Assessments and foreign policy implications of the national security of the Republic of Serbia

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Abstract

National security determines the degree to which endangering national interests that sublimate national values is absent. With a review of the genesis and framework of the modern interpretation of national security, the paper discusses its approaches to endangerment. A retrospective of the ideas of endangerment in the paradigm of the changed physiognomy of contemporary conflicts and dynamic geopolitical movements creates the need for an innovative approach and prediction in national security strategic assessments. The paper provides an overview of the internal and external political aspects of national security and a framework for the actions of prominent entities according to the perceived foreign policy interests of importance for the Republic of Serbia's security. By analysing common and conflicting interests of Serbia and forces that have geopolitical interests in the Western Balkans, it is possible to establish the most objective framework for predicting the trend of relationship development and the vector of influence. The paper analyses Serbia's interactions with Russia, the United States, and the EU. The findings point to a complex situation regarding Serbia's national security, where Russia seeks to maintain its strong soft power presence, the United States wants close cooperation and insistence on recognising Kosovo's independence, and the EU does not vigorously stimulate or promote Serbia's European integration. In that way, a concrete contribution is made to the developing of strategic assessments of possible trends of importance for the Republic of Serbia's security, as well as to the achievement of declared national goals.

Keywords:

national security, endangering national security, soft power, strategic communication, Republic of Serbia

Introduction

The current geopolitical moment represents the sublimation of the results of the twentieth century's security movements and new trends conditioned by intensified globalisation and humanity's general development. On the one hand, global security is based on the legacy of the two world wars and the Cold War, the collapse of the bloc system, and the United States' dominant unipolarity, which marked the end of the twentieth century. On the other hand, there is an increasingly dominant tendency of multipolarity, led primarily by Russia and China, and trends in creating new or establishing old zones of influence (e.g. Germany and Turkey). All this is taking place within the framework of the heated technological revolution and economic globalisation, with the imperative of establishing new energy bases in the economy, which would mean a departure from fossil fuels and further disrupting the planet's global health. The globalisation of the media and the internet has created a unique cognitive discourse, where ideas and information are placed that have different motives and degrees of reliability, and where knowledge, and fake news too, has become an everyday reality. The emergence of global infections and pandemics threatens and globalises the most profound human perspectives affecting humanity. Considering the above, we can agree that risk and uncertainty were features of world politics in the first decades of the twenty-first century (Williams, 2008, p. 58). Therefore, assessments of threats to national security represent a first-class challenge for the academic, professional, and professional public operating within the defence and security sector.

Approach to the analysis of national security

The conceptual framework of national security as a comprehensive description of the degree that the endangering of the nation and its vital interests is absent is not new. In December 1919, the Boston Educational Journal, identifying almost all fields of social activity of the nation as contents of national security, stated:

"We are never pessimistic, but we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that national security will not come, cannot, come incidentally. There will be no national security without safeguarding all public interests" (Winship, 1919, p. 722).

The term itself was established in professional and political circles after the Second World War. In his address to the US Congress in December 1945, President Truman called for a single organisational unit that would unite the military establishment with the "National Defense Council" to protect US national interests. Thus, in 1947, the National Security Council and the law that defined US national security foundations were created (Neocleous, 2006).

From then until today, one of the main features of the attitude towards national security issues has been the changed structure of international relations and the latent loss of state sovereignty over all aspects of national security due to growing multilateralism and forms of collective security (McCormack, 2015).

It can be said that national security is part of the state's policy, the goal of which is to create national and international political conditions that favourably affect the protection or expansion of solid national values towards existing or potential opponents (Jablonsky, 2001). National security can be defined in terms of the appropriate elements of state power and priorities considered a vital national interest. Elements of national power are categorised into natural and social determinants. Natural determinants (geography, resources, and population) refer to the number of people in a nation and their physical environment.

