

**Security and Defence  
Aspects of the Republic of  
Serbia's Accession to the  
European Union**

- **Stanislav Stojanović, PhD**  
Strategic Planning Department, Defence Policy Sector  
Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Serbia

# **National Security Strategy And Defence Strategy Of The Republic Of Serbia As Factors Of The Security And Defence Aspect Of Eu Accession**

The changes in international relations which transpired in the last decade of the 20th century have to a considerable extent altered the geopolitical configuration of the contemporary world and substantially contributed to global integrative processes, thus initiating the process of adaptation of security and defence structures of modern societies. In modern contexts, security is increasingly perceived globally, and national security, which is largely conditioned by the security situation both in the immediate vicinity and in the global environment, is more and more based on cooperation, dialogue and partnership with other states.

Under the geo-strategic circumstances thus changed and under the influence of global developments, the security and defence policy of the Republic of Serbia is based on the integral and multilateral approach to the matters of security and defence. The fundamentals of such policy are the strengthening of our own defence capacities, the European orientation in foreign policy and the commitment to an active involvement in the process of cooperation and joint activities with other states and subjects of international relations aimed at building global, regional and national security.

The main postulates and orientations of the national security policy, reflected in the recently adopted National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, are based on the key national interests and universally accepted values of the contemporary world. In that sense, the Republic of Serbia is committed to the respect of obligations deriving from the UN Charter, the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Helsinki Final Act. It advocates in particular for the respect of international law and the reaffirmation of the role of the OUN, the OSCE and the EU, as well as for the creation of efficient mechanisms for maintaining global security.

In the last decade, the European Union has developed the structure and the operational framework, and has been more and more acting as a global factor in the field of security and defence. Progress achieved in the implementation of the Common Foreign and Defence Policy of the EU and in the inclusion of European defence forces in solving security problems not only on the European continent but also beyond it, are an indication of an increasingly important role of the EU in the harmonisation of the relations and interests of the European states and in assuming its part of the joint responsibility for building European and global security.

The EU principles, strategy and practice in conflict-solving give grounds for this organisation to be considered a large peace project. It is well-known that the impetus to its creation originated in the devastating consequences of World War II and in the efforts of the

key EU states to ensure the preconditions for a lasting peace on the European soil. The specificity of the EU as a peace project and a security community is reflected in its dedication to achieving peace and stability in the European space by means of establishing and harmonising economic, political and social preconditions for self-sustainable peace.

Regardless of the numerous challenges, the EU practice of extending the relations established within the security community to other areas, the integration of nations and states into the family of European nations, its commitment to solving conflicts by non-violent means and placing emphasis on prevention and elimination of the causes of conflict present a strong impulse and basis for enhancing the overall security of the European continent.

The strategic priority of the Republic of Serbia is to have its foreign and security policy harmonised to maximum extent with the positions and actions of the EU in the most important matters of global, European and regional character, while taking into account the interest of preserving its own territorial integrity and sovereignty. Consequently, the Republic of Serbia is determined to continue to improve cooperation and establish better quality and more meaningful relations with the states of the Western Balkan region, and to proceed with intensified political and economic reforms of its society, their harmonisation with the European standards and fulfilment of other necessary conditions on the road to European integrations.

Through the process of European integrations, the Republic of Serbia expresses its readiness to build the capacities and capabilities of its national security system, in accordance with the standards and obligations deriving from the European Security and Defence Policy. The integration of the Republic of Serbia in the European Union is at the same time a security and defence integration and, in the process of accession, it offers possibilities that should be analysed from the point of view of the interests of the Republic of Serbia.

Bearing in mind that the security of Serbia is inseparable from the security of the European space, the basic orientations related to that, as laid out in the National Security Strategy and Defence Strategy, are very important. In the said documents, it is emphasised that the Republic of Serbia harmonises its foreign and security policy with the positions and actions of the EU, the latter undoubtedly representing one of the greatest peace projects ever launched. In that context, it is very important that the defence capacities and capabilities of the national defence are reformed and further enhanced in accordance with the standards and obligations arising from the European Security and Defence Policy.

The European foreign policy orientation of the Republic of Serbia is one of the cornerstones of the National Security Strategy. The document emphasises the long-term commitment of the Republic of Serbia to strongly contribute to, first of all, regional security, stability, prosperity and fast democratisation of the South-East Europe region through the steady promotion of human rights, lasting peace, good neighbourly relations and tolerance, as well as openness to comprehensive and active cooperation with all the neighbouring states, states in the region, in Europe and in the world.

