

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES OF EURO-ATLANTIC PATH ON REPUBLIC OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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Abstract: After the NATO summit in Bucharest 2008 year, focus of NATO discussions on issues for further enlargement has been on considering the opportunities for admission of interested countries with an Action Plan for membership in NATO of SEE including Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina's road to EU in our paper will be analyzed through the following key events: 2008 entry in force on internal agreement with EU for stabilization and association, 2010 visa liberalization with EU, 2015 full implementation of Stabilization and Association Agreement, February 2016 Bosnia and Herzegovina submits its application for EU membership, September 2016 European Council invites European Commission to give its opinion on EU membership application. Parallel on Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina way to EU also NATO path will be analyzed. Integration path to NATO has been set through more scientific variables which are fundamental basic conditions for NATO integration: political, economic, judicial reforms, defense reforms, interior ministry and so on. An analysis and assessment will be made from strategic position in relation with following variables: projection of overall defense forces, internal borders, new types of threats to national security, deterrence ability, influence on EU and NATO's cohesion. Comparison of defense spending will be made with NATO member states from SEE: Republic of Slovenia, Croatia and Montenegro. Research analysis also will be made from: World bank, EU commission, Freedom House estimates and other international organizations for overall analysis and assessment on fulfillment of basic criteria for membership in NATO and EU: political, economic, military and final observations based on numerical parameters for final assessments of meeting criteria for NATO and EU membership for short term period of next five years till 2024 year.

Key words: criteria, challenges, NATO, EU, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

1. Introduction

In the period since the end of the armed conflicts in BiH (1992-95), country has been faced with a number of unresolved issues, starting with unfinished transition process, tension in the part of interethnic relations, unsolved various disputes, infrastructure issues, organized crime and so on. Based on political and defense determination of BiH and a process of deep structural changes and reforms in socio-political system, including defense reconstruction. On this direction, has been made a change in the overall political dialogue in BiH followed by political decisions with clearly stated commitments for the country's accession to NATO and EU.

Accession of BiH to the Partnership for Peace program on 14-th December 2006 year was an event of particular importance and confirmation on the efforts of this country on the

road to NATO. "Although the membership in this program, does not imply guaranteeing the collective security of the member states, as in the case with NATO membership, but is the first step in that direction" (Defense White Paper of BiH, 2005:16).

Bosnia and Herzegovina has begun active cooperation with NATO, primarily in the area of democratic, institutional and defense reforms, as well as practical cooperation on issues of common interest. During April 2007, BiH started cooperation with NATO in the Individual Partnership Program. As a result, BiH has been able in cooperation with NATO, to carry out an independent selection of activities from the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Work Plan which NATO or the Member States offer for training on a two-year basis (Turcalo, Kapidzić.2014:79). From particular importance for BiH progress in achieving cooperation with the countries in the region and with the United States is its accession to the US-Adriatic Charter in December 2008. BiH also greatly contributes to international peace and security through the participation of its military members and units in international operations led by NATO or UN. As a result of the progress made by BiH in the democratization of the defense system, as well as the cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia at the NATO Summit in Bucharest in 2008. During April 2010, the framework of NATO agreement was reached with joining BiH to the Membership Action Plan (Woehrel,2013:7). Over the past period, BiH has made significant progress in achieving the technical and military aspects of NATO integration. There is a lack of cooperation between political entities regarding the fulfillment of the political criteria for membership in NATO.

2. Defense reforms and fulfillment of military criteria

The Ministry of Defense with the Joint Headquarters of the Armed Forces as its expert body, performs the tasks as single defense system under the supreme command of the presidency (Program rada Ministarstva BiH, 2017:1-4). For strengthen the integrity of the defense institutions were took measures for building effective system for equipping, supplying and maintaining the assets and infrastructure of the armed forces (Srednjoročni plan rada Ministarstva odbrane BiH (2016-2018), 2018:3). As a turning point which led to the creation of the current structure of the Armed Forces, the achievement of an agreement between political entities during 2005 for the unification under a single command of their separate Armed forces and ministries was considered. Armed Forces constitute a single military force composed of representatives of order all three constituent ethnic groups in accordance with the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Zakon o odbrani BiH, 2005: Član 2, stav 1). At the end of January 2006 transfer of all responsibilities and personnel from domain of defense and entities to Ministry of Defense has been fulfilled. In July 2006 total number of Armed forces was limited to 16 000 from which 10 000 were active military personnel 1000 civilian and 5000 active reserves (Armed Forces of BiH Size, 2018:5-7).