Social determinants (economic, political, military, psychological, and informative), on the other hand, concern the way people of a nation organise and the way they change their environment (Jablonsky, 2001). National security can mean the ability of a state to independently, or in cooperation with other states or organisations, protect the solid values and interests of society from external and internal forms of threats, and thus provide general conditions for the unhindered political, economic, social, and cultural development of society and the well-being of its citizens (Stajić and Gaćinović, 2007, p. 57).

National security is achieved through the functions of the national security system. The national security system of modern states includes the function and structure in national security, which includes the state's ability to preserve the values of its society from internal and external threats to peace and freedom of citizens and joint action with other social subsystems (Gaćinović, 2017, p. 94).

The national security system consists of elements that deal with internal security (police, security services, the judicial system, etc.) and elements predominantly oriented towards external security (armed forces and intelligence services), which are subject to international norms and internal ones (Ostojić and Mitrović, 2017).

According to the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, "National Security of the Republic of Serbia is an objective state of protection of its national values and interests from all forms of threats, and a subjective sense of security of the citizens of the Republic of Serbia." It represents the result of the influence of the strategic environment and the undertaken measures and activities of state bodies and institutions in the performance of security functions and the actions of other entities in all areas of social life (National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, 2019).

Until the late 1970s, security assessments were focused mainly on the nature of possible military threats. However, in the early 1980s, there was a growing awareness of the possibility of applying other forms of security breaches, which emphasised the importance of the vulnerability of modern society, as well as regional and global forms of interdependence. The first method considers possible threat development scenarios, based on a general analysis of probable development of international relations'. It considers variables from the primary social level, geopolitical movements, the economy, and political trends, and their overall global effects on the international system. The second method involves elaborating and describing scenarios according to individual issues and determinations of possible crises. The integration of both methods, macro, and microanalysis with the elaboration of scenarios according to the estimated possible crises, is the basis for an adequate assessment of trends of importance for the country's national security (Nils, 1981). Following the above, researchers and planners of policies and strategies that treat national security are faced with three basic questions: who is our threat (actor), what is the goal of the threat (interest of the opponent and our expressed weakness), and by what means can the threat be carried out (form and content)?

The content of the concept of security changes within the limits of understanding and acceptability of a particular time and the social, cultural, and historical parameters (Hammerstad and Boas, 2015, p. 477).

Current national security assessments are based on several security approaches. For example, the so-called "Copenhagen School" bases the formulation of security theory on a realistic approach that includes measures to combat the perceived threat (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde, 1998). Characteristically, this school of thought recognises threats as the main content of the concept of security. On the other hand, one group of authors pro-

poses risk as the central concept of security (Corry, 2012, p. 243). In doing so, the risk does not set direct cause-and-effect patterns between the threats and the reference objects, according to which it manifests but emphasises the "conditions of possibility" in which the risk could turn into real damage (Hammerstad and Boas, 2015).

In doing so, three approaches to risk can be highlighted as the content of the concept of security:

1) "Risk as governance" deals with the transformation of the concept of security from war and violence to governance and technology, starting from sociological approaches to governance;

2) "Global risk management" considers the concept of risk transformatively unpredictable, and living with risk is a permanent feature of society. Approaching the risk as "too great," precautionary measures are taken to avoid future disasters;

3) "Political analytical" has a managerial perspective and aims to develop methods for measuring the probability and impact of a particular risk (Hammerstad and Boas, 2015).

Climate change, pandemics, migration, and demographic change are most often presented as risks. On the other hand, phenomena such as terrorism, organised crime, and other phenomena, whose devastating effects have already partially materialised, have been presented as threats to national security. Despite significant scientific discussions, no unique definition of security challenges, risks, and threats has yet been adopted, but they are most often seen as a degree of danger to the security of the individual, society, state, and global community.

Threats to national security can be observed in three stages:

- Challenge: a phenomenon or process that is possible and probable, comprehensive, and value-indeterminate.

- Risk: the possibility of loss, injury, damage, or destruction. Unlike challenge, risk has a clear negative definition.

- Threat: aware of the intention to cause harm by forcing particular behaviour.

Overall, challenges, risks, and threats pose a security threat. By endangering national security, we mean phenomena caused by the action of a human being or a natural factor whose duration and intensity cause or may lead to security being disturbed.

