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SECURITY CHALLENGES OF
THE NEW WORLD

**CHALLENGES OF MILITARY NEUTRALITY
IN DYNAMIC GEOPOLITICAL RELATIONS**

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

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IN DYNAMIC GEOPOLITICAL RELATIONS*

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CHALLENGES OF MILITARY NEUTRALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY GEOPOLITICAL RELATIONS IN EUROPE⁴

Abstract

In a security environment where the biggest security threats include a wide range of military and non-military threats, no country can rely only on its own forces. The development trend of multilateral relations has a significant impact on the creation of the security policy of states. However, there is no consensus of global power centers on the direction of building a common global peace policy. The increasing confrontation of major powers (USA-RF), with the tendency to increase the number of influential states (China, Brazil, India) announces even more complex international relations. The war in Ukraine influenced Sweden and Finland to abandon their military neutrality status, while other European countries, including Austria and Switzerland, did not change the direction of their security policy. The Republic of Serbia with its unresolved internal issues, above all the status of AP of Kosovo and Metohija, is facing serious security challenges and the question arises whether military neutrality is the appropriate political direction for the protection of the national interest. Analyzing contemporary security threats and changes in geopolitical relations, it was concluded that military neutrality is the most adequate framework for creating the foreign and defense policy of the Republic of Serbia.

Keywords: *military neutrality, security, spheres of influence, global power centers, Europe.*

INTRODUCTION

Modern security challenges, risks and threats have become complex, unpredictable and transnational. The clear boundary between military and non-military threats has been erased, i.e. threats to security have both military and economic, political, social, environmental and technological dimensions. Security assessment therefore includes a

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multidisciplinary approach to creating public policies. Global security challenges: regional and local conflicts, ethnic and religious extremism, terrorism, organised crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, illegal migration, hybrid threats, cyber threats, limited availability of natural resources, including water, food, energy and raw materials, as well as climate change and environmental degradation, threaten the stability of individual states and entire regions, as well as global security (SNB, 2019).

In such security conditions, the Republic of Serbia, like some other small European states, bases its foreign policy orientation on the development of political and economic ties with partners of different ideological approaches and opposing geopolitical positions and on reliance on military neutrality, which primarily refers to non-adherence to military alliances and a neutral attitude towards parties to armed conflicts. Despite some perceptions that neutrality has lost its realistic function in preserving sovereignty and autonomy, it continues to serve as a bearer of national identity for neutral states and as a promoter in international peacebuilding (Goetschel, 2011).

Neutrality is defined as strategic independence in relation to powerful states, and such a foreign policy status requires compliance with certain rules of conduct in international relations (Vračar and Ćurčić, 2022: 46). Political neutrality is in today's conditions more in the domain of a theoretical concept than reality, as it implies non-alignment and non-belonging to political (and economic) organizations in which certain interests of the state would be realized, the creation of other formal political alliances that in some domain exclude the independent conduct of the country's policy, or alignment with a side in a conflict without formal alliance (Trapara, 2016; Gordić & Petrović, 2019). Military neutrality is a political decision that implies a state's conscious renunciation of military alliances, participation in wars and assistance to warring parties, as well as the obligation to defend military neutrality if it is threatened, including by armed means (Blagojević, 2022: 233). The creation of military neutrality as the most important component of political identity aims to ensure the security of the state from the influence of external factors. Regardless of the controversial understandings of neutrality and frequent discussions about the principles of military neutrality, especially the actions of certain neutral states during World War II, it cannot be denied that a military neutral status does not have an offensive, but rather a peacetime character.