BiH defense expenditures, given in (Table 1), as a percentage of GDP are 50 percent of mentioned reference value. Based on the data in column 3 (Table 1) it can be concluded that defense expenditures as a percentage of the GDP of BiH are higher than those of Slovenia which are 0.9 percent. These expenditures in BiH amount to 71 per cent in relation to those of Croatia and 67 per cent in relation to Montenegro. Also defense expenditures for a soldier in BiH amounting to 15619 dollars (column 5, Table 1) which are significantly lower than defense spending per soldier in Montenegro amounting 34461 dollars and even lower than those in Croatia 37466 dollars and Slovenia 53,157 dollars. According to this, aspirants countries with low values of defense expenditures per soldier have armed forces with low degree of sophistication which is a disadvantage in terms of meeting the criteria for admission to NATO. Furthermore, Armed Forces of BiH fall in category of less fashionable because their defense

expenditure per soldier are lower than a NATO member state, with lowest value, similar to Albania whose defense expenditure per soldier amounts to 17294 dollars. Armed forces of Albania are 8500 persons (World Bank. Armed Forces Personnel.) and defense spending is \$ 147 million (SIPRI. Military expenditure by country, 2015). Albania as a NATO member is far away behind economic development from all other member states (Madej, Winter. 2010:9). Croatia which gained NATO membership in same time as Albania, has a twice bigger value of defense spending per soldier. Moreover, BiH Armed Forces belong to category of small powers because their numerical status is less than 50 per cent of the reference value of 25,000 soldiers (Szayna, S. T. NATO Enlargement 2000-2015 2001: 89).

Table 1. Defence Expenditures of BiH, Croatia, Slovenia and Montenegro

State	Defence Expenditures (SIPRI. Military expenditure by country, 2015)	Defence Expenditures as % of GDP (World Bank. Military expenditure % of GDP.2019)	Peacetime Active Force (World Bank. Armed Forces Personnel.2019)	Defence Expenditures Per Troop	Defence Expenditures Per Capita
1	2	3	4	5	6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	\$164 million	1,0	10500	\$15619	\$43
Croatia	\$695 million	1,4	18550	\$37466	\$162
Slovenia	\$404 million	0,9	7600 ⁹⁰	\$53157	\$205
Montenegro	\$67,2 million	1,5	1950 ⁹¹	\$34461	\$105

By comparison, Armed forces of Croatia and Slovenia fall into the category of small and modern armies. Based on the data given in Table 3, it can be concluded that BiH has 30 soldiers per kilometer border line towards countries without an Action Plan for membership, not NATO or EU members, as a rough gauge for determining the ability for distraction from aggression directed to its territory.

⁹⁰ Ministrstvo za obrambo, Slovenske vojske, 2015: 10-14.

⁹¹ Ministarstvo odbrane Crne Gore. Izveštaj o stanju u vojsci Crne Gore, 2015:5-7.

Table 2. Troops and Border Length Ratios of Bosnia and Herzegovina

(CIA: . <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bk.html>)

State	Peacetime Active Force Size (World Bank. Armed Forces Personnel)	Total Land Border Length + Coastline (km)	Total Border Length with Current Non-NATO or Non-EU States (km)	Troops per km of Current Non- NATO or Non-EU Border	Total Border Length with Current Non-MAP, Non-NATO or Non-EU States (km)	Troops per km of Current Non- MAP, Non-NATO or Non-EU Border
Bosnia and Herzegovina	10500	1543+20	345	30	345	30
Montenegro	1950	683+293,5	475	4	233	8

By comparison, BiH has a better capacity in terms of Montenegro, which represent countries with the lowest value in NATO, for an initial defense of its borders in eventual aggression.