In the analysis of national security, the formal characteristics of the modern state are taken into account: 1) geographically defined territory in which it has jurisdiction, 2) dominance over existing groups, organisations, and alliances operating in its territory, 3) absence of rivals within its borders and international recognition, 4) represents a source of law, 5) strives to achieve broader goals than groups and organisations, 6) represents a permanent political government that includes services that are holders of power (Vinsent, 2009, pp. 31–34).

Current security trends suggest that globalisation has a significant impact on creating the state's national security and its response to security threats, taking into account its (state) characteristics such as power, integrity, and position (Ripsman and Paul, 2010). Thus, globalised international relations require a holistic approach to security. Therefore, the

unified aspect of national security threat assessments requires political, economic, and military capabilities and capacities aligned with social, technological, and environmental standards. A comprehensive approach to military issues, together with political, economic, social, and environmental aspects, represents a unified security agenda of a modern approach to analysing trends relevant to national security. This approach is complementary because international relations must be analysed in a more detailed approach to security threats to human collectivities (Buzan, 1991).

Based on this, there is a need for special attention to global issues such as geopolitical movements, ethnic conflicts, population and migration, increasing military capacity, environmental problems, pandemics, illicit trade in weapons and narcotics, a proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, information security, security in cyberspace, etc. All these and many other problems exist in some countries as threats and risks to national security. Keeping in mind that the current change in the physiognomy of modern war as a suppressive form of endangering national security is a visible deviation from the classical "Clausewitz" theory of war, it is possible to speak of postmodern warfare (Mitrović and Nikolić, 2021). In modern hybrid warfare, the absence of classical military force is noticeable, where conventional and non-conventional methods, actions of state and non-state actors, means, and applied technologies are dynamically combined. In such a hybrid war, the action is directed towards the broadest range of social life areas with limited armed force. The goal of hybrid war is not destruction and devastation but the takeover of the opponent and his capacities, who are often unconsciously and reluctantly engaged in acting following the hybrid occupier's interests. In short, "hybrid warfare is a postmodern concept of low-intensity conflict, which non-linearly and flexibly combines conventional and unconventional forms of action on the nation's comprehensive defence capabilities, intending to engage in following the interests of the aggressor and limited use of force (from the state to terrorist groups)" (Mitrović and Nikolić, 2021, p. 137). The mere existence of such forms of endangering national security requires a comprehensive approach when analysing one's weaknesses, which represent the probable goals of potential opponents.

Political aspects of national security

Political security is essentially about the state's organisational stability (Ejdus, 2012), where the state with its institutions and its legitimacy is the primary reference point in the political security sector (Buzan *et al.*, 1998). The parameters that are important in perceiving the threat to the state's political security refer to the intensity of political threats and the state's political strength. The state's internal strength is reflected in the socio-political cohesion and the weakness in the political community's socio-political disintegration (Ejdus, 2012, p. 147). According to Ejdus, "[s]trong states are those that have full positive or empirical sovereignty and can deliver public goods to their citizens who in return accept power as legitimate. Weak states are those that, due to the dire economic situation, ethnic or religious differences, cannot deliver public goods to all citizens who in return question the government in part or the whole territory" (Ejdus, 2012, p. 148). Threats to the state's political security are directed against its organisational stability and can come from within or without. Internal threats are aimed at the state's internal legitimacy in part of the territory by non-state actors, and external threats relate to the denial of international recognition (Ejdus, 2012, p. 150).

It is possible to single out two primary areas of policy and political aspects of importance for national security: domestic policy and foreign policy. Internal political spheres that affect the nation's resilience and its comprehensive perception of a "difficult to achieve" goal include the resilience and functionality of the political system, the rule of law, the

integrity of institutions and resilience to corruption, publicity and transparency in public institutions, political integration of minorities and so on. Research indicates that most post-communist countries are particularly vulnerable to external action towards internal political structures (Mitrović, 2018). It could be seen as a result of an immature political culture caused by an unnatural and abrupt transition from one political system to another. Namely, most of these countries "abolished" socialism and "introduced" democracy without maturing the democratic political culture. Such declared democracies represent possible polygons of influence of forces, which create hotbeds of instability by acting towards weak points. This example of hybrid action is, in the terminal phase, practical hybrid occupation of the state, where an external force achieves its interests by engaging the victim state's capacity for its own goals without conventional war actions.