GLOBAL SECURITY RISKS AND THREATS

Current international relations are largely dominated by tensions between great powers and the formation of blocs, rather than the spirit of multilateral cooperation. The absence of a supreme authority at the international level means that states are forced to act in a way that best ensures their security, otherwise they will be in a position where they risk being threatened (Walt, 1987). The spread of globalization and economic inter-

dependence has shown that ethnic, ideological and religious identities have not weakened, but have created such social differences that have fueled a wave of civil wars and secessionist aspirations (SFRY, Chechnya, Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova), the spread and deepening of terrorism (Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Moscow, Paris), but also the emergence of new challenges and security threats (cyber-attacks in Iran) (Mišev, 2020: 151). This state of affairs on the international stage led to the first war on European soil in the 21st century. The armed conflicts in Ukraine, starting in 2014 and the non-compliance with the Minsk Agreements (2014 and 2015), destroyed the security architecture in Europe, which was based on trust and cooperation. The idea of a single European area of cooperation and security that includes Russia was unsuccessful, and the European concept of state security is being questioned. The introduction of several packages of sanctions against Russia, the increased influence of the United States on Western European countries and their material, financial and military support for Ukraine, interruptions in the supply of energy and other necessary material resources from Russia, as well as very unfavorable political relations, have had a negative impact on the economies of Western European countries, and have not contributed to the cessation of hostilities in Ukraine.

The influence of global power centers is a constant and dynamic process that indirectly affects the rest of the world. Russia seeks to regain its political, economic and military influence in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, especially in countries with neo-colonial influence of Western European states, but also to preserve its security by limiting NATO's further advance to the east (Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova). On the other hand, the US and its strategic partners in Europe want to maintain the *status quo* in international relations and expand their influence over European states that pursue independent or pro-Russian policies. China is trying to use its economic influence and the conflict between the US and Russia to take a leading position in the global system, both in the Indo-Pacific and in Europe, America and Africa. Considering that China is the only great power that has not waged a single war for more than 40 years (after the one-month war with Vietnam in 1979), implementing the Confucian model of cooperation as a set of ethical principles, it is becoming an increasingly important factor in international relations and an increasingly desirable economic, military and political partner. In this way, the share of non-military means for achieving political and strategic goals has not only grown, but has sometimes proven to be more effective than traditional military weapons (Mišev, 2020). The growth of economic and military capabilities of states that claim to be great powers causes intense competition among them in the sphere of resource exploitation and market dominance, as well as in the exercise of military and political power (Schweller & Pu, 2011). Regional powers such as Turkey, India, and Brazil are also seeking to expand their scope of action with the aim of changing the global order.

The overall security situation in the world has become more unstable, complex and unpredictable in the last decade, with a large number of armed conflicts⁵, with international governmental institutions, including the UN Security Council and the UN as a whole, demonstrating disunity and ineffectiveness in acting to de-escalate conflicts caused by the state policies of the great powers. Based on a comprehensive analysis of the security environment, the question arises to what extent European states, including Serbia, need to adapt their security policy and its instruments in order to be able to respond quickly and adequately to changing security threats and dangers in order to protect national interests. Kenneth Waltz believes that security is one of the key national interests of every state. National interest implies a set of values that are protected, primarily sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, national identity, constitutional order, freedom, etc. (Waltz, 1987). Continuous monitoring and analysis of the strategic environment at the global, regional and national levels identify challenges, risks and security threats that are assessed to have, or in certain circumstances may have, a direct or indirect impact on the security of citizens and the state. At the same time, priorities are determined in the function of protecting national interests, and in order to take preventive and appropriate measures to develop the capabilities of the defense and security system. As a result, public policies of strategic interest for security are created and implemented not only at the national, but also at the regional and global levels.

POLITICAL IDENTITY AND STATE NEUTRALITY

The crisis of building an independent political identity has never shown such dependence on great powers, not even during the Cold War, when the politics of the Non-Aligned Movement played a serious role in international relations. Identity politics suggests a political orientation built around an existing social identity (Ford, 2005). Territory, language, ideas, culture and history can serve as objects upon which to establish notions of political identity. Political identity is used as a tool to make political claims, promote political ideologies or stimulate and orient social and political actions, usually in a broader context of inequality or injustice and with the aim of affirming group distinctiveness and belonging and gaining power and recognition (Neofotistos, 2013). In short, political identity can be defined as a form of social identity that marks membership in certain groups that share common interests with the aim of retaining and increasing power.

