

**BULGARIA: A LOYAL PARTNER  
AND PROSPECTIVE MEMBER OF  
NATO**

**BULGARIA: A VALUABLE NATO ASSET**

**BULGARIA'S WAY TO NATO**

**BUILDING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH NATO  
MEMBER STATES**

**PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO NATO MEMBERSHIP**

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## BULGARIA: A VALUABLE NATO ASSET

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**B**ulgarian political leaders and policy-makers have long been aware of the complexity and logic of the process of NATO enlargement. It has been clear that the decision to invite new member states entails numerous estimations of the capacity of the applicant country to enhance the security and strength of NATO, and to enhance the security situation in its region of location, as well as in the adjacent areas. The sustainability and predictability of a country's democracy represents another important dimension.

It is somewhat presumptuous to compile a list of the benefits NATO would derive from Bulgaria's membership but certain indications of contributions are in order.

Bulgaria has managed to establish a stable and sustainable democracy that has passed the serious challenges of the turbulent 1990s. Successful transition has been possible through intense reform in a regional context characterized by numerous severe conflicts and wars. Human rights and the rule of law are firmly rooted in the Bulgarian polity and society, while reform has been underpinned by strong internal consensus. The country has revived and strengthened its pre-World War II democratic practices and is firmly on the way to

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resuming its rightful place in the European and Euro-Atlantic communities. Over the last five years, Bulgaria has established an undisputed track record as a de facto ally to the Alliance. The country provided its airspace to NATO during the Kosovo crisis in 1999, and this proved of enormous significance for the success of the Allied Force Operation. Bulgaria has participated in various NATO missions, most notably in the SFOR and KFOR

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missions in Bosnia and Kosovo. In the spring of 2001, the Bulgarian Parliament ratified an agreement with NATO that provides for faster executive decision-making on passage of Alliance troops and armaments to its missions in the area of SEE. In the period following the terrorist attacks on the US in September 2001, Bulgaria has taken the position of a NATO ally and has provided its air space, air field for deployment of refueling aircraft, a unit and other means of support to the operation *Enduring Freedom*. The country has also been a very active participant in the Partnership for Peace Program. Numerous air-, land-, and navy exercises have taken place on the territory of the country. These have contributed notably to the increase of professional abilities of the national armed forces.

A proactive Bulgarian democracy has been a major factor in implementing the various tasks of adapting the country to post-Cold War realities. Bulgaria's definitive Euro-Atlantic orientation has translated into practical

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results in the region of SEE on many issues of the post-Cold War international relations. Bulgarian diplomacy has also developed its capacity to promote Euro-Atlantic values in the region of Southeast Europe. Bulgarian diplomats have worked successfully together with their future allies on many issues and in many fora.

There can be little doubt that Bulgaria occupies an important geo-strategic position in an European context. The country provides an important link in a volatile region that has produced many points of conflict and tension. Through its solid and sustained policies, the country has been a source of stability and predictability, a producer rather than consumer of security.

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Bulgaria's membership in NATO will constitute a significant step toward stabilizing the geo-strategic zone extending from the Adriatic Sea through SEE and the Black Sea-Caucasus-Caspian Sea area to Central Asia. Alliance forces have substantially covered this broad, geo-strategic zone for the past several years, but the improvement of allied effectiveness there is also linked to the important contribution that Bul-

garia's territory, airspace and maritime space will make. Full integration of this geo-strategic region in the Alliance is not simply linked to the further securing of the eastern borders of the Alliance, stabilization of the Southern zone of NATO, or the establishment of a sanitary belt around persistent conflicts or eventual conflict chains (Balkans, Caucasus, Middle East).

The added value of this geo-strategic connection also stems from the new tasks of fighting terrorism – a threat that will require many additional efforts in a long-term perspective, if it is to be successfully countered.

Bulgaria has continuously conducted an open and active policy of regional cooperation. The country initiated the Sofia Process of multilateral cooperation, which has led to numerous agreements and activities. It is presently common practice and routine for Bulgaria and other Southeast European countries to consult and act in concert with neighboring countries. Bulgaria is also an active participant in two regional cooperative ventures with Alliance participation: the Southeast European Defense Ministerials (SEDM) and the Multinational Peace Force of Southeast Europe (MPFSEE). Bulgaria is host to the MPFSEE, and the headquarters for the initial four years of the brigade are located in the Bulgarian city of Plovdiv. A Bulgarian officer is currently the Chief of Staff. Intensified regional cooperation in tackling organized crime, illegal immigration and drug trafficking, is another offshoot of the Sofia Process, most notably in the context of the Southeast Cooperation Initiative.

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The Bulgarian armed forces have made notable strides towards meeting the NATO accession criteria. The country will bring in the additional manpower of about 45,000 well-trained troops, coupled with a long tradition of statehood, military capacity, and societal respect for the armed forces. The country is actively implementing the Membership Action Plan of NATO for applicant countries as well as the 2004 Reform Program, which will ensure full compliance with the membership criteria. Emphasis is placed on restructuring, inter-operability, modernization of assets, language training, leadership and management training, and social adaptation for early retirees. Bulgaria will enhance NATO's capacity through the appropriate domestic increase in spending for defense purposes. In 2001, Bulgaria spent 2.91 percent of its GDP on its military forces. However, this figure will rise to 3.5 percent of the GDP in 2002. This level of spending will ensure compliance with the defense requirements and will continue to increase as the country enjoys higher levels of economic growth. There is firm consensus on the need to continue adequate defense expenditure in order to comply fully with the membership criteria.

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Bulgaria has been very active in promoting regional efforts to tackle the newly emerging threats to international security. The country is engaged in intense cooperation within the SECI, Interpol and Europol. Trilateral agreements for combating organized crime, drug trafficking, trafficking of human beings and terrorism have been concluded with Greece, Turkey and Romania. Bulgaria is engaged in extensive sharing of experience with the Republic of Macedonia and FR Yugoslavia in the area of justice and

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home affairs. Joint border control commissions have been established with Greece, Turkey and Romania. Bulgaria is especially keen to help advance the further harmonization of legislation in the areas of border control, organized crime and drug trafficking, thereby creating a common platform for addressing these important new challenges. Moreover, Bulgarian politicians and policy-makers are firmly convinced of the importance of tackling the emerging threats. “Soft security” matters are firmly on the political and legislative agenda providing ample space for further cooperation and contribution to an enlarged NATO.

*Ethnic relations have been comfortably accommodated in the democratic social and political framework.*

Bulgaria finds itself leading by example in a region where success stories seem hard to come by. The country has managed successfully to complete its transition to democracy and market economy, thereby ensuring a sustainable base for development. Ethnic relations have been comfortably accommodated in the democratic social and political framework. Bulgaria is re-gaining its rightful place in the international community and its adherence to European values has been acknowledged many times.

Bulgaria’s assets mentioned above provide indications of the country’s current and future role. Much evidence points to Bulgaria’s character as a stable democracy that upholds human rights and the rule of law, as well as to its sustained track record of effective cooperation with NATO. Bulgaria is country that has been implementing a balanced and successful regional policy in a volatile region that will increasingly play a role in a new century faced with new threats to international security. The story of Bulgaria in the post-1989 period is one of achievement through effort and perseverance. These are not just domestic legends – they have repeatedly been acknowledged and supported by Bulgaria’s Euro-Atlantic partners.

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## BULGARIA'S WAY TO NATO

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As early as August 1990, when Bulgaria was still part of the Soviet-dominated Warsaw Pact, and NATO had just offered the “hand of friendship” to its former Cold War adversaries and did not contemplate any enlargement, Dr. Solomon Passy – a young Member of Parliament representing the democratic opposition Union of Democratic Forces – made a surprising speech in Parliament. He pleaded for a decision on Bulgaria’s future membership in NATO, thus marking the beginning of a public debate that would go on for several years. In November 1990, Dr. Passy and a group of Bulgarian MPs representing different political fractions of the majority and the opposition visited NATO headquarters and in the aftermath submitted a draft resolution (signed by 135 out of the total 400 MPs) to the parliament. They proposed the initiation of consultation with NATO on the country’s accession to the Alliance. It took several months to reach a surprising consensus on national security in the parliamentary committee. In April 1991 the committee unanimously adopted a draft text to be submitted to the plenary. Subsequently, the authors failed to provoke a debate by the full house, since by then the Grand National Assembly was concentrating exclusively on the elaboration of the new Constitution.

This motion was rightly seen by many as unrealistic and politically naive, with little chance of being implemented in practical policy. But it had the merit of introducing the option of NATO membership into the public and political debate. It laid the foundations of an increasingly popular and influential Atlantic movement in Bulgaria. Dr. Solomon Passy became the founder of the first Atlantic Club in Central and Eastern Europe and later the first Vice-President of the Atlantic Treaty Association from CEE. In July 2001 he became the Foreign Minister in the government of Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg Gotha.