Foreign policy influence on Serbia's National Security

Foreign policy action in the form of endangering national security refers to the overall foreign policy position and power, integration into international institutions, and influence within them. Analyses of early 21st-century security reforms indicate that Serbia has a variable approach to its national security and attitude towards security integration, which is understood by some authors as a threat to European and regional security, with possible re-escalation of ethnic-nationalist tensions (Seroka, 2010).

From the point of view of the Republic of Serbia's national security, projections of security trends imply a prediction of the influence of various factors on its national interests. In contrast, the achievement of national interests protects fundamental national values. (National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, 2019). Based on that document, it is possible to group foreign policy areas of particular importance for the national security of the Republic of Serbia into those related to the process of integration into the European Union and those related to the status of Kosovo and Metohija[1]. The listed priorities are comprehensive and cover many issues that should be analysed, from the influences of global and regional geopolitical powers, through neighbourly and regional relations, to minority status and influence. Meanwhile, dealing with all those issues is too demanding for the volume and capacity of the article and deserves independent research and analysis. This has limited the contribution in the area of European integration and characterised soft power influence. Namely, analysis in the article of the current attitude of dominant subjects towards foreign policy areas of importance for Serbia's national security will be predominantly aimed toward integration and correlation with foreign powers, which significantly influences the process.

The European Union: Since 2006, the Republic of Serbia has been independently implementing European integration, following the general rules on association with certain specifics. Namely, the Republic of Serbia, unlike all previous candidates for membership within the negotiation process, has an additional chapter, under number 35, which refers to the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. The Republic of Serbia has opened a total of eighteen negotiating chapters and conditionally closed two (25 – "science and research" and 26 – "education and culture") (Key findings of the 2020 report on Serbia, 2020).

The European Union believes that "Serbia should make further substantial efforts and contribute to reaching a comprehensive, legally binding agreement with Kosovo." The EU suggests that such an agreement is urgent and crucial so that both Kosovo and Serbia can progress on their European path (Key findings of the 2020 report on Serbia, 2020). The EU's position is that Serbia is 60% in line with the EU's Common Foreign and Secu-

1. Kosovo and Metohija is the southern autonomy region of the Republic of Serbia, called Kosovo for short, which self-declared independence in 2008. The UN does not recognise Kosovo as an independent state. The number of states which recognise Kosovo as an independent state is between 106 and 114. Kosovo's status is defined by UN Resolution 1244, and the territory is under observation and the protective presence of the UN and the EU with a strong presence of armed forces, police, and administrative staff from the international community. Kosovo has a parliamentary system of governance, with the president as an elected leader. All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institution, or population, in this text should not be prejudged and be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

rity Policy and should step up its efforts in this field (Key findings of the 2020 report on Serbia, 2020). At the same time, the EU indirectly criticises Serbia for its special ties with Russia and China, which are the subject of criticism not only in terms of foreign policy coherence, which is predominantly conditioned by the support given by these countries to Serbia in negotiations with "Kosovo," but also in the economy and the political aspect of environmental protection (use of illicit and harmful technologies). It can be said that the process for the European integration of Serbia is stagnant, both due to specific internal slowed-down reform processes and due to several existing problems in the EU. Political turbulence, Brexit, slowing economic growth, the crisis in transatlantic relations, problems in relations with Russia, concerns about China's growing influence in Europe, among other things, affect the general unwillingness to enlarge further (Stojanović and Šaranović, 2020). The process is also in crisis, and European institutions have an increasingly loud critical view of Belgrade's authorities. According to them, the EP report sharply criticises the situation in the media, the political climate, and unresolved scandals, which, according to them, violate Serbia's internal stability and the actual degree of harmonisation with general European norms (EWB, 2021; N1, 2021). In economic terms, the EU is the most significant donor and patron of Serbia, but this is not significantly promoted in the media and accepted by public opinion (EU Delegation to Serbia, 2021).