The formation of a European political identity shows that Europe is integrated into a wider global community through the World Trade Organization (WTO), the UN, NATO,

⁵ Armed conflicts affected 56 countries in 2022. Major conflicts, with over 10,000 deaths, were in Ukraine, Myanmar and Nigeria (probably also in Ethiopia, but there is no confirmation of the number of victims), intense conflicts in 16 countries (with 1,000 to 9,999 deaths), while in other conflicts the number of victims was lower. The total number of estimated conflict-related deaths was 147,609, which is slightly less than in 2021 (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2023).

etc. In considering the notion of a European identity, rather than the subsumed national identities of European constituent states, peripheral territories can present aggravating circumstances, as in the case of the Partnership for Peace countries. Despite the attempts of the European Union to create a distinct identity for Europeans, there are other centripetal and centrifugal forces working to create broader and narrower political identities, because the European identity is not like the Partnership for Peace program within the framework of a new world security order (Bryder, 2005: 45). The attempt to create a Euro-Atlantic or Western political identity based on military power implies imposing an equal political identity on all European states. History has shown that political science and security studies on the development and building of nation-states have had a constant tendency to form political collective identities: economic (EC, EU, WTO, OECD), political and legal (UN), as well as military (Warsaw Pact, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Axis Powers, Entente Powers).

During the formation of the nation-state, almost all European governments took action to "homogenize" their populations in terms of religion, ethnic and cultural minorities, national language, and public mass education system (Nevola, 2011). Governments that did not take such action failed to achieve it, creating very fragile and insecure nation-states, as happened in Southeast Europe. This created problems with identity politics, and this failure created major problems with national identity, and therefore for the nation-state. Political identity and national identity are essential components of the political culture of a society (Nevola, 2011: 39).

The modern European order, under the guise of a European economic and political identity, is imposed through the European Union and NATO. Most European countries have accepted to identify themselves through these two organizations, so that the EU currently has 27 members and NATO 32. Even militarily neutral states (Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, Ireland, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia) have joined NATO's Partnership for Peace program. This tendency is best explained by the theory of political unification. The theory of political unification emphasizes that collective identity needs "force" if it is to be a resource for the "political unification" of a community; in other words, it must be supported by power structures and instruments that bind affiliation and translate identity into loyalty. In this case, the availability of political identity is confirmed and collective loyalty is established, which consists of the possibility of setting a "common bond" as binding (political obligation) (Nevola, 2011). In this way, great powers use international organizations to project power with the aim of exercising direct control and influence on the creation of public policies of member states. Equating national identity policies with the policies of powerful actors in the international system makes it impossible for states to conduct sovereign and independent foreign and domestic policies and build their own national political identity.

Figure 1. *Eurasian Corridor*



Source: *Google Maps*.

Since global power centers do not enter into direct conflicts, the struggle for spheres of influence takes place in countries that are not sufficiently resilient to global changes and upheavals. In a move from Israel and Palestine, through Syria, Azerbaijan, Georgia to Ukraine, the Eurasian War Corridor was created in place of the former Iron Curtain. The struggle over the division of spheres of influence and the imposition of their own political, but also economic and cultural identity by global power centers proved to be a source of instability for independent states. The end of the Cold War led to armed conflicts in which the great powers measured their strength. The fragmentation of the European federal states of the USSR, the SFRY, Czechoslovakia, but also the unitary republics of Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Syria, has shown that there is no region that is not sensitive to changing geopolitical relations and changing constellations of power in the process of multipolarization. The war in Ukraine has caused Western European states to fear Russia and a possible new conflict, which has also caused a wave of reconsideration of the foreign policy orientations of states, especially among the Nordic countries.