In August 1990 Dr. Zhelyu Zhelev, the founder and leader of the anti-communist and pro-Western UDF, was elected President. As one of his first foreign policy initiatives, President Zhelev proposed to the Parliament that Bulgaria join the US-led multinational coalition in the Gulf War. The

decision was adopted in October 1990, and Bulgaria became one of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, together with the then Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania, to contribute non-combat troops to the Allied Forces in the Gulf. On two historical occasions in 1990, the first visit of a NATO Secretary General to Bulgaria in June and the first visit of a Bulgarian Head of State to NATO Headquarters in Brussels in November, President Zhelev made a strong case for Bulgaria's future membership in NATO. In the context of post-communist Parliament and Government, the President became an important institutional player in the formulation of a new, pro-Western foreign and security policy of the country. Bulgaria's new strategic partners – the United States and Western Europe – saw Dr. Zhelev as “the guarantor” of the democratic changes and a reliable counterpart.

These early pro-Atlantic moves proved insufficient to ensure a consistent international policy orientation due to the controversial, hesitant transition and delayed reforms largely dominated by post-communist policies and practices. The issue of future NATO membership gradually became the central point of political and public disagreement.

Notwithstanding the succession of different political forces in government the executive failed to adopt a clear decision on the issue until early 1997. In 1992, the first UDF government of Prime Minister Philip Dimitrov missed the opportunity to issue a clear-cut policy statement expressing Bulgaria's desire to join the Alliance. At the time, the Alliance itself did not contemplate any enlargement, and the issue was not pressing. The succeeding non-partisan government of Prime Minister Lyuben Berov was also very cautious not to provoke any controversy since it came into office as a result of a political stalemate and had to rely on a fragile majority in parliament for its survival.

Subsequently, in the first half of the 1990's the focus was on developing a close dialogue and cooperation with the Alliance and on active and devoted participation in the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), established in 1991, and the Partnership for Peace (PfP) initiative launched by the Alliance in 1994. Bulgaria was one of the first countries to join the Partnership for Peace, and has developed a robust program of practical cooperation with NATO since 1994.

On the eve of the NATO Brussels Summit (January 1994), the issue of membership became topical again when other Central and Eastern European countries proclaiming their will to join the Alliance. On December 21, 1993 the National Assembly almost unanimously adopted a declaration stating that in case of future NATO and WEU enlargement, Bulgaria will

join these organizations with full respect for its national interests. The Bulgarian Parliament also expressed its expectation that the Partnership for Peace (PfP) initiative would represent a step forward in the integration of Central and Eastern European states into NATO on an equal basis and in the interest of strengthening European security. Thus, the declaration formulated the first consensus position with respect to future NATO membership and represented a responsible national position.

The December 1994 elections brought an absolute majority for the BSP and its Democratic Left coalition. In 1995-1996, the government headed by Zhan Videnov was influenced by external factors (Russia's offensive against NATO enlargement) and domestic considerations (differences on NATO membership within the BSP itself and the broader coalition of the Democratic Left), to opt for an ambiguous position. It never made a clear statement on its foreign and security policy priorities. Although anti-NATO membership positions prevailed within the government and the party leadership, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister were reluctant to openly take a negative stance since they were conscious of its discrediting effect. The President, and the opposition UDF, effectively exploited this ambiguity to emphasize their clear Atlantic orientation. The opposition took every opportunity to confront and discredit the government on this highly visible and public debate. Consequently, the government focused on dialogue and cooperation with NATO, and particularly on the Intensified Dialogue with the Alliance on issues regarding the NATO Enlargement Study published in late 1995. The intensified dialogue offered the government an excellent opportunity to delay the final decision on membership proper, while displaying a constructive and positive attitude towards consultation and cooperation with NATO.

Upon the conclusion of the first round of the Intensified Dialogue in late 1996, the government made note of a report on its results though they did not take the long awaited decision regarding membership. By this time, the growing economic and political crisis entirely occupied the attention of the government. This left little room for far-reaching decisions on foreign and security policy issues. Thus, Bulgaria missed another opportunity to express a formal request for membership, and risked being isolated from the mainstream of efforts leading to the first wave of enlargement.

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The landslide victory of President Petar Stoyanov, in October 1996, was based upon the overwhelming support for his foreign policy agenda, which included early NATO membership as a top priority. On his first trip abroad in January 1997, President Stoyanov met with the North Atlantic Council and categorically stated Bulgaria's support for NATO enlargement and the country's will to join the Alliance. The Allies treated this statement with due respect and as a legitimate expression of Bulgaria's position that was backed by the moral authority of a recognized national leader. This was also due to the impressive and efficient role that the newly elected President played in dealing with the acute political crisis in early January 1997. During the handling of this crisis he provided strong evidence of his capacity to master consensus and unite the nation.

On February 17, 1997, the caretaker Government of Stefan Sofiyanski, appointed by President Stoyanov and implementing his policy agenda, took the historic decision to proclaim the will of Bulgaria to become full member of the North Atlantic Alliance and to be considered among the countries ready to be invited for accession negotiations. The decision was built upon the 1993 Declaration of the National Assembly and the strong public support for President Stoyanov, also enjoyed the firm support of the UDF which was heading towards a clear victory in the forthcoming parliamentary elections.

A National Program on Bulgaria's accession to NATO was adopted on March 17, 1997. This concrete and comprehensive program outlined the basic direction and fields of government activity, such as political preparation for membership and implementation of NATO requirements in the field of security and defense policy, measures to improve interoperability with NATO forces, economic and financial aspects of integration, as well as information activities. The main emphasis was placed on prioritizing and implementing the immediate objectives of compensating for the fact that Bulgaria was lagging behind some of the leading candidates, while envisaging long-term goals and efforts.

The government clearly understood the necessity of properly financing the program. Although this was not an easy task given the economic crisis and the rigorous financial discipline needed to address it. The solution was sought by way of defining clear priorities, strengthening bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the Allies and maximizing the practical effect of that cooperation.

In addition to this program the Government set up an Interagency Committee on NATO Integration as a steering mechanism that would coordinate the interaction of relevant ministries and other governmental agencies. The committee is co-chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and

the Minister of Defense and includes the Chief of the General Staff of the Bulgarian Army and Deputy Ministers from twelve other ministries responsible for specific aspects of the preparation for accession to NATO.

The center-right reformist government of Prime Minister Ivan Kostov, which came in office in April 1997, reaffirmed the priority of early entry into NATO. The government provided a clear reformist agenda and determined the action necessary to prepare the country, and its armed forces in particular, for the requirements of membership.

The first act of the newly elected National Assembly, in which the UDF and its coalition partners had absolute majority, was the Declaration on National Accord of May 8, 1997. This declaration established that the membership in NATO was one of the ten top priorities on the political agenda.

The Bulgarian leadership approached the NATO Summit, in Madrid in July 1997, voicing strong expectations for an invitation to join NATO. They viewed it as an adequate response to Bulgaria's dedicated efforts towards accelerated reforms. Nevertheless, it was widely understood that the chances were limited due to the short time within which Bulgaria would have to prove its credibility as a future member.

The Bulgarian government accepted the decisions taken in Madrid to invite three new members (the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland) as realistic and responsible decisions that reflected the complex discussions on an issue of utmost importance. The first wave of enlargement was seen as a historic opening of the Alliance to the new European democracies and as a guarantee for a continued enlargement process. Bulgaria congratulated the three new members and confirmed its readiness to actively cooperate with other candidates in order to accomplish the common goal of membership.

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The Government noted with disappointment that the decisions in Madrid had failed to fully recognize the existing political and strategic realities and needs of Southeast Europe, as well as the advantages of the Alliance's early enlargement in the region. There was an expectation that enlargement should continue as a geographically balanced process providing equal security and stability in different regions thus avoiding the risks of creating new dividing lines or gray zones. The advantages of such a balanced approach would be best obtained through an early and simultaneous accession of the Black Sea applicant countries.

Bulgaria also expressed its support for a comprehensive pre-accession strategy focused on a clear integration agenda that would include specific projects aimed at the practical preparations of candidate countries. A regular review of the progress achieved would identify the problems yet to be solved and for a joint formulation of guidelines for future work.

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Finally, Bulgaria reaffirmed that joining the North Atlantic Alliance remained in its immediate national interest and strategic priority. The future membership in NATO was not an issue of the politics of the day but a matter of strategic civilizational choice based upon a solid public support.

The continuing conflicts in the former Yugoslavia in late 1990s, and those in Kosovo and Macedonia in particular, presented Bulgaria with formidable challenges. But it was also an opportunity to test and prove Bulgaria's firm pro-Atlantic policy orientation and its capability to contribute to Euro-Atlantic security.