Russia: according to the current concept of Russian foreign policy, the Western Balkans region, where Serbia is located, is not the focus of the Russian Federation's priorities (The Concept of foreign policy of the Russian Federation, 2016). This region is entirely left out, which indicates that it is not among the Russian foreign policy engagement priorities (Nikolić, 2019). However, a change in this approach is possible, according to a study by Russian scientists, who, taking into account the current situation and declared priorities of Russian foreign policy, suggest that the approach to the Western Balkans be shaped by 1) shifting from bilateral to multilateral cooperation; 2) the creation and support of political forces in Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Albania and other countries in the region that would be pro-Russian; 3) expansion of the Russian media presence in the Balkans; 4) the continuation of economic investments in regional industrial and energy projects; 5) intensification of educational, trade and cultural cooperation; 6) a constructive approach to religious issues; and 7) development of multilateral cooperation platforms in which Russia actively participates or dominates and attracts the countries of the Western Balkans to participate in them (Entina and Pivovarenko, 2019).

Officially, the issue of Serbia's EU integration is not crucial or controversial for Russia. Aspects of Serbia's accession to the EU, apart from the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the current sanctions due to the annexation of Crimea, are not significant for Russia and its attitude towards Serbia. With regard to Kosovo and Metohija's status, Moscow is committed to implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and supports Belgrade and Pristina's talks, emphasising that it will support any acceptable solution from Serbia's point of view. In general, Russia views Serbia as part of the Western Balkans and a space for indirect influence, primarily to undermine the political dominance of the influence of the EU, Germany, and the United States in this part of Europe. For this purpose, Russia uses Serbia's support in solving Kosovo's issue in favour of its strategic interests in the Western Balkans, using Serbia as a base for achieving influence.

Soft power activities in agitation, social network influence, and dominantly energy (un) security influence are increasingly evident issues in Serbia–Russia relations. Russia projects its soft power influence in Serbia primarily through diplomacy, energy, and strategic communications. They exert a strong influence on Serbian public opinion, intending to develop animosity towards the United States and NATO and create an environment for slowing down EU integration. With the combined appearance of propaganda through the

media, social networks, sponsored organisations, and influential individuals, Russia successfully implements its strategic communications. The results can be observed through two examples. The first refers to the agitation, recruitment, and inclusion of extremists from Serbia on the side of pro-Russian forces in Ukraine. There is no reliable data on their number, and estimates range from a few dozen to 300. They act as organised structures within the pro-Russian forces or independently so that according to specific sources, we can talk about the existence of the "Serbian platoon" that fought in eastern Ukraine and later in Syria on the side of Russia. Going to Ukraine and Syria's battlefields is facilitated using intermediary agencies from Russia (Karšić, 2017). There are different motivations for this, but political and material reasons dominate. Members of extreme right-wing and neo-Nazi organisations act from the position that they are "helping the Russian brothers" and with the expressed goal of developing a pro-Russian and anti-Western relationship in Serbia itself (Janjić, 2014). These organisations, such as the Unité Continentale, are in close contact with similar organisations in Russia, from which they receive logistical support[2]. Serbian officials strongly dissociate themselves from such people and strongly condemn them. The Criminal Law of Serbia prohibits its citizens' participation in such conflicts, and as a result of the proceedings against persons who were engaged in the conflicts in Ukraine, 28 court verdicts have been pronounced so far (Djurdjević, 2018). Such organisations are of great danger to Serbia's national security because it undermines internal stability and disrupts international relations. Such developed ties can be recognised as the action of Russian soft power, in a form that implies influence, indoctrination, and motivation through "patriotic, cultural and religious ties", and which can be recognised as part of Russian strategic communication in Serbia, which is effective synchronisation of pro-Russian works, words and images (Pashentsev, 2020).