NEUTRALITY OF EUROPEAN STATES

The policy of military neutrality is an increasingly frequent topic of expert and scientific discussions. The abandonment or significant redefinition of the underlying postulates of neutrality has prompted serious challenges to the importance of neutrality, the authenticity and scope of the strategic culture of neutral states. For some, this concept is

outdated, while others believe that it can still contribute to strengthening peace and stability in the world. However, although radically modified, neutrality has not disappeared but continues to represent a concept that is an important segment of international politics (Stojanović, 2020: 211). A militarily neutral state may not be a member of a military alliance or participate in an armed conflict as a belligerent, except in self-defense, and is obliged to promote and encourage peace processes. This has contributed to militarily neutral states participating in UN peacekeeping missions, but also to building joint military capacities through the Partnership for Peace program or the Nordic Alliance.

After decades of development of the Nordic peace policy and military neutrality of Sweden and Finland, the return of Russia as a major military and political power shook the foundations of the security policy through which these states had built a clear political identity. Sweden bases its policy of neutrality on tradition, not on an international treaty. Neutrality was formally declared by King Gustav XIV in 1834. During the military conflicts of the first half of the 19th century, Sweden maintained its neutral status. Since World War II, Sweden's security has strongly depended on the status of Finland and indirectly on the policy of the USSR towards Finland (Finlandization). Like Finland, it became a member of the EU in 1995. Finland derives its policy of neutrality from the period immediately after World War II. Its interest in remaining neutral in conflicts between the great powers was first recognized in the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between Finland and the USSR of 1948 (AFCMA, 1948). The treaty prohibited signatories from joining a military alliance against another signatory, and Finland was not allowed to allow its territory to be used to attack the USSR. Finland was also obliged to maintain its neutrality by means of adequate armed forces, which it used to cooperate with its neighbours. Military cooperation between the Nordic countries began after World War II, when Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Iceland formed the Nordic Council in 1952. Since the 1960s, Finland has joined and military cooperation has been intensified through several regional agreements: the Nordic Group for Cooperation on Military Matters of the UN (1960), which was changed to the Nordic Coordinated Arrangement for Military Peace Support (1997) (NORDEFECO, 2024). The Nordic countries have built their political identity through the development of the so-called Nordic peace policy, despite the fact that Iceland and Norway are members of the military-political international organization - the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The specificity of the Nordic peace is that it was strengthened during the Cold War, when the Nordic region managed to remain excluded from high-tension activities and did not support the deployment of foreign troops and nuclear weapons despite their strategic orientation and the nearby military presence of both the Soviet and American superpowers (Mišev, 2022). Since the 1990s, the Nordic countries have been promoting military partnership through the Nordic Armaments Cooperation - NORDAC (1990) and the Nordic Defence Support - NORDSUP (2008) (NORDEFECO, 2024). All Nordic countries have a law on compulsory military service for men, and in Sweden and Norway also for women.

For security and political analysis, it is very significant that after the collapse of the USSR, Finland intensified its cooperation with the West, first in 1994 when it joined the NATO Partnership for Peace program, and then in 1995 when it became a member of the EU. This was not an obstacle for the Nordic countries to deepen their military and economic cooperation. In 2009, the Nordic countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the five Nordic nations, which established the Nordic Defense Cooperation - NORDEFECO. The specificity of this Memorandum is that it opened the way for cooperation with countries outside the Nordic region (NORDEFECO, 2024). Although the Nordic Defence Alliance did not expand, the Memorandum foresees respect for the UN, NATO and the EU, as well as cooperation with non-members of NORDEFECO, in particular Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia (NORDEFECO, 2024). Global changes, the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact, the strengthening and expansion of the NATO Pact and the increase in the number of secessionist wars, have contributed to the Nordic countries, primarily Sweden and Finland, changing their security policies. Due to increased tensions in Europe, as a result of the war in Ukraine, Finland and then Sweden became members of NATO after submitting applications.

