reach expected level so far, given the historical bonds of the two peoples, ethnic, religious and language closeness. The incompatibility of foreign policy strategies can be one of the causes of such low level of bilateral relations between the two countries.

Serbia and Montenegro have chosen different foreign policy strategies that are not complementary. Foreign policy strategy of Serbia, which relies on military neutrality, leaves more room and openness for the enhancement of bilateral military relations between the two countries. Also, Serbia is interested in enhancing cooperation with Montenegro in all areas, including the field of defence, having in mind that a numerous Serbian community lives in Montenegro. The concept of military neutrality of Serbia has no limitations in terms of the enhancement of bilateral military relations with Montenegro, since it allows cooperation with all countries in the east and west. On the other hand, Montenegrin choice of foreign policy strategy of protection through the system of collective security, i.e. the membership of NATO, makes the enhancement of bilateral military cooperation with Serbia more difficult. Montenegro unconditionally harmonises its foreign policy decisions with the current discourse within NATO, which also implies the actions which often conflict with the highest national interests of Serbia such as the recognition of the unilaterally proclaimed independence of the so-called "State of Kosovo". Such constellation of relations in a way limits the space for the strengthening of bilateral military relations between Serbia and Montenegro, although after the changes on Montenegrin political scene in 2020, and particularly in 2023, there came to a certain step forward in the development of the overall political relations. The beginning of the war in Ukraine, in February 2022, that has caused a sharp polarisation in relations between political West and the Russian Federation, only additionally made the enhancement of bilateral cooperation between the two countries more difficult, especially in the military sphere.

It can be concluded that there is certain causality between the phases in the choice of foreign policy strategies of Serbia and Montenegro and the dynamics of the development of their bilateral military relations. In the period after the dissolution of the state union in 2006, there were attempts at reviving and improving bilateral military cooperation between the two countries chiefly through joint participation in regional initiatives and projects. However, the foreign policy orientation of Montenegro has not allowed for that, since, in accordance with it, decisions have been often made that seriously encroached upon internal issues of Serbia, specifically in the matter of the AP Kosovo and Metohija. Apart from that, lack of trust of the political West regarding the military neutrality of Serbia, as well as the current discourse of leading NATO countries towards Serbia as a "Russian player" in the region of the Balkans, additionally restrict the room for Montenegro for the strengthening of bilateral military cooperation with Serbia.

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S u m m a r y

A different choice of foreign policy strategies can be a serious obstacle for the development of overall bilateral relations between states, regardless of their historical, ethnic, religious or language closeness. Non-complementary foreign policy courses can alienate a state from the other whose peoples share a strong historical and traditional closeness, while, on the other hand, they can bring closer countries that used to have serious conflicts and difficult burden of historical inheritance.

So far, Serbia and Montenegro have not managed to raise the level of bilateral relations to the expected level, following the dissolution of the state union in 2006. Reasons and causes of such unjustifiably low level of mutual political relations are diverse and they should be part of a thorough and all-encompassing analysis. This paper analysed just one determinant that can be significant for profiling bilateral relations of Serbia and Montenegro, that being their different choice of foreign policy strategies. The two countries, according to qualitative and quantitative criteria, belong to the corps of the so-called small states that do not have a great political, economic or military power, and, as such, must find the way in complex geopolitical conditions, and amid strong pressure of great powers, which have always had their interests in the Balkans, to protect their national interests. After a brief Euro-Atlantic course, Serbia chose the foreign policy strategy of neutrality because of its internal problems, principally the resolution of the so-called “Kosovo issue”. With such foreign policy strategy, it tries to balance between the demand for economic development through cooperation with the political West, and the imperative to maintain its position in the defence of its sovereignty and territorial integrity through maintaining relations with the Russian Federation, China and global South. On the other hand, Montenegro chose the foreign policy strategy of protection in the framework of an alliance through the membership of NATO.

Such dissonance of foreign policy courses of Serbia and Montenegro had impact on the development of the overall relations between the two countries. The paper analysed one segment of bilateral relations between Serbia and Montenegro. Namely, bilateral military relations represent a very sensitive sphere of the overall relations among states and they demand a high degree of confidence and common consensus. Hence, this paper endeavoured to find possible causalities between the dynamics of the development of bilateral military relations between Serbia and Montenegro and different phases in the choice of their foreign policy strategies. It has been proven that the causalities indeed exist, i.e. that the non-complementarity of foreign policy strate-

gies of the two countries will continue to be a serious obstacle to the achievement of the expected level of bilateral military cooperation, and of political relations of Serbia and Montenegro, especially in the conditions of the deterioration of relations between the political West and East after the beginning of the war in Ukraine in 2022. Moreover, the escalation of the conflicts in international community has only reconfirmed the consistency of foreign policy courses of both Serbia and Montenegro, which makes the strengthening of their overall political and bilateral military relations more difficult.

Keywords: international relations, foreign policy, foreign policy strategies, bilateral military cooperation, small states, Serbia, Montenegro, military neutrality, NATO.

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