Another example is the successful agitation and influence on families to send Serbian children to Russian paramilitary training camps. In the summer of 2018, the "Youth-Patriotic Camp Zlatibor 2018" was organised on a well-known mountain in Serbia, at which children and young people aged 14 to 23 were trained in martial and military skills. However, shortly after opening, the camp was closed by the Serbian police, and President Aleksandar Vučić emphasised that the state will not tolerate such forms of training in which children in uniform are taught military skills[3]. However, this is not the first time that children from Serbia have participated in camps of this kind, but this is the first time such a camp has been organised on Serbia's territory. Namely, in April 2018, a group of 30 children from Serbia travelled to Russia to the International Camp of War Patriotic Youth, organised under the Russian government's patronage and led by the ultranationalist group ENOT Corp. In Serbia, the organisation's direct organiser is the Association of Participants in Armed Conflicts in the Former Area (UOSYU). Furthermore, even though the unit was officially shut down later in 2018[4], its activities through UOSYU continued, so that the camp was reorganised in 2019, with sports, recreational and educational activities reported, with the absence of weapons and imitations. In that way, by manipulating the regulations and the affection of the local self-government that supports these activities, the idea of indoctrination of young people was implemented (Djurdjević, 2019).

Parents claim that they sent their children voluntarily, believing that they would develop positive patriotic feelings! This example is even more drastic because it indicates that the Russian signals have reached the most persistent target group: the family. Considering that motivation and recruitment are achieved through social networks, where the Russian interpretation of the Serbian patriotism of young generations is glorified, the long-term negative impact on national security is evident. Acting through determined forms of strategic communication (propaganda, public diplomacy, and lobbying) (Mitrović, 2019), the Russians apply other, harder subversive actions.

2. Geopolitical extreme right-wing movement "Unité Continentale" founded in Belgrade in mid-2014 came into the spotlight after the Washington Post wrote in May 2017 about its founder Guillaume Kuvelier, who has French and US citizenship. After fighting on the side of pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine, he enlisted and worked in the US Army, where he was still working at the time of writing. Unita's political views are based on the ideology of the "continentalism" of the Russian political scientist Alexander Dugin, based on animosity towards the West and advocates against the European Union and NATO. In Russia, the patron of Unita is the non-governmental organisation International Eurasian Movement. The Ukrainian prosecutor's office initiated a process against 54 members of Unita, of which 6 are Serbian citizens. The rest are ten citizens of Spain, 21 Italy, 1 Moldova, 1 USA, 2 Finland, 11 France, 2 Czech Republic and Belarus, and 1 Latvia (Djurdjević, 2018).

3. Member of ENOT Corp. and President of the Organising Committees of these camps Valerij Shambarov states that their goal is for young people to "become real men and warriors so that they can defend their homeland, and that the camps are military-patriotic." Its branch office in Serbia, UOSYU, is headed by Zeljko Vukelic, which states that they support the Russian Embassy in Serbia and that a Russian military attaché also visited the camp. The Russian Embassy did not deny these allegations (Božić and Ćosić, 2018).

4. The organisation ENOT Corp stopped working at the end of 2018 after being arrested by the Russian police. Members of this right-wing organisation are charged with inciting hatred or hostility, humiliating human dignity, and involving minors in the commission of crimes. In 2015, members of this organisation were decorated by the commander of the pro-Russian forces in Donetsk (Djurdjević, 2019).

The registered and recorded subversive actions of the Russian intelligence officials were also revealed in the media, and the expert service of Serbia confirmed their authenticity. However, despite that, this spy affair passed with "much noise and little detail", with noticeable comments that many foreign services are working on achieving their goals in Serbia, and not only Russia. Due to the apparent evidence, the Russian side did not deny the activity but tried to present it as a provocation of an unnamed third party (Petrović, 2019). The overlooking of the implemented strategic communication indicates a Russian information offensive in international relations (Szpyra, 2020).