There are no strategic military targets in Finland that would be a reason for an armed attack by another state. The geostrategic and security importance of Finland lies in its geostrategic position, as it shares a border with Russia for about 1,300 kilometers. Due to the increasing approach and expansion of NATO to the Russian borders, first Azerbaijan, Moldova and Georgia, and then Syria and Ukraine have been drawn into proxy wars with the aim of hindering the influence of the United States. In the modern constellation of power, where proxy wars are also being waged on European soil, Finland has objective reasons to be concerned about its security. Sweden does not border Russia, but in the changed geopolitical relationship, security threats, by their military and non-military nature, are not only territorial, but also supranational, multidimensional and multiplied.

Unlike Sweden and Finland, most of the militarily neutral states of Europe (Austria, Switzerland, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Cyprus, Ireland, Monaco) have retained their foreign policy direction and established political identity. All of these states are surrounded by NATO members and territorially far from global centers of power. In the case of Sweden and Finland, the policy of military neutrality is shaped as a foreign policy doctrine, while Austria and Switzerland are bound to neutrality by international treaties. Austria became neutral after its defeat in World War II on 26 October 1955 by the Vienna State Treaty (Treaty, 1955). Austrian military neutrality is based on three principles: military non-interference in the conflicts of other countries, a ban on the stationing of foreign troops in Austria, and non-adherence to a military alliance (Austrian security, 2023). As an EU member state, Austria has committed itself to gradually improving its military capabilities and to making civilian and military capacities available to the European Union for the implementation of common security and defence. Its security policy

is based on the EU document: *the EU Strategic Compass for Security and Defence*, which it has integrated into the Security Strategy 2023 (Austrian Security, 2023). Austria relies on security policy within the framework of the UN, the EU, the OSCE, its partnerships with NATO and within the Council of Europe. Austria is concerned that emerging global powers (Russia, China) pose a serious security challenge. It also believes that the lack of stability and prosperity in the peripheral areas of Europe negatively affects its security.

Switzerland's neutrality was recognized at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Switzerland bases its neutrality on the strategy of "Security through Cooperation"⁶. The basic principles of Swiss neutrality include the prohibition of supporting parties to an international armed conflict, with the aim of avoiding armed conflict and maintaining impartiality⁷ (Security policy, 2021). Neutrality does not prevent Switzerland from cooperating militarily with other states and organizations where this is beneficial to both parties. In Europe, this primarily concerns the Partnership for Peace and the EU, and at the global level, it concerns cooperation with the US, Russia and China. There are warnings that the risk of direct military conflict between NATO and Russia has increased, leading to serious risks of escalation and ultimately potentially catastrophic consequences for Switzerland's security environment. South-eastern Europe continues to face tensions. In the Western Balkans, the EU's rapprochement has a stabilizing effect on the region, although the potential for conflict remains on the ground, for example in the relations between Serbia and the so-called Kosovo, as well as within Bosnia and Herzegovina (FDD, 2021). Like Austria, Switzerland emphasizes the high risk of conflict between global centers of power and Southeast Europe as a potential flashpoint in this relationship.

International relations in the new geopolitical and geostrategic paradigm, characterized by the opposing dynamics of globalization and fragmentation, show that the creation of political identity is a continuous and never-ending process. Europe faces numerous security challenges. In addition to the war in Ukraine, the threat of nuclear and hypersonic weapons, cyberattacks, the spread of terrorism, illegal migration, climate change, pandemics, Europe is struggling with increasing internal problems such as unstable financial markets and the strengthening of right-wing movements. In the last ten years alone, Europe has faced referendums on independence in Scotland (2014) and Catalonia (2017), and the peak of political turmoil was the UK's departure from the EU

⁶ This principle ensures that if Switzerland is the target of an armed attack, it has both options available: autonomous defense or cooperation with other states, especially its neighbors.