Since the beginning of the Kosovo crisis Bulgaria actively supported the efforts of the international community to reach a peaceful settlement. The government opted for a more active regional role of positive commitment and security projection, as opposed to the earlier policy of non-involvement during the previous conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. At the initiative of the Bulgarian Foreign Minister Nadezhda Mihaylova, on March 10, 1998 the foreign ministers of five SEE countries (Bulgaria, Greece, the Republic of Macedonia, Romania and Turkey) met in Sofia and adopted a Joint Declaration on Kosovo. They reached a common position on the crisis and articulated an awareness of their responsibility as neighboring countries to facilitate the efforts of the international community, and the Contact Group in particular. Other joint statements of the five countries followed. An important achievement of this process was the adoption of a common and balanced position, with the participation of both Albania and FR Yugoslavia, at a summit in Antalia in October 1998.

With the new escalation of the crisis in early 1999, Bulgaria continued to work with the other "front-line" countries to remain united and to send a strong and clear message to Milosevic urging him to comply fully with the conditions of the international community. In February 1999, the Presidents of Bulgaria and Romania addressed a joint letter to Milosevic calling on FRY to subscribe to a political solution to the Kosovo conflict and to accept an international NATO-led peacekeeping operation as the

only means left for ensuring peace in the region and safeguarding the territorial integrity of FRY. The two Presidents stated their readiness to lend all necessary support for the on-going international efforts. In a Joint Statement in March 1999 the five countries in the region urged the authorities in Belgrade to accept the Rambouillet peace plan as the only possible peaceful outcome to the crisis.

The Bulgarian Government established regular dialogue and interaction with NATO and the Allies from an early stage of the crisis in Kosovo by sharing information and assessments concerning the developments in and around the area. This was of particular value to the Alliance and enabled it to take advantage of Bulgaria's position as a country with much experience and expertise in the political circumstances of the region.

On two occasions, in October 1998 and again in April 1999, Bulgaria made use of the institutional arrangements established for consultation through Article 8 of the PfP Framework Document. The consultations in 19+1 format, and particularly the second meeting attended by Bulgarian Prime Minister Ivan Kostov, demonstrated Bulgaria's will to be a full-fledged, loyal partner to NATO in deciding upon issues of Euro-Atlantic and regional security. They confirmed both the fundamental importance of NATO for the security of Bulgaria, and the Alliance's recognition of the security interests of Bulgaria. The Bulgarian authorities confirmed the political will to assist the Alliance in every possible way in its efforts to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the crisis in Kosovo, including providing access to Bulgarian airspace and territory. On the basis of a joint assessment of the situation in and around Kosovo and of the threats to Bulgaria, the participants discussed a number of practical issues essential for implementing Bulgaria's firm commitment to assist NATO.

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In order to provide military backing to the political aims of the international community, on October 12, 1998 the North Atlantic Council issued the Activation Order (ACTORD) for both limited air strikes and elements of a phased air campaign in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. On the eve of this critical decision, in response to a request by the North Atlantic Council, the Bulgarian Government expressed its readiness to grant NATO access to Bulgarian airspace. It also pledged support for humanitarian and logistic

operations in the framework of NATO's efforts to enforce and guarantee peace in FRY. As a practical contribution, Bulgaria offered a military reconnaissance aircraft for participation in the NATO-led operation "Eagle Eye", the NATO Air Verification Mission in Kosovo. NATO accepted the offer with appreciation.

On October 23, the Bulgarian Parliament urged the FRY to comply fully with the provisions of the agreements with NATO and OSCE (for verification of compliance with the relevant UNSC resolutions) within the established timeframe. This was to be the only way to take advantage of the opportunities for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Kosovo and would prevent destabilization in SEE. Parliament also stated that it stood ready to grant NATO access to Bulgaria's airspace and recommended the Government to continue consultations with NATO in order to conclude agreements for concrete political-military and military measures.

After all efforts to achieve a negotiated solution to the crisis had failed, on March 24, 1999 NATO launched its air campaign against the FR Yugoslavia in a bid to force compliance with the Rambouillet peace plan for Kosovo. As Gen. (Ret.) Wesley Clark, former Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, recounts in his book *Waging Modern War*, a key element of the strategic road map for what would become Operation Allied Force, was to isolate the theater of operations so the Serbs couldn't be sustained and rearmed. "We would not be successful here if we allowed a large military assistance pipeline to be created to funnel high technology weaponry, advisers, and other sustaining strength into Serbia at the very time we were trying to compel Milosevic to cease his actions in Kosovo. Countries like Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Romania were going to be hugely important in this effort", General Clark writes.<sup>1</sup>

The air campaign was a crucial test for the political leadership in Bulgaria. With the first for several decades waging just across the border and some stray NATO missiles landing in Bulgaria, there was a nationwide fear that Bulgaria could effectively be dragged into the conflict. The war created a substantial economic burden with the destruction of the bridges over the Danube almost entirely blocking exports to Western Europe and Bulgaria's strict adherence to the oil embargo on FRY. The increased political risks in the region discouraged critical privatization-related foreign investment and severely affected tourism. The resulting financial losses were

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. Wesley Clark (U.S. Army Retired), *Waging Modern War: Bosnia, Kosovo and the Future of Combat* (Oxford: Public Affairs Ltd., 2001, p. 190).

huge and jeopardized the promising performance of the reformist economic policy.

Another grave concern came from the devastating effect of the Kosovar refugee flow to Macedonia that threatened the fragile stability and the very existence of this neighboring country. Many in Bulgaria saw Macedonia, rather than Kosovo, as the potential cause of a larger disorder in the region. Moreover, Milosevic's strategy of provoking huge flows of refugees to destabilize as many countries of the region as possible posed the risk of a refugee influx of Macedonian Slavs and of the Bulgarian minority living in Eastern Serbia. Crime-related elements among the Kosovar refugees also posed the possibility of boosting organized crime in Bulgaria itself.

Bulgaria took part of the burden of the refugee crisis according to its abilities. But it also considered it necessary to keep the refugees close to their homes in order to facilitate their effective return. Bulgaria took part in the air bridge for humanitarian aid and was among the first to send aid to the Kosovo refugees temporarily settled in Macedonia and Albania. A comprehensive package of humanitarian assistance was provided to neighboring Macedonia, including the full maintenance of a refugee camp in Radusha.

In the face of widespread fears and deeply divided public opinion, the political leadership of the country had a hard time providing steadfast support and practical assistance to NATO's military action. Nevertheless, the President, the Prime Minister and the majority in Parliament unflinchingly defended the strategic choice of integrating with the West, and gave their full support to the NATO effort. When the air campaign entered a critical phase in the second half of April 1999 NATO formally requested unrestricted access to Bulgarian airspace in order to achieve full aerial encirclement of Yugoslavia. The Government exercised all its authority to avoid constitutional delays and consequently, on April 28, 1999 Bulgaria and NATO concluded an agreement, within the framework of Operation "Allied Force", regarding access and transit of NATO aircraft through Bulgarian airspace. This was a valuable contribution to the early and successful end of the air campaign in May 1999.

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Russia challenged the smooth deployment of an international peacekeeping force (KFOR) in compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1244. In order to back its demand for its own zone of responsibility in Kosovo Russia wanted to create a separate chain of command for its troops. The Russian military deployed a battalion to Pristina Airfield to get Russian presence on the ground. Flying Russian reinforcements into Pristina became a crucial issue, as a substantial force would allow the Russians to claim their own sector and finally create a *de facto* partitioning of Kosovo.

Bulgaria, like Hungary and Romania, responded negatively to the Russian requests to open an air corridor for Russia to move in more troops. The reply was coordinated with Hungary and Romania, as well as with the Alliance. Thus, the three countries contributed significantly to the U.S. and NATO efforts to resolve the Pristina airfield issue and to negotiate the Agreed Points on Russian participation in KFOR signed in Helsinki on June 18, 1999. The reaction of the three countries also revealed a new geostrategic reality in which Russia had limited capability to assert its power and influence in an area of its former satellite countries.

Bulgaria also contributed to the quick deployment of KFOR into Kosovo by opening its airspace and territory for both NATO and non-NATO forces participating in Operation “Joint Guardian”. An Agreement between Bulgaria and NATO regarding the transit and temporary stationing of NATO personnel and equipment within the framework of Operation “Joint Guardian” was concluded on June 21, 1999. The country has gained significant experience in Host Nation Support through the logistic support it provided to transiting KFOR forces.

In addition to the logistic support for the operation Bulgaria has been contributing to KFOR since 1999 with an engineer platoon, civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) officers, other headquarters staff and some 80 regular police officers to UNMIK.