3. Fulfillment of political criteria

Based on the European Commission's annual reports for the progress of BiH, it can be concluded that there is insufficient commitment and absence of political will to achieve serious progress in meeting the political criteria for admission to NATO. According to the data released by Freedom House, BiH is estimated as a partially free country. In each column of Table 3, the first number represents the index of political rights, while the second issue is the index of civil liberties in the period 2015-2019. Both indexes are based on a scale of 1 to 7, where index 1 represents the highest and 7 lowest level of development of political rights and civil liberties in the country.

Table 3. Freedom House Rating of BiH, 2015-2019

State	2015 Freedom house 2015	2016 Freedom house 2016	2017 Freedom house 2017	2018 Freedom house 2018	2019 Freedom house 2019
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3,4 (3.5) DS / PF	3,4 (3.5) DS / PF	4,4 (4.0) DS / PF	4,4 (4.0) DS / PF	4,4 (4.0) DS / PF

The third component in each column of the table is the assessment status of political rights and civil liberties expressed with "S" (free countries), with "DS" (partially free) and with "NC" (not free countries). Countries with an average value of the first two components between 1 and 2.5 are considered free, between 3 and 5.5 partially free, while between 5.5 and 7 for non-free countries (Szayna, S. T. NATO Enlargement 2000-2015. 2001: 63).

According to Freedom House data given in Table 4, it can be concluded that there are no changes in the status of press freedom in BiH compared to the previous year, where was estimated as a partially free country.

Table 4. Freedom of Media and Press 2018-2019 Status of BiH

State	2018	2019
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Partly Free	Partly Free

For comparison, Croatia is also estimated as a partially free country. While Slovenia for the same period has been valued as a free country. Nevertheless, the fact remains that further significant efforts are needed by BiH to fully meet the political criteria, as well as a serious approach and unreserved support on the path towards NATO by all political subjects.

4. Economic progress of Bosnia and Herzegovina

BiH is in early stage in development of a functioning market economy and in early stage of achieving capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union (European Commission report for BiH, 2016:30-35). Certain degree of progress has been made in the area of business climate, labor legislation, and identification of the existing weaknesses in the finance sector with the agreed reform agenda. The public sector is estimated to be insufficiently effective, while progress within the private sector is moving in improperly slow pace. Based on the data in Table 5, the real growth rate of BiH GDP in the course of 2018 was 3 percent. For comparison, the real growth rate of Montenegro's gross domestic product for the same period was 2.5%, Croatia 3%, while Slovenia was 3.1%.

Table 5. General Characteristics of BiH, Croatia, Slovenia and Montenegro
 (CIA. World Fact book)

State	Total Population	Gross Domestic Product (Purchasing Power Parity)	Gross Domestic Product – Real Growth Rate	Gross Domestic Product Per Capita
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3 849 891 (July 2018)	\$44.83 billion (2018)	3%	\$12800
Croatia	4 292 095	\$95,65 billion	3%	\$22900
Slovenia	1 972 126	\$66,5 billion	3,1%	\$32200
Montenegro	642 550	\$10,37 billion	2,5%	\$16600

BiH has made efforts to recover the country from the aftermath of the global crisis over the past period, but yet this country is far behind the other countries in the region. The value of the Gross domestic product per capita in BiH is 12800 dollars. According to the data given in Table 5, this value for BiH is significantly lower than Montenegro, which is 16600 dollars and even lower than Croatia which is 22900 dollars and Slovenia which is 32200 dollars per capita. In addition, integration of a particular aspirant country in the Euro-Atlantic structures is so much easier than the higher its GDP per capita value (Szayna, S. T. NATO Enlargement 2000-2015:2001: 51). Also, the insufficient efficiency of the measures and efforts undertaken by BiH to restructure the public sector in accordance with the actual needs for functional improvements

of the internal plan and solving the existing problem with the excess staff were noted. Existing investments in the private sector are insufficient, while in the part of foreign direct investments there is a significant decrease. An additional problem is the phenomenon of leaving BiH from educated young people, which has resulted in further deterioration of the country's economy.