⁷ The sustainability of Swiss neutrality has been questioned several times in the past. Thanks to economic concessions with Germany and the general development of events during World War II, it managed to maintain its neutral status. Due to the military operations in Ukraine, Switzerland joined the sanctions imposed on Russia by the EU countries, which its leadership does not interpret as a departure from the policy of neutrality, but as compatibility of its own policy with the EU, since it does not provide military assistance to any of the warring parties, despite pressure from Western countries to allow the export of military equipment to Ukraine (Đukić and Vuletić, 2023: 626).

(Brexit). It is obvious that the politics of national political identity are strengthening. On the other hand, out of fear of conflict between opposing centers of power on a global scale, after the historic expansion of seven countries in 2004, NATO has been strengthened in the last decade with four more countries, including Finland and Sweden. With complex global security challenges and changing geopolitical relations, states cannot rely solely on their own armed forces.

CHALLENGES TO THE MILITARY NEUTRALITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Serbia's military neutrality stems from a strategic commitment based on the National Security Strategy and the Defense Strategy, both from 2019. The strategies indicate how the state will use national power in accordance with state policy (Lykke, 2001). In order for the holders of political power to determine the instruments and mechanisms for defending national interests, it is necessary to define threats to the security of the state.

Challenges, risks and threats to security, of a military and non-military nature, which in certain circumstances may endanger the peace and stability of Serbia and the region, are defined by the National Security Strategy: (1) armed aggression; (2) separatist tendencies; (3) the illegal unilateral declaration of independence of "Kosovo"; (4) armed rebellion; (5) terrorism; (6) proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; (7) ethnic and religious extremism; (8) intelligence and subversive activities; (9) organized crime; (10) drug addiction; (11) illegal migration; (12) problems of economic development, (13) problems of demographic development; (14) epidemics and pandemics of infectious diseases; (15) endangerment of energy security; (16) the unfinished process of demarcation between the states of the former SFRY; (17) the consequences of natural disasters and technical and technological accidents, as well as the threat to the environment and the health of citizens due to radiological, chemical and biological contamination and (18) climate change and (19) high-tech crime (SNB, 2019). The general state of security in the world is also significantly threatened by gross violations of the UN Charter and generally accepted norms of international law, in particular interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, as well as the concept and practice of pre-emptive attack and military interventionism. Of particular concern is the tendency to aggravate relations between great powers, conditioned by competition for the realization of their opposing interests and the change of existing spheres of influence. In such circumstances, the risk of a military conflict on a global scale, although significantly reduced, cannot be completely ruled out (SNB, 2019). The dangers of an armed attack on Serbia and the outbreak of armed conflicts in the region depend on the relations between the great powers and the possibility of their direct confrontation.

For Serbia, the most significant security issue is the still unresolved status of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija (K&M) and the constant tensions caused

by the provisional Pristina institutions. The protection of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity is possible only if the Government has control over its entire territory, which is why K&M remains the primacy of Serbia's security policy. K&M in this sense represents a dual type of security challenge for Serbia, which adds another type of complexity to this issue. First, the potential for renewed conflict in this area represents a direct challenge to Serbian security and Serbian policy of neutrality. On the other hand, military neutrality can become challenging in situations of tension or conflict, as global power centers use the situation to project their power and expand their influence. Given that the provisional institutions of government in the southern Serbian province are supported by the US and NATO, and that all countries surrounding Serbia are NATO members (except Bosnia and Herzegovina), there is pressure from NATO countries that have taken clear positions in support of the independence of Kosovo and Metohija, which may lead to tensions in maintaining Serbia's neutrality. In addition, changes in regional relations such as the influence of China and Turkey and sudden events, such as the war in Ukraine and the Middle East, may pose challenges in maintaining political identity, especially if the situation changes rapidly.