The attainment of the necessary level of security in the region is seen as a key precondition for the overall development of all the countries in this part of Europe, which are either full-fledged EU members or are striving to become one. The fulfilment of this precondition creates the conditions for our orientation to be successfully implemented, to contribute in the most efficient way, through strengthening the political dialogue and economic cooperation with the countries of the region, to the maintaining and enhancing of stability in the entire Europe, to be active in the prevention of potential conflicts and to work on peaceful resolution of the existing conflicts.

Acknowledging this fact, I would like to stress that one of the main strategic orientations of the policy of the Republic of Serbia is precisely the development and enhancement of cooperation in the field of defence policy, which is realised through active and efficient participation in the international efforts to build favourable security environment.

As far as the Defence Strategy of the Republic of Serbia is concerned, the very introduction to this document emphasises Serbia's European commitment: "Defence strategy expresses the commitment of the Republic of Serbia to build and strengthen its own capacities and capabilities for defence, as well as to work jointly with other countries through integration into European and other international security and defence structures, thus contributing to the strengthening of national, regional and global security."

In the part which refers to the strategic concept of defence, this document expresses the basic attitudes of the Republic of Serbia concerning the engagement of the available resources to preserve and protect its defence interests. It determines, on the basis of the defence policy orientation and goals, as well as of the assessment of security challenges, risks and threats, a new social and international role of the defence assets. In the part of this strategic document which deals with the strategic orientations of the defence of the Republic of Serbia, it is emphasised that a significant segment of the concept of our defence is the promotion of partnership and multi-lateral cooperation with other states and international organisations

and institutions in the interest of preservation and protection of the defence interests of the Republic of Serbia. Among other things, this part of the Defence Strategy of the Republic of Serbia provides the basis for future cooperation with European multinational forces and participation in joint activities.

On its road to the European Union, Serbia will, according to some allegations served to the public, have to choose between the preservation and protection of its territorial integrity, which is in both the National Security Strategy and National Defence Strategy defined as one of the vital national interests, and the EU membership. As you know, the state leadership had, even before the adoption of the National Security Strategy, resolved this dilemma by expressing clear determination that the Serbia's EU membership cannot be conditioned with its renouncing part of its territory.

On the basis of the defined security and defence goals on the national level, there exist no obstacles to achieving a more intense cooperation with the EU. To our knowledge, there is also no divergence between the contents of the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia and the Defence Strategy of the Republic of Serbia on one hand and the contents of the EU Defence Strategy, since the experts who designed our national strategy consulted the contents of the EU's strategic document in the preparation of the two above-mentioned documents. Besides, the Ministry of Defence participated in designing the National Programme of the Integration of the Republic of Serbia in the EU, in the part concerning defence and security. It can be ascertained that almost all the strategic documents produced and adopted since 2000 depart from the premise that Serbia will soon become an EU member and strive to have the strategic activities in all the aspects of social life adapted to this foreign policy goal. After all, if there are some shortcomings, any strategic document, including the mentioned strategies is, if need be, revised and amended in accordance with changes related to the factors which determine its contents.

## **Conclusion**

The geopolitical position of Serbia as the central country of South-East Europe, its turbulent history and the important role it played in the two world wars and is playing even today, affirm that Europe without Serbia is incomplete and that Serbia outside the EU is devoid of its full European identity. Therefore, the orientation towards the integration of the Republic of Serbia in the European Union enjoys great support both among the people and within the political institutions of Serbia.

At the same time, the Republic of Serbia has, in its most important strategic documents concerning security and defence, reaffirmed its commitment to the EU membership, and thereby its commitment to contribute to common democratic values and to the strengthening of regional and global security.

By continuously improving bilateral cooperation with most European countries, Serbia, and therefore the Ministry of Defence as well, aims at enhancing the dialogue with the EU and at reforming its civilian and military capacities in order to be ready, once the full-fledged membership has been obtained, to assume the obligations deriving from the European Security and Defence Policy, i.e. the Common Security and Defence Policy, including participation in the EU-led crisis management operations.

The Ministry of Defence will continue to strengthen its institutional capacities and ensure the resources necessary for the integration in the European Security and Defence Policy activities.