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On a trip to Bulgaria, shortly after the successful conclusion of NATO’s air campaign and the deployment of NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR), NATO Secretary General Javier Solana praised Bulgaria’s strong stance in the Kosovo crisis and its effective realignment with NATO. “By lending your political support to NATO’s actions, you strengthened the international coalition opposing President Milosevic. Through your practical assistance to NATO’s operations – in particular, by al-

lowing NATO pilots access to your airspace – you demonstrated clearly that Bulgaria is determined to back up its words with actions”, Solana said in an address to the Bulgarian Parliament on 8 July 1999. “Bulgaria has confirmed its credentials as a solid partner for NATO and the international community. “The Bulgarian Government has exhibited signs of being part of the NATO family”, the then-US Secretary of State Madeline Albright said in Sofia on June 22, 1999.

In the aftermath of Kosovo, Bulgaria continued to render support to the efforts of NATO and the international community in order to project stability in the Western Balkans. Bulgaria’s lead in developing common regional approaches in concert with NATO and the EU was reaffirmed with the initiative of Prime Minister Ivan Kostov to have “no-tie” meetings of leaders of the countries neighboring the FRY for informal and frank exchanges of views on the challenges facing the region. The first of these meetings took place in Hissarya, Bulgaria, in January 2002, and was attended by the prime ministers of 7 countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Macedonia and Romania), as well as by the NATO Deputy Secretary General and the EU High Representative for CFSP. The Hissarya meeting sent a clear message that the “front-line” countries, which had firmly supported the cause of the international community throughout the Kosovo conflict, remained committed to the consolidation of peace and stability in the region.

Bulgaria welcomed the fall of the Milosevic regime and the democratic changes in FRY. It engaged in good-neighborly relations and cooperation with the new authorities in Belgrade by supporting and assisting the democratic process as well as sharing lessons from its own experience. Improved relations include an intensified high-level political dialogue, extension of the legal base of bilateral relations and exploration of possible joint projects of regional importance. As Co-Chairman of the Working Table on Security Issues of the Stability Pact in the second half of 2001, Bulgaria supported the integration of the FRY in this forum.

The Bulgarian Government welcomed the successful unfolding of NATO’s Southeast Europe Initiative (SEEI), launched at the Washington Summit in April 1999. The aim of the initiative is to foster a cooperative security relationship between the Alliance and Southeast Europe and its contribution to the objectives of the Stability Pact for SEE. Acting as a *de facto* Ally and in an effort to consolidate its role as a major contributor to regional stability and cooperation, Bulgaria initiated and led the work on the establishment of a Southeast Europe Security Cooperation Steering Group (SEEGROUP). The SEEGROUP was successfully established in

July 2000. Bulgaria exercised the first chairmanship of the group and put its work well on track. According to NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson, “Bulgaria has been one of the most active participants contributing constructively to problem solutions (in the framework of the Southeast Europe Initiative)” (NATO’s Partnerships. Speech by Lord Robertson, Secretary General of NATO, at the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria, Sofia October 12, 2000).

In 2001 Bulgaria contributed actively in another SEEI-sponsored initiative – the development of a SEE Common Assessment Paper on Regional Security Challenges and Opportunities (SEECAP). It is currently involved in a number of specific projects to follow up the SEECAP recommendations, such as exchanges of border security personnel (SEES-TAFF), a comparative study of national security strategies (SEESTUDY), civil-military interaction in security management (SEEMAG), exchange of information related to early warning, conflict prevention and crisis management (SEECHANGE), a Compendium of Anti-Terrorism measures in Southeast Europe, etc.

Based on the lessons learned from Kosovo and willing to contribute further to enhancing security and stability in Southeast Europe, in early 2000 Bulgaria proposed the establishment of an enhanced legal and procedural framework that would allow it participate more effectively in operations, exercises and other joint activities with the Alliance. An Agreement between Bulgaria and NATO regarding the transit of NATO forces and personnel was concluded on March 21, 2001. This agreement facilitates expedient and unhindered execution of NATO operations in the area.

The conclusion of the Transit Agreement coincided with the dramatic developments in Macedonia, which led to a major political crisis. In 1992 Bulgaria was the first country to recognize the Republic of Macedonia after it seceded from Yugoslavia. It lent its support and assistance throughout the difficult first years of Macedonia’s independence. In the midst of the Kosovo conflict, which placed tremendous pressures on Macedonia’s political stability and integrity, the Bulgarian government undertook a new initiative to solve the so-called “language controversy” that divided the two countries and prevented the improvement of bilateral relations. On February 22, 1999 the prime ministers of Bulgaria and Macedonia signed a Joint Declaration in Sofia that marked a significant breakthrough in their bilateral relations and strongly supported the efforts to prevent a “spill-over” of the Kosovo conflict.

In the aftermath of the conflict and with extremist activities and violence spreading from Kosovo to southern Serbia, the stability of the Repub-

lic of Macedonia remained a major source of concern for Bulgaria's ruling elite and the public. The insurgence of ethnic Albanians in Macedonia itself in March 2001 invoked serious fears that the violence could escalate into a full-scale civil war and undermine the effort of the international community to bring peace to the Western Balkans. A war next door could also seriously affect Bulgaria's own political and economic stability. In this context, President Petar Stoyanov met the NATO Council in Brussels to express his concern over the unrest in the neighboring country and stated that Bulgaria was ready to send troops to the area as part of an internationally approved mission. Subsequently, Bulgaria rendered active political, diplomatic, logistic, and other assistance to the government in Skopje and urged for a strong and coordinated international response to the crisis. Bulgaria mobilized regional and international support for Macedonia's territorial integrity and political stability, and for the isolation of the extremist elements. Bulgaria's political leaders also made extensive use of their close relationship with the ruling elite in Skopje to encourage moderation, a measured response, and full compliance with its part of the political settlement.

When the NATO Washington Summit in April 1999 launched the Membership Action Plan (MAP), Bulgaria welcomed this new arrangement as a confirmation of NATO's "open door" policy. It provided the road map for specific practical measures that were designed to provide efficient assistance to applicants in key areas and enable them to meet the membership requirements. Since then the Bulgarian government has been giving highest priority to its Annual National Program under MAP, setting concrete objectives and targets for its membership preparations. Co-ordination among relevant agencies has been enhanced and sizable resources are being allocated to translate the MAP priorities into practice. For the last three years the defense expenditure has been in the order of 2.5-9% of the GDP<sup>2</sup> which is the highest ratio among the aspirant countries, and is expected to stay, at least in mid-term, at the same level. With the successful development of the Membership Action

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<sup>2</sup> There is additional financing as of about 0.35% of GDP that is for MAP related activities under Interministerial Committee' on NATO Integration control.

Plan, which is now in its third cycle, Bulgaria has been able to achieve significant progress in all relevant fields of preparation.

However, it is important to reiterate Bulgaria's understanding that the decision on future NATO enlargement will be a political one that will take into account the overall security environment at the time of the Prague Summit. The Membership Action Plan should not substitute political decisions but rather should support, justify and provide NATO leaders with reliable information on the achievements and capabilities of individual aspirant. Performance within MAP will be a very important part of the overall assessment and an indication and evidence of Bulgaria's ability to understand and undertake the responsibilities of membership.

*The Bulgarian government also delivered on its post-Madrid pledge to work closely with the other aspirant countries in its effort to join NATO.*

The Bulgarian government also delivered on its post-Madrid pledge to work closely with the other aspirant countries in its effort to join NATO. The principle of cooperation vs. competence underpins the commitment of the nine aspirant countries undertaken in Vilnius in May 2000. This has been reaffirmed at subsequent meetings of their Heads of State and Government, Foreign and Defense Ministers and was also joined by Croatia. The combined efforts of the Vilnius-10 countries demonstrate their

commitment to develop the political skills and culture of consensus building and solidarity. By sharing information and experience, they intend to support each other's effort in preparing for membership and to limit the risks of individual failure.

In October 2000 Bulgaria hosted the first NATO aspirant countries Defense Ministerial meeting with the participation of NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson. At the meeting the Ministers shared their experiences of MAP implementation, national defense restructuring and reform management. They agreed to coordinate their efforts to achieve membership in the Alliance and outlined measures for cooperation in the fields of common interest, such as possible contribution to the collective security and defense within NATO, implementation of NATO's Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI) in order to meet new tasks including crisis response operations, military-technical cooperation and defense industrial issues.

Upon invitation by the Bulgarian President, the heads of state of the Vilnius Group countries gathered for the first time in Sofia, on October 5, 2001, with ministers and other senior officials from NATO member countries. The focus of the summit was the contribution of Europe's new

democracies to the Euro-Atlantic security and their determination to stand firmly with the United States and NATO in the war against terrorism. In the Sofia Declaration of Solidarity the leaders of the aspirant countries stated that they considered the September 11 attacks to be an attack on all their countries. The declaration states, “Our governments will fully support the war against terrorism. Our policies and actions will be guided by the principles and solidarity shared by the United States and the Allies”.