It is clear that Serbia's biggest security problem is not Kosovo and Metohija, but the conflicting interests of the great powers in Southeastern Europe, especially Serbia, which is a challenge for the whole of Europe. Also, unresolved relations with the countries of the former SFRY and energy dependence on Russia further undermine Serbia's commitment to European integration. With its geographical location, road, river and rail transport network, Serbia has the potential to become the logistics center of the region (Stanojević, Mišković and Mišev, 2017). In economic and political terms, Serbia must rely on cooperation with the EU's largest foreign trade partner, but also with the USA, Russia, China and Turkey. Therefore, its foreign policy activities are focused not only on EU membership, but also on the development of bilateral and multilateral economic and political relations. Serbia's advantage in the process of resolving the status of Kosovo and Metohija is its membership in international organizations, primarily the UN, and the preservation of the principles set forth in the UN Charter and UN Security Council Resolution No. 1244 as an important foreign policy action of Serbia. Participation in and respect for military and economic-political alliances such as NATO, the SCO and the CSTO definitely show that Serbia has a friendly and defensive policy towards other states and alliances. However, countries aspiring to become NATO members are expected to meet certain political, economic and military conditions in order to ensure that they become security partners of the Alliance, and not just its beneficiaries. Among other things, like EU membership, NATO membership is conditioned primarily by territorial integrity and control of the entire territory and borders. Therefore, joining NATO in its current strength would require Serbia to give up part of its territory in order to meet the conditions for full membership. This means jeopardizing a vital national interest defined by public policies, which are, among other things, deeply rooted in the historical and national consciousness of Serbian citizens.

The unresolved status of Kosovo and Metohija is only a reflection of the lack of a consistent international policy and international law on European soil. The same applies at the global level, taking into account the situation in Israel and Palestine, Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, Libya. The priority of European states should be a common identity policy constituted and created through the EU. However, international institutions have become an instrument of power in the hands of global centers of power with the aim of realizing their interests. From all of the above, it is clear that new security threats are creating conditions for the formation of a new international order, primarily due to distrust and competition among the great powers, which is an obstacle to building a common policy of global peace. The current structure of the international order is not and must not be an obstacle to the national defense strategy of Serbia, which is based on military neutrality. If Serbia were to opt for a military alliance, in this case NATO, it would clearly jeopardize vital national interests, which is the preservation of Kosovo and Metohija. Therefore, it is undeniable that military neutrality is an adequate political framework for defending Serbia's national interests and preserving peace in this part of Europe.

CONCLUSION

In essence, the most dangerous threat to Serbia's military neutrality is the complex interplay of geopolitical pressures, unresolved regional conflicts, and the evolving nature of security threats. Navigating these challenges requires a delicate diplomatic approach, strategic foresight, and a commitment to preserving Serbia's sovereignty in the face of complex regional dynamics. Effectively managing these challenges requires careful diplomatic and military strategy to preserve military neutrality while maintaining stability and security in the region.

Europe has shown itself unable to resist the political pressures of global power centers, which is why peripheral states in particular are at risk of destabilization. The European political identity has been incorporated into NATO, which has not only deprived states of the ability to conduct an independent foreign and defense policy, but the EU itself has not built its own military capabilities independently of the military alliance. With its rapid expansion, NATO has made a strategic shift towards Russia, which resulted from the US strategy of maintaining global primacy, limiting the strengthening of the military forces of European states or the joint armed forces of the EU, increasing military potential and securing other resources from new members. Serbia is located in a region with historical conflicts and tensions, with pressures from various international actors who want to draw it into certain alliances or provoke new conflicts. Maintaining effective defense within the framework of military neutrality is becoming increasingly demanding. Military neutrality can cause difficulties in building relations with other countries, especially those that are members of military alliances. Serbia must balance

between preserving military neutrality and cooperating with various states and international organizations in order to protect national interests, primarily preserving sovereignty and territorial integrity. Maintaining military neutrality in the context of preserving sovereignty is a challenge, especially in light of regional events and international tensions. On the other hand, Europe must redefine its political and economic role, both at the regional and global levels, and resist dependence on global centers of power.

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