5. Bosnia and Herzegovina as a future NATO and EU member

Assessment of BiH as a future NATO and EU member is done by reviewing its progress in fulfilling the basic prerequisites for admission to NATO, as well as analyzing the strategic goal of NATO enlargement with this country. Aspirant countries on their way to join NATO and EU need to meet three main categories of basic criteria: political, economic and military (NATO Enlargement and Open Door policy, 2018). In this context, Table 6 provides an overall assessment of BiH in fulfilling the basic prerequisites for NATO membership. Progress in meeting the political criteria, from possible four levels of valuation is valued at a low level ("countries with the sum of the first two components in the Freedom House estimates from 2 and 3 are valued at a high of 4 and 5 with intermediate- high, 6 and 7 with medium-low and with 8 and more are evaluated with a low degree (Szayna, S. T. NATO Enlargement 2000-2015. 2001:68), since the sum of the first two estimated components for 2017 in Table 3 is 8.

Table 6. Overall assessment of BiH in the fulfilment of the basic criteria

State	Political	Economic	Military	Total	Overall Assessment
1	2	3	4	5	6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Low (1)	Low (1)	Medium-high (3)	5	2.2 (Low)

Each of the above degrees in columns 2 to 4 is valued with a numerical value: 1 for low, 2 for intermediate-low, 3 for medium-high and 4 for high degree. Based on the time frame needed to establish a functioning market economy and gaining capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union, BiH economic progress is also valued at a low level. The country's progress in meeting the military criteria is evaluated with a medium-high degree because the amount of its defense expenditure per soldier ranges up to 25 percent in a negative or positive direction according to European country with the lowest expenditures in NATO (Table 2). In addition, the sum in column 5 of this table is 5. By simply converting the given collective value represented on a measuring scale with 9 triangles (3-12) in the proportional value in column 6 using a measuring scale with finishes of 0-10 is coming to an overall assessment of the country's fulfillment of NATO and EU basic criteria. From this aspect, BiH is generally estimated at a low level (low for values from 0 to 3, average for values from 3.1 to 6.9 and high for values from 7 to 10) because the value obtained in column 6 of Table 6 is 2.2. With recognizing the strategic position and researching the armed forces, strategic importance of BiH accession to NATO and EU comes to light. Table 8 gives an assessment of the strategic position of BiH.

Table 7. Assessment of the Strategic Position of BiH

State	Power Projection	Interior Borders	New Risks	Impact on NATO Cohesion	Overall
1	2	3	4	5	6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	High (1)	High (1)	Medium (LH) (0.5)	Low (0)	2.5 (Medium)

In the part of the *"projection force"* criterion (column 2), BiH is highly valued (1) because its accession to NATO makes a contribution to increasing NATO's efficiency in carrying out operations in the Balkans and wider. BiH is also highly valued (1) in the category of *"internal borders"* (column 3), because according to the values in Table 2, with its admission to NATO, the length and exposure of its borders to countries without Action membership plan aren't NATO or EU members. In the category of *"new risks"* (column 4) the existence of bilateral disputes between BiH and any neighboring country, as the first sub-criterion is valued at a low level (0). For example: it's interesting to point out that BiH is opposed to Croatia's plan to build a bridge from Klek to Peljesac, because believes that this would impede her exit at sea as well as a gross violation of the rights they belong to in accordance with international maritime law. On the other hand, BiH is highly valued (1) because its admission to NATO doesn't have a negative impact on the security environment in Europe, as the second subcategory of the mentioned category. According the *"new risks"* category, BiH is valued at a median level (0.5) as the average value of the individual assessments of the mentioned sub criteria. In the category of *"influence on NATO's cohesion"* (column 5), BiH is valued at a low level (0), primarily because it has not yet received candidate status for EU membership. Column 6 of Table 7 gives the sum of the values from columns 2 to 5 and represents the overall assessment of the strategic position of BiH. The strategic position of BiH, whose sum is 2.5 is assessed with a medium degree ("low for values from 0 to 1.5, medium for values from 1.6 to 3.5 and high for values of 3, 6 to 4 (Szayna, S. T. NATO Enlargement 2000-2015. 2001:68-74).