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In a message to the participants President George W. Bush expressed the gratitude of the United States for the overwhelming support from the governments and peoples of the Vilnius Group and for their commitment “to act as allies and by doing so, to become allies in fact” (Message from the United States President George W. Bush to the Sofia 2001 Summit, October 4, 2001). Similarly, U.S. Senators Tom Daschle and Trent Lott commended the commitment of the aspirant countries to stand with the United States in the war against terrorism and to regard this horrific act as an attack on their own countries (A Letter of Senators Tom Daschle and Trent Lott to Sofia Summit 2001, October 4, 2001).

From the very outset of the war against terrorism, Bulgaria committed itself to act as a *de facto* United States and NATO ally. In a letter to President George W. Bush dated September 13, 2001, Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg Gotha stated the readiness of his government to act in accordance with Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, regardless of the fact that Bulgaria was not yet a full member of NATO. After the North Atlantic Council determined on October 4, 2001, that the terrorist attacks against New York and Washington DC had been directed from abroad, and confirmed invocation of Article 5, the government of Bulgaria aligned itself with the NAC decision. The government expressed its readiness to contribute to the implementation of the measures agreed by the NATO allies to support the campaign against terrorism. As a newly elected non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the next two years, Bulgaria has committed to place the fight against terrorism high on its foreign policy agenda.

In practical terms, Bulgaria immediately granted the requested blanket fly over clearance for US aircraft in support of Operation “Enduring Freedom”. On November 12, 2001 Bulgaria and the United States signed an

*On November 23, 2001 US Air Force aerial refueling aircraft began using a Bulgarian airbase near Bourgas to support humanitarian relief flights to Afghanistan. Effective intelligence-sharing cooperation with the US and other key Allies have also been increased.*

Agreement regarding fly over and transit through of air-crafts, and presence of US forces, personnel and contractors on Bulgarian territory for operation Enduring Freedom”. In accordance with the agreement, on November 23, 2001 US Air Force aerial refueling aircraft began using a Bulgarian airbase near Bourgas to support humanitarian relief flights to Afghanistan. Effective intelligence-sharing cooperation with the US and other key Allies have also been increased.

In direct response to the NAC decision to backfill Allied assets in NATO’s area of responsibility that directly support the operation in Afghanistan, Bulgaria offered to contribute an additional security company to the NATO-led Stabilization Force (SFOR) in

Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to help with the protection of SFOR Headquarters. In January 2002 the company was deployed thus freeing US and Allied soldiers for their operations against terrorism.

Bulgaria’s consistent contribution to global, European, and regional security has been reinforced by the political consensus, which had gradually emerged by the year 2000, on policy regarding NATO and NATO membership. The Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) had always supported Bulgaria’s entry into the European Union while opposing membership in NATO. It was vehemently critical of Bulgaria’s involvement in NATO’s air campaign during the Kosovo conflict. In the aftermath of the conflict, the BSP leader Georgi Parvanov who is associated with the policy of reformism, social-democratic values and Euro-Atlantic orientation, won a difficult internal debate. He realigned the Socialists with the other major political forces in supporting the country’s bid for NATO membership. The BSP pledged to work for “an active partnership and interaction with the North Atlantic Alliance” and for the “European and Euro-Atlantic integration in all political, economic, and defense structures as a priority task” While the new pro-NATO stance did not refute the idea of a referendum, there was a commitment to go to an eventual referendum with a clear stance in favor of membership. (Political Report delivered by Georgi Parvanov at the 44<sup>th</sup> Congress of the BSP, May 6, 2000).

In a practical move to implement the new policy, in April 2001 the BSP leader Georgi Parvanov visited NATO at the head of a New Left

coalition delegation, and announced the BSP's decision to support the ratification of a Transit Agreement with NATO. In a further policy paper issued in December 2001, the Socialists committed to targeted actions aimed at achieving NATO membership in the year 2002.

The newly emerged political consensus on NATO membership provided a solid basis for continuity and consistency of the country's foreign and security policy agenda despite the changes that occurred in the leadership as a result of the general and presidential elections in 2001. The convincing victory of the new political movement formed by Bulgaria's exiled monarch Simeon II at the June 2001 general elections did not challenge the extremely positive record of close cooperation with NATO inherited from the outgoing UDF government. The new Prime Minister reaffirmed rapid NATO and EU entry as key priorities of his government, and pledged Bulgaria's support for current and future NATO-led crisis management efforts in the region and elsewhere. The appointment of Foreign Minister Solomon Passy, founder and longtime president of the Atlantic Club who holds impeccable pro-NATO credentials, provided additional evidence of the commitment of the new government to seek NATO accession in 2002.

Practical steps undertaken by the government of Simeon Saxe-Coburg Gotha to continue and better focus the ongoing defense and security reform, to contribute to the war against terrorism, and to help consolidate peace and stability in the region, have reassured skeptics. They have also raised public expectations in anticipation of the Prague decisions. In 2001 the government took the long-delayed decision to decommission the obsolete SS-23 Soviet-made mid-range tactical missiles. They will accomplish dismantlement with US technical assistance, by October 2002. The Military Doctrine and other fundamental documents that provide the conceptual basis for defense policy have been reviewed to reflect recent changes in the security environment, particularly the

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September 11 terrorist attacks. A comprehensive defense review was completed, with close consultation with NATO, by the end of 2001. As a result the defense plans have been considerably adjusted to provide for armed forces that are affordable and compatible with NATO force structures.

The invigorated effort of the executive to take the country to NATO as early as possible is supported by the newly elected president Georgi Parvanov. In his inauguration speech on January 22, 2002, President Parvanov pledged his commitment to ensuring continuity in pursuing the national strategic goals of NATO and EU membership, and supporting all practical measures undertaken by the government in this respect. Parvanov's choice of Brussels as the venue for his first trip abroad also reflected his strong ambition to see Bulgaria as a member of NATO and EU during his term in office.

Thus, early membership in NATO, in parallel with the efforts to speed up accession to the European Union, emerged as Bulgaria's immediate foreign policy goal enjoying societal and cross-party consensus and a vigorous commitment of all state institutions.

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# BUILDING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH NATO MEMBER STATES\*

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The wave of solidarity with the US after September 11 has come to signify that the Euro-Atlantic community of democratic nations is bound together in a common commitment to a better future. Reminiscent of World War II, one lesson learned is that there are no distinctions between “big” and “small” nations when civilization is at stake. In today’s world of globalization and interdependence no one can feel on one’s own. Regardless of national resources or military might, every country has a role to play in upholding common values. But it is clear that the Euro-Atlantic community is shaped by common actions as well. The US engagement to Europe was essential in the course of two world wars and during the Cold War. However, having reached the moment to live up to the promises, enshrined in the Washington Treaty, Europe has proved to be a reliable US partner too.

Those two-way security correlations and coincidence of interests best summarize the essence of Bulgaria’s strategic partnerships with NATO and its member states. NATO could count on Bulgaria and Bulgaria could count on NATO. Given the political fall-out of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Southeast Europe

*NATO could count on Bulgaria and Bulgaria could count on NATO.*

(SEE) has come to be viewed as the test case of NATO’s post-Cold War endurance and credibility. Because of the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, as well as possible other flash points, SEE has come to be identified with the emerging risks and challenges in the Euro-Atlantic area, as defined in the 1999 NATO Strategic Concept – ethnic tensions and regional conflicts. It is exactly in SEE where NATO’s new missions of crisis response and partnership are most relevant, thus making the region of prime geostrategic importance.

It is important to reiterate that whilst engaging into bilateral co-operative endeavors with NATO member countries, Bulgaria does not differentiate

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\* This article expresses the personal views of the authors only. It does not necessarily reflect Bulgarian official positions.

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between “small” or “big” Allies. Whilst acknowledging the US leading role in the Alliance, Bulgaria also takes stock of the fact that NATO is an organization where decisions are reached by consensus and all members enjoy an equal veto-wielding power. By the same token, the experience of the newest members Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic shows that there are no distinctions between “junior” or “senior” Allies. Therefore Bulgaria aspires to co-operate with all Allies and build strategic partnerships with these NATO member states whose strategic interests in SEE de-

velopments and the consolidation of NATO’s southern flank place Bulgaria high on their agenda.

## **BULGARIA AND NATO MEMBER STATES: PANOPLY OF PARTNERSHIPS**

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Intensive political dialogue and exchange of high-level visits with NATO member countries is a major avenue of advancing Bulgaria’s bid for a full-fledged membership. In the field of defense, Bulgaria’s multiple partnerships with NATO member states are carried out in accordance with the bilateral framework agreements on defense co-operation, memorandums of understanding (MoU) and annual programs for mil-to-mil co-operation. The scope of those co-operative endeavors is carefully coined to support the efforts to restructure and modernize the Bulgarian Armed Forces in line with NATO standards. The “Security Through Co-operation” Program is being applied to prioritize and streamline Bulgaria’s bilateral co-operation in the defense field. The program encompasses five major areas, namely strategic partnerships, foreign consultancy, support, Southeast Europe Defense Ministerial (SEDM) process, multinational contingents, defense diplomacy.