If we take into account Russia's overall economic influence, primarily in the field of energy, it can be concluded that Serbia has a challenging position with solid exposure to Russian influences on its national security. Namely, in Serbia, the Russian national company "Gazprom,"[5] which is under the direct control of the state's institutions of Russia, and carries out activities of strategic national importance, is the majority owner of "Serbia gas,"[6] while the Russian company "Lukoil" took over all the capacity and infrastructure of the Serbian oil company "Beopetrol". From an oil and gas point of view, this situation indicates that Serbia is an entirely energy dependant country. In short, economic analyses of Russian–Serbian relations indicate the domination of Russian interests, which are solidly packed in intensive propaganda campaigns (Lakićević, 2016). In general, the influence of Russia's soft power on Serbia's national security is evident and rising.

USA: Relations between the USA and Serbia are burdened by the legacy of American interventions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo against Serbian forces and mentoring the creation of the "Republic of Kosovo." America's main interest in Serbia and a key stumbling block in its relations is its relationship with NATO, which the United States sees as a guarantor of peace in the region and a way to combat organised crime, human trafficking, and Islamic terrorism (Hartwell and Sidlo, 2017). Cooperation between the United States and Serbia has been on the increase since 2001, and this is especially evident in the fields of economic and military cooperation. Support for Serbia's European integration was also emphasised, and efforts to develop bilateral relations based on mutual interests and respect. This is especially important because the United States believes that the Balkans without supervision, especially when the EU has its internal problems, could become a conflict zone again. That is why Washington is trying to renew its strategic engagement in the Western Balkans, especially in Serbia. What permanently burdens the possible deeper cooperation and connection is that the United States is the primary creator and promoter of Kosovo's fierce independence. The relationship of the United States and Serbia involves an arrangement here they "agree to disagree" about Kosovo. At the same time, the United States shares a vision of Serbia as a developed democracy, at peace with its neighbours and integrated into Euro-Atlantic institutions as an essential part of Europe's overall vision, whole, free and at peace. This summary briefly shows the United States' future steps: strengthening its role in the Western Balkans, supporting the development of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, supporting negotiations on Serbia's EU membership, and monitoring Serbian-Russian relations and actions of Russian-sponsored political entities (Morelli and Garding 2018).

Conclusion

National security sublimates the degree of protection of the nation's values, which are achieved from the state's point of view by fulfilling national interests within the internal function of the state and international relations. Indeed, national security is not guaranteed and granted but must be acquired and defended, thus realising its interests and value capacities. The cumulative statement of security threats, observed in the existing forms of challenges, risks, and threats, expresses national security threats. The modern

5. "Gazprom" is under the direct administration of the Cabinet of President Vladimir Putin, has more than 300,000 employees, provides 25% of the consumption of gas, and possesses 25% of world reserves of gas (Petrović, 2010).

6. The Russian oil company "Lukoil" bought Serbian oil company "Beopetrol" in 2003 for 117 million euros.

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state is under an onslaught from postmodern forms of security threats, conditioned by geopolitical trends of multipolarity, economic globalisation, the technical-information revolution, and so on. From the point of view of political factors, national security is influenced by internal and external factors. From the Republic of Serbia's point of view, foreign political influences are focused on European integration, status, and relations with Kosovo and Metohija, which are still the main drivers for national security. Considering some analyses, this could lead to blindness and a possible non-systematic approach toward core national security interests (Vanchoski, 2021). However, recognised prominent actors involved in the foreign policy aspect of achieving the Republic of Serbia's national security are, among others, the EU, the USA, and Russia. By analysing common and conflicting interests and Serbia's position and possible interest, it is possible to establish the most objective framework for predicting the trend of relationship development and the vector of influence. Many factors, from declared neutrality and economic security (Stojković and Glišić, 2020) and energy independence, have developed public awareness of the need for general and security integrations to resist the influence of strategic communication, agitation, and propaganda. In that way, a concrete contribution is made to the strategic assessments of possible trends of importance for the Republic of Serbia's security and the rationalisation and achievement of the declared national goals.

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