Furthermore, Table 8 provides an assessment of the Armed forces of BiH. According to the criterion of *"projection of force"* (column 2), armed forces of BiH are valued at an intermediate-low level (2), because they belong to the group of small and less modern armed forces. While the *"deterrence ability"* criteria, the armed forces of BiH are valued at a high level (4), since it has a larger number of troops per kilometer border line towards countries without an Action Plan for membership, not NATO or member states of the European Union, for example Montenegro is country with lowest value in NATO (Table 2).

Table 8. Assessment of the Armed Forces of BiH

State	Power Projection	Deterrence	Overall
1	2	3	4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Medium-Low (2)	High (4)	Medium (6)

Column 4 of this table represents the sum of the values from columns 2 and 3, with possible values of the aggregate score of 0 to 8 and represents the overall assessment of the armed forces of BiH. In addition, armed forces of this country are assessed in an aggregate grade, because the sum of the values from columns 2 and 3 is 6 (low for values from 2 to 3, average for values from 4 to 6, and high for values from 7 to 8. By reviewing the obtained

results from the assessment of the strategic position and the armed forces of BiH, gaining insight of the strategic importance of BiH accession to NATO and EU (Table 10).

Table 9. Assessment of Strategic Rationale of BiH

State	Strategic Position	Armed Forces	Overall Assessment
1	2	3	4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	6.2	6.6	6.4 (Medium)

In addition the numerical value for the category "*strategic position*" in column 2 of Table 9 is 6.2 and it is obtained by simply converting the value into column 6 of Table 7 represented on a measuring scale from 0 to 4 in the proportional value in column 2 from Table 9 using a measuring scale with fins of 0-10. However, the numerical value for the category of "*armed forces*" represented in column 3 of Table 9 is 6.6 and it is obtained in a similar manner with the exception that it converts the given cumulative value in column 4 of Table 8 represented on scale with values from 2 to 8. Column 4 of Table 9 presents the average value of the sum of the multiple values of columns 2 and 3, with possible values of the aggregate score 0 to 10 and represents the overall assessment of the strategic validity of BiH accession to NATO. In addition, the strategic importance of BiH accession to NATO is generally assessed with a medium degree since the average value of the numerical values of columns 2 and 3 is 6.4 (low for values from 0 to 3, average for values of 3.1 up to 6.9 and a high degree of values from 7 to 10 (Szayna, S. T. NATO Enlargement 2000-2015.2001:99). Finally, by combining the obtained results that refer to the fulfillment of the basic criteria and strategic expediency, the final assessment for BiH is coming to end.

Table 10. Final Assessment of BiH

State	Criteria	Strategic Attractiveness	Overall
1	2	3	4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2.2 (Low)	6.4 (Medium)	4.3 (Medium)

In column 2 from table 10 are presented the numerical value from column 6, table 7, and column 3 presents the numerical value from column 4, table 10. In column 4 of this table, the average value of the sum of the numerical values from columns 2 and 3, which is 4.3. According for BiH is finally assessed with a medium degree (low for values from 0 to 2, medium-low for values from 2.1 to 4, average for values from 4.1 to 6, medium-high for values from 6.1 to 8 and high degree of values from 8.1 to 10) on the readiness and strategic desirability of admission to NATO.

6. Conclusion

NATO and EU membership for BiH is an issue of vital interest, not only in terms of preserving the existing borders under NATO and EU umbrella, but also for contributing to international peace and security. This developments would have a positive impact on BiH trade relations with other NATO and EU member states. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that in the period from 2010 onwards BiH has not made some progress on its path to NATO and EU. The reason for this unfavorable situation is the lack of political will and unwillingness of some of

the political entities of BiH. With activation of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Membership Action Plan should in no way be misunderstood and finding a solution to this issue is an essential step for development of BiH as a unified state.