Building partnerships has come to be a major vehicle to further deepen Bulgaria’s relations with NATO Allies on a bilateral scale. It should be stated, however, that a full account of defense co-operative activities with NATO member states is beyond the scope of this article. Bulgaria’s policy approach since 1997 has been to dismantle its Warsaw Pact-era defense establishment and build mobile, flexible, NATO-compatible armed forces

capable of Article 5 collective defense and non-Article 5 crisis response missions.

Thus, Bulgaria's bilateral partnerships in the defense realm are underpinned by advancing Bulgaria's aspiration to join NATO, assisting the military reform plan (so called "Plan 2004") and developing Bulgaria's efficient participation in the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP). As a corollary, Foreign Consultancy Support has been instrumental in helping Bulgaria to achieve NATO standards in the areas of defense resources planning and budgeting, command and control systems, logistics, procurement, peace support operations, civil-military relations, language training and NCO training. Over the last three years the Bulgarian Ministry of Defense has hosted consultants from the UK, the US, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Italy.

## **STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS**

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### ***TRANSATLANTIC PARTNERSHIPS:***

#### ***BULGARIA'S DEFENSE CO-OPERATION WITH THE US AND CANADA***

US commitment to security and stability in SEE is exemplified by the decisive American role in the NATO-led crisis response operations in the Western Balkans. We are greatly appreciative of the genuine *Bulgarian-US strategic partnership* that has been under way since the early 1990s. One landmark indicator of that partnership emerged in November 1999 when US President Clinton paid a visit to Bulgaria to commemorate with us the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1989 Bulgarian "peaceful revolution".

However, the strongest expression of that partnership occurred in the US moment of need after September 11. Having associated itself with the decision of the North Atlantic Council of October 4, 2001 to invoke Art. 5 (collective defense) of the Washington Treaty, Bulgaria has been acting as a *de facto* US Ally in the anti-terrorist campaign along the lines expected by the US from its NATO Allies.

Bulgaria granted a blanket overflight permit of the aircraft taking part in the "Enduring Freedom" Operation. In compliance with a bilateral agreement (November 2001) on the transit and presence of US forces in relation to the operation in Afghanistan Bulgaria hosted the first ever US Air Force on its territory. In substance this is the first practical application in a bilateral context of the generic Agreement between Bulgaria and NATO of March 2001 that simplifies host nation support (HNS) procedures in the context of future NATO-led peace support operations. As a corollary,

Bulgaria increased its contributions to SFOR and KFOR with the assignment of a combat aircraft AN-26 and the deployment of a separate Bulgarian contingent (security company) to protect the SFOR HQs. The quality performance of the Bulgarian contingent was highly appreciated by NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) Gen. Ralston.

The US-Bulgarian relationship in the defense realm is increasingly gaining momentum. Major areas of co-operation encompass achieving C4 (command, control, communication and computers) interoperability with NATO, elaborating a democratic, transparent and effective defense budgeting system, increasing the capacity of the Bulgarian armed forces for peace-support operations, modernizing air defense systems, etc. Under the Warsaw Initiative the Bulgarian military is participating in the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, the Foreign Military Funding program, the Enhanced International Peacekeeping Capabilities Program, the Excess Defense Articles program, etc.

Those developments notwithstanding, we are greatly appreciative that Bulgaria, alongside the Baltics, Slovenia, Slovakia and Romania, was entitled to US military assistance of \$10 million under the Gerald Solomon Freedom Consolidation Act. That bill, passed in the House of Representatives in November 2001, was drafted to support the Warsaw speech (June 15, 2001) of President George W. Bush for an enlarged NATO from the Baltics to the Black Sea.

One new aspect is the Bulgarian-US co-operation to decommission and destroy the SCUD, SS-23 and FROG missiles by the end of October 2002. On a regional scale, Bulgaria has an impressive record of participating in the US regional initiatives for SEE. From the very beginning Bulgaria is participating in the South Balkans Development Initiative (SBDI), announced by President Clinton in 1995 to link the transport infrastructures of Bulgaria, Albania and the Republic of Macedonia. Bulgaria is strongly committed to the objectives of the 1996 Southeast Co-operative Initiative (SECI), designed to improve the infrastructure and the overall economic situation in SEE. Last but not least, the US Action Plan for SEE was announced in February 1998 during the meeting of then-President Stoyanov and President Clinton in the White House. We take all those tokens as recognition of the evolving US-Bulgarian strategic partnership.

The *Bulgarian – Canadian partnership* is marked with a growing intensity. In 1998 Bulgaria was included in the Canadian Military Training Assistance Program (MTAP). Bulgaria has been actively involved in all three MTAP dimensions, namely language training (French and English),

international peace support training, and civil-military relations. In April 2000, Canada launched a new co-operative project to cover Bulgaria and other countries in SEE within the framework of the Stability Pact for South-east Europe. The Canadian Regional Training and Support Project (CRTSP) is designed along two major tracks. The first dimension aims to enhance the capacity of the armed forces and the police in fulfilling their functions whilst the second track is targeted at consolidating the democratic institutions in the respective countries. It is worth reiterating that Canadian experts granted crucial technical assistance to help Bulgaria implement its obligations under the Ottawa Treaty on the destruction of anti-personnel landmines (APLs). Thus Canada has an important input in Bulgaria's achievement to destroy its APLs stockpiles two years in advance from the stipulated timeframe in the Ottawa Treaty.

***BULGARIA'S EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIPS:***

***WHEN A STRONGER EUROPE MEANS A STRONGER NATO***

The *Bulgarian-UK partnership* in the defense area is increasingly substantial. Bulgaria has been covered by the British "Outreach" program since 1995. We take this important framework program as an expression of the growing UK interest to support the reforms in Central and Eastern Europe. Bulgaria has been participating in the Program on a priority basis, particularly in the joint projects on the democratization of civil-military relations, the improvement of defense planning and budgeting, military standardization, language training, etc. The UK MoD conducted a two-phased study of the Bulgarian civil-military relations, whose recommendations were incorporated into fundamental defense documents such as the National Security Concept, the Military Doctrine and the Plan 2004 on the reform in the armed forces. Another crucial area of co-operation extends to the UK support for the social adaptation of the military personnel subject to dismissal during the ongoing military reform. Thus the social costs related to that painful fall-out of the ambitious military reform efforts are alleviated in an efficient manner.

In real terms, the relations between Bulgaria and the UK entered a new stage in the context of the anti-terrorist campaign. Yet another Bulgarian contribution to the success of the global coalition against international terrorism, the Bulgarian chemical deactivation and decontamination contingent within the UK-led ISAF left for Kabul in mid-February 2002. Having passed the tests of SFOR and KFOR, we once again demonstrate that Allies and Partners, especially those aspiring for membership, can effectively operate together.

The *Bulgarian-German partnership* has gained practical dimensions with the deployment of the Bulgarian KFOR contribution (an engineer-construction platoon) within the German contingent in Kosovo. The other areas of defense co-operation are focused primarily on military training and defense equipment. For example, German assistance has been used to align the non-commissioned officers (NCOs) curriculums of the Bulgarian defense academies in line with NATO standards.

*Bulgaria's partnership with France* has been put on a sound bilateral legal basis. Under the 2001 bilateral program Bulgaria and France held over 80 politico-military and military-technical activities. These encompass audits of the Bulgarian Armed Forces, joint maritime exercises, specialized workshops, assistance on the elaboration of the Bulgarian fundamental defense documents, military infrastructure, standardization, logistics, etc.

*The partnership between Bulgaria and the Netherlands* was practically tested in the course of the ongoing NATO-led SFOR operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In July 1997 Bulgaria became a troop-contributing participant in SFOR with the deployment of an engineer-construction platoon within the Dutch contingent. In November 2001, following an agreement between Bulgaria and the Netherlands, the engineer-construction platoon was replaced by a mechanized one that is entitled to conduct various patrol and security tasks. Bulgaria and the Netherlands also began operating together within KFOR in Kosovo (following the decision of the Netherlands to withdraw its forces, the Bulgarian engineer-construction unit was redeployed within the German KFOR contingent in May 2000). As a corollary, the Situation Center at the Bulgarian MoD, as well as the Crisis Management Center at the Bulgarian General Staff were set up with Dutch financial and technical assistance.

*Bulgaria's partnership with Italy* is centered on an extensive range of activities. These include the implementation of projects in the area of shipping, the functioning of the field communication-information system, search and rescue (SAR) joint exercises, joint maritime training, etc. *The partnership with Spain* is focused on the areas of military standardization, quality of defense production, legal basis for participation in peace support operations, military education and career development, etc.

Building on *Bulgaria's partnership with Belgium* we receive extensive consultancy support in the fields of budget control, communication systems, military medicine, mine clearance, etc.

Within our *partnership with Denmark* we are conducting a project on the co-operation in the areas of multinational contingents and peacetime preparations for peace support operations. One practical end-result of this project

should be the elaboration of a doctrine to use rapid reaction forces in multinational peace support operations, as well as improvements in the logistical provision to forces sent abroad. Under its *partnership with Norway* Bulgaria receives technical assistance on the training and preparedness for participation in multinational contingents and peace support operations.

Partnerships with the newest NATO member states – *Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic* – is increasingly gaining momentum. Faced with similar problems of force restructuring and modernisation, Bulgaria's co-operation is centered primarily on the five chapters of the Membership Action Plan (MAP). These chapters include political and economic issues, defense issues, resource allocation, security of information and legal issues. As a corollary, the modernization of the Bulgarian national logistics system, including issues related to the standardization of procedures, certification and quality of military production, are addressed on a priority basis.

#### ***PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE NATO NEIGHBOURS***

Bulgaria has built tangible strategic partnerships with Bulgaria's neighbors *Greece and Turkey*. Agreements on defense co-operation with Greece date back to 1991 and multiple bilateral visits have been exchanged at the levels of Ministers of Defense and Chiefs of Staff. Bulgarian and Greek units practically worked together in SFOR while a Bulgarian motor-transport platoon was deployed within the multinational logistic division HELBA under Greek command. Greece also provided important inputs in the efforts to build NATO-compatible air defense system in Bulgaria. Other areas of co-operation encompass training of military personnel for peace-support missions, logistics, joint training, etc.

Bilateral defense co-operation with Turkey dates back to 1992. Since then the legal basis for defense co-operation has been further developed aiming to build mutual confidence, overcome past stereotypes and ensure transparency in inter-state relations. Bulgaria and Turkey have reached a high level of co-operation, following a regular practice to discuss issues of common interests at the level of Ministers of Defense and Chiefs of Staff. Other practical tokens of co-operation in the defense realm include the exchange of platoons along the common borders, staff talks, military education and training, logistics.

Both Greece and Turkey are among the staunchest supporters of the Bulgarian and Romanian bids for NATO. Given that, among other benefits, further NATO enlargement southwards would link the territories of Greece and Turkey with the Central European zone. That policy was

formally launched at the quadrilateral meeting (Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Turkey) on the margins of the Ministerial Plenary Meeting of the EU-OIC Joint Forum in Istanbul, February 13, 2002. The four Ministers of Foreign Affairs released a press release that endorsed future NATO enlargement southwards. Furthermore, Greece and Turkey explicitly pledged their support for Bulgaria and Romania to be invited to join the Alliance at the NATO Summit in Prague. This position was reaffirmed at the second meeting of the Foreign Ministers in Athens on March 29, 2002. The four ministers issued a Joint Statement that provided for an Action Plan to be developed with specific projects and activities. Recently, the “2+2” dialogue acquired a crucial defense dimension. On April 18, 2002, in Athens the Defense Ministers of Bulgaria and Romania, Greece and Turkey shook hands and agreed on further reinvigorating mutual co-operation.

The “2+2” dialogue serves to indicate that NATO’s enlargement towards Southeast Europe would strengthen NATO’s military capabilities and provide strategic depth to better counter terrorism and other non-military threats. In other words, the operational robustness of the Alliance’s Southern flank would be further enhanced.

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## **REGIONAL MULTILATERAL SECURITY ENDEAVORS**

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*Bulgaria’s regional policy in SEE is premised on active engagement, co-operation, confidence building and good neighborly relations.*

As a country conducting pre-accession negotiations with the EU and a serious candidate for NATO membership, Bulgaria has proved in practice its potential for contributing actively to the solution of complex regional security issues. Promoting a number of regional initiatives, Bulgaria aspires to assert a new European culture of co-operation among the countries of SEE, which would make our region attractive for investment and for international economic activity. Bulgaria’s regional policy in SEE is premised on active engagement, co-operation, confidence building and good neighborly relations.

Regional security co-operation is an essential aspect of the international efforts to enhance security. Nevertheless, it has both its strengths and limits. Credible judgments on its effectiveness should consider regional co-operation an instrument to facilitate and accelerate the accession of all and

each country in SEE to the Euro-Atlantic institutions. Regional co-operation, no matter how successful, cannot and should not be regarded as a substitute to full-fledged integration. In that sense Bulgaria's regional policy in SEE is underpinned by the assumption that regional security and co-operative initiatives are essential components of the overall strategy for NATO and EU membership.

In a similar vein, Bulgaria's SEE policy is presumed on the mutual compatibility, complementarity and unity of the goals of the current regional initiatives. Bulgaria is actively involved in a wide network of such initiatives – the Process of Co-operation in SEE, the EU sponsored Stability Pact for SEE, NATO's Southeast Europe Initiative, the Southeast Europe Defense Ministerial (SEDM) process, Southeast Europe Co-operative Initiative (SECI), the Black Sea Economic Co-operation, etc. As a corollary, Bulgaria is actively engaged into trilateral co-operation of variable geometry with Romania and Turkey, Romania and Greece, Greece and Turkey, Albania and the Republic of Macedonia. One recent development is the '2+2' format of Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Turkey.

It is important, however, to reiterate that regional co-operation should be streamlined to achieve greater synergy in identifying regional priorities and avoid duplication of efforts and resources. By extension, Bulgaria stands for using the comparative advantages of all major regional co-operative endeavors. This approach would help multiply achievements and make regional initiatives more responsive to indigenous needs. Should we find linkages and aim for an added value, efficient regional co-operation is both workable and doable. For example, the unified "Balkan voice" identified in the framework of the SEE Co-operation Process that all regional countries aspire for a European and Euroatlantic future, should be aligned with the Stability Pact for SEE to implement specific regional projects on a priority basis. We may also wish to explore the opportunities for a greater synergy between the mechanisms set up under the SECI and the Stability Pact as well.

#### ***EU-SPONSORED STABILITY PACT FOR SEE***

In 1999 in Cologne and Sarajevo the states of the region of SEE, supported by the international community and led by a vision for the new Balkans, laid the foundations of the strategy of the Stability Pact. The period since then has been a time of hard work, aimed at assisting the post-conflict reconstruction, consistent and resolute conduct of reforms, consolidation of a climate of good neighborly relations and co-operation,

as well as at speeding up the integration processes oriented towards the EU and NATO. We initiated and undertook serious steps with a view to transforming the Balkans into a region, enjoying the same degree of security and prosperity, as the rest of the continent.

We realistically assess the achievements, as well as the problems encountered by the forward-looking Stability Pact for SEE. Undoubtedly, the creation of the new political climate built on co-operation and synergy of efforts rather than rivalry and competition is a significant achievement. As the co-chair of Working Table 3 in the second half of the year 2000, Bulgaria did its best to reach a tangible progress and results in the priority areas of political-military aspects of security and “justice and home affairs”. In the course of the Bulgarian co-chairmanship Bulgaria has closely pursued panoply of priorities. These priorities included the Multinational Peace Force SEE operational preparedness; disaster preparedness and civil-military emergency planning; transparency of military budgeting; retraining and re-integration of retired military personnel; small arms and light weapons; humanitarian demining; common assessment of regional security challenges and opportunities (the latter was adopted in Budapest in 2001). Currently Bulgaria is engaged in the ongoing Security Sector Reform under Working Table 3 (security issues).

One area where we see a coincidence of interests with both NATO and EU members is infrastructure. Firstly, the building and maintenance of indigenous quality infrastructure in SEE would warrant the success of crisis response and anti-terrorist missions in the hotspots in and around the Euro-Atlantic space, providing, *inter alia*, NATO-relevant capacity for host nation support, supply lines and logistics. Secondly, a robust infrastructure network will ease trade relations and boost economic co-operation, thus warranting a sustained economic growth in SEE. We are confident that investments in the infrastructure in SEE are tantamount to investments in the security of Europe as a whole.

Bulgaria has identified key projects that, in our belief, coincide with the EU and NATO interests and priorities in the region. These projects include the construction of a second bridge across the Danube at Vidin – Kalafat as part of Transport Corridor No 4; clearing the debris on the Danube in order to restore free navigation; the projects related to Transport Corridor No 8, primarily the construction of the Sofia – Skopje railroad and the linkage of the Bulgarian energy system with that of the Republic of Macedonia.

### ***NATO'S SOUTHEAST EUROPE INITIATIVE (SEEI)***

NATO's Southeast Europe Initiative (SEEI), launched at the 1999 Washington Summit, is another essential vehicle for security co-operation between the regional countries and NATO member states. We appreciate NATO's comprehensive approach to stability and security in SEE. Bulgaria views this Initiative as a value-added and result-oriented instrument to enhance regional security and complement already existing initiatives and instruments.