In February 2016, BiH applied for EU membership and in September 2016 the European Council invited the European Commission to submit its Opinion on the merits of Bosnia and Herzegovina's application. In December 2016, the Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations handed over a comprehensive Questionnaire covering all EU accession criteria. The country's consolidated answers were finalized in February 2018 and the answers handed over to the President of the European Commission. Pending finalization of the Opinion preparation process, this interim report on Bosnia and Herzegovina provides an update on the situation in the country as well as on key developments on "fundamentals' first" areas: the rule of law and fundamental rights, public administration reform and economic development. BiH continued to implement the Stabilization and Association Agreement (EU commission report for BiH: 2018). In 2018, BiH have made little progress on the road to accession in EU. In the four areas of rule of law, fundamental rights, public administration and economic development, reforms have yet to not be implemented. First complain is the fragile relationship between the three main ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats) which is consistent source of tension. In January 2019, a controversial 'statehood parade' by Bosnian Serbs re-kindled the debate on dividing BiH along ethnic lines. The October 2018 general elections had a low voter turnout of 50 %; as in previous elections, votes were cast on ethnic lines, with little change in the balance between the parties. NATO has invited BiH to implement its first annual reform program in line with the country's Membership Action Plan, as a possible step towards joining the alliance. BiH prosecutors filed a record number of war crime charges in 2018, however a number of cases have been put into question due to the refusal of defendants living abroad to attend their trials. European Commission report for 2018 report, acknowledged there has been little progress on the country's fundamentals areas: rule of law and fundamental rights, public administration, and economic development. Political reforms (for example of the electoral system) were delayed by obstruction and lack of coordination within the government. Reform of the judiciary has been slow-paced, although progress has been made on implementing the 2016 recommendations on justice sector reform. Corruption is widespread and remains a key concern. Judicial independence from political influence, as well as overall observance of human rights, remains in need of improvement. The report noted no progress on public administration reform (PAR) or freedom of expression, as 2016 recommendations have not been implemented. BiH has made progress on curbing organized crime, justice and security, marked by the adoption of a new strategy on fighting crime and the implementation of an anti-money-laundering action plan.

Since the publication of the Commission's report, BiH has missed its December 2018 deadline to answer supplementary questions posed by the Commission as part of its 2016 'questionnaire' (a document used to assess a country's readiness to begin the accession process). The European Parliament's Committee expresses its concerns about the slow pace of EU-related reforms, and urges BiH to continue its commitment and implement European Court of Human Rights rulings (EU commission report for BiH: 2018).

Political leaders of BiH must demonstrate their determination for fully implementation of the reforms as a prerequisite for NATO membership. Considering the complexity of social and political relations and the marked division of ethnic backgrounds, we can conclude that BiH is a country that has no other alternative than Euro-Atlantic integration. In this context, BiH in the period till 2024 is necessary to undertake measures for meeting the criteria for admission to NATO and EU as follows:

- (1) Overcoming essential differences between political entities and intensifying efforts for comprehensive reforms with a focus on appropriate resolution for basic and most important criteria for admission to NATO and EU;
- (2) Taking concrete steps by political entities for the practical implementation of undertaken obligations regarding the registration of the entire perspective real military property from the entities under the jurisdiction of the state, as a basic precondition for the activation of the Membership Action Plan for NATO;
- (3) Promote overall relations with neighboring countries through economic, cultural and political cooperation within key areas, as well as peaceful settlement;
- (4) Increasing public support for BiH membership in NATO and EU especially among citizens in Republic of Srpska, through intensive holding of public discussions and informing citizens for the benefits of joining in NATO and EU;
- (5) Consistent implementation of defense sector reforms and achieving full compatibility of BiH Armed forces with NATO member states;
- (6) Continuation of the active participation of BiH in NATO missions and cooperation with member states and partner countries on issues of common interest;
- (7) Promoting democratic processes and achieving high standards in respecting citizens' political rights and freedoms, including the rights of minorities;
- (8) Increasing efforts and achieving progress in establishing a functioning market economy and capacity to cope with the pressure of competition with EU member states.

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