It was Bulgaria that initiated and coordinated the establishment of the Southeast Europe Security Cooperation Steering Group (SEEGROUP). The main objective is to support practical regional security cooperation and improve harmonization and coordination among countries in the region. This makes SEEGROUP an appropriate forum for coordination, expert co-operation and development of concrete projects. Within SEEGROUP Bulgaria has been a strong proponent of the policy to build upon achievements and explore the logical follow-ups of all major developments. For example, SEEGROUP has been very instrumental in implementing the SEECAP (SEE Common Assessment Paper on Regional Security Challenges and Opportunities) recommendations, spurring panoply of other joint projects such as SEESTAFF and SEESTUDY. On their turn, those initiatives are commensurate with and reinforce the agenda of Working Table 3 (Security Issues) of the Stability Pact for SEE and its priority on Security Sector Reform.

### ***SOUTHEAST EUROPE DEFENSE MINISTERIAL (SEDM) PROCESS***

In 1997 Bulgaria was one of the initiators of a process of regional co-operation in the field of security and defense, considering such efforts as a means to further accelerate and complement the accession of the SEE states to NATO. The process of SEE Defence Ministerials (SEDM) of NATO member states and PfP SEE participating countries has been launched as a forum "in the spirit of PfP" for consultations and joint planning within the overarching Euro-Atlantic framework. SEDM participating countries encompass Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, the Republic of Macedonia, Romania and Turkey (the US, Slovenia and Croatia hold an observer status). One tangible result of the SEDM process is the creation of the Multinational Peace Force Southeast Europe (SEEBRIG). A mechanized brigade, SEEBRIG is available for NATO or EU-led peace support and crisis management operations with a mandate from the UN or the OSCE.

This is an outstanding example that the SEE countries have overcome the Cold War legacy and stereotypes of the past. The Forces Headquarters

for the initial 4-year period are located in the Bulgarian town of Plovdiv. The HQs were officially inaugurated on September 11, 1999. Later that year SEEBRIG held its first command post exercise that practiced the operational “pool of forces” in peace support contingencies. In September 2000 and June 2001 the brigade held two more exercises, Seven Stars 2000 and Seven Stars 2001 respectively. Those practical exercises showed encouraging results in terms of interoperability with NATO standards and procedures. Effective on May 1, 2001 SEEBRIG was declared operationally ready. Yet, Bulgaria is part of the efforts to go beyond the brigade’s operational status and extend to deployability.

The range of activities held under the SEDM aegis has been gradually enhanced to include other co-operative endeavors. One depicting example is the decision to build an engineer-construction unit within SEEBRIG, thus ensuring a speedy and well-coordinated response to disasters and emergencies. As a corollary, the establishment of an information system on crisis response aims to provide a swift information exchange and intra-regional co-ordination of crisis response efforts.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

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That brief outline of Bulgaria’s co-operative initiatives with NATO member states is indicative of our country’s strategic aspirations for European and Euro-Atlantic future. We are committed to working together with all NATO Allies to promote co-operative security, build peace, fight terrorism and international crime, prevent ethnic cleansing and abolish despotism, promote democracy and prosperity. The experience, culture of co-operation and expertise, gained through operating with NATO members and NATO hopefuls alike, will help Bulgaria plug-in NATO capability immediately upon accession.

Despite the genuinely positive development prospects for the Balkans, certain areas in the region still contain smouldering hotbeds of tension and conflict. The international military and civil presence in the Western Balkans, though paramount to preserve peace, falls short of the strategic objective to solve problems completely and rule out new ones. The best option is the integration of the Balkan countries in the European and Euro-Atlantic structures. This holds true because the stability of SEE warrants the stability of Europe. However, lots of efforts – in terms of indigenous “regional ownership” and tangible external engagement – should be rendered to make this project fulfilled.

The European Union (EU) already follows a two-track policy of negotiating accession with Bulgaria and Romania and concluding stabilization and association agreements with the Western Balkan countries. NATO, the lynchpin of the post-Cold War security architecture, has already a proven record in providing security and stability in SEE, as well as engaging into outreach programmes like the Partnership and the Membership Action Plan (MAP). In the eve to Prague 2002, the time has come now for the Alliance to prove that it can also warrant the overall stabilisation of SEE. NATO enlargement southwards would substantiate a policy of integration rather than exclusion. Thus, our countries' return to the European mainstream will be institutionalised in an efficient and cost effective manner.

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# PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO NATO MEMBERSHIP

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## ATTITUDE DYNAMICS TOWARDS NATO

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The attitude of Bulgarians towards NATO membership is an integral part of the picture of public opinion highlighted by the personal commitment to this country's security by its citizens.

Public opinion towards NATO has passed through three stages in the period between the end of 1989 to December 2001:

Between 1989 and 1992, NATO was still viewed as an entity mainly defined through its opposition to the former collective security system of socialist countries. This system was in a process of irreversible disintegration and many people had a disposition towards NATO as "the prospective partner". The desire for EU membership was more prevalent. There were assumptions that EU membership would be possible without regardless of possible NATO membership.

The period of 1993-1999 could be defined as a pragmatic stage of cognizance. The supporters of European integration are already a majority. The sympathizers of the NATO membership idea increased and fluctuated from one-third to half of the respondents. Their share was markedly bigger among young and well-educated people, financially well off, and also among the urban population. Public attitudes were still quite volatile and were affected by the unfavorable situation globally, in Europe and in the region.

The last two years, 2000-2001, have marked the period of completion of the *process of irreversible increase* of public support for NATO membership. Neither changes of government, nor the adverse situations had a negative impact on this process. Bulgarians' firmly acknowledged the need of security and NATO membership became the logical priority. Support for membership of NATO is currently to be found in all social strata. The attitude towards the Alliance is full of intense expectations for Bulgaria's quick integration in the Euro-Atlantic Alliance. As EU integration might take a longer period of time, these expectations increase since Bulgaria has preserved all of its chances of being invited to join NATO.

Bulgarians' attitude towards NATO is characterized by an intense desire for reciprocity. The assessment of Bulgaria's integration into NATO is influenced most by public expectations of positive changes in NATO's attitude towards Bulgaria. Ninety six percent of the people who believe that NATO is changing its attitude towards Bulgaria for the better are inclined to think that Bulgaria is also improving its attitude towards NATO.

The establishment and declaration of NATO's interest towards Bulgaria has made possible the formation of genuine pro-NATO and anti-NATO attitudes in the country. This period started after the first years of the transition. Until that time, judgements about NATO were made in the form of assumptions about compatibility or incompatibility between the awareness, knowledge and general concepts about NATO and Bulgaria's concrete priorities.

As early as the first half of 1992, the independent public opinion surveys registered prevailing public attitudes in support of the assertion that "the attitude of NATO towards Bulgaria has changed for the better". This opinion was then supported by 46% of Bulgarians and only 2% held the view that NATO had developed a worse attitude towards Bulgaria after the fall of totalitarianism. At that time, a still large share of the Bulgarian population would not commit itself to an opinion as to how NATO's position towards Bulgaria had changed. The lack of knowledge about NATO and the reluctance to take a firm stance on issues related to NATO were responses that were rather regularly encountered at that time.

*The independent public opinion surveys registered prevailing public attitudes in support of the assertion that "the attitude of NATO towards Bulgaria has changed for the better".*

The same survey of May 1992 found that 54% of the Bulgarians were of the opinion that this country demonstrates better attitude towards NATO and only 2% were of the opposite opinion, while 41% found it difficult to judge. More than two thirds of the representatives of the higher-income strata of society (university-educated and young people, urban population of large cities, people with higher than average living standards) believed that Bulgaria had changed its attitude towards NATO in a positive direction.

The conclusion could be made that, at this initial stage, the higher – income social strata supported the idea of a new type of relationship with NATO, including the idea of beginning of military co-operation.

What is most important at that stage and a major determinant of public

opinion, is the search for a reciprocal relationship with NATO. It is extremely important, however, to underscore that it was a search for reciprocity of attitudes in relation to the behavior of official entities – Bulgaria (as the Bulgarian official position) and NATO (as the policy pursued by the Alliance in relation to Bulgaria). At this first stage, reciprocity is sought, *inter alia*, as a guarantee for overcoming important psychological barriers. This was the time when the old concepts of Fatherland, nation, nationality were being redefined. The guarantees for human rights and freedoms were a part to each of these definitions of patriotism and loyalty.

The perception of human freedom and responsibility based on a new system of values led to a revised and personalized attitude towards NATO.

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The independent researchers registered an equilibrium and comparability between the assumption that Bulgaria was positively viewing NATO and the personal positive position on rapprochement with the Alliance. Sixty eight percent of the people who indicated that Bulgaria had changed its attitude towards the Alliance for the better indicated that they had changed their personal opinion in the same direction.

Yet, people still seemed to be waiting for a firm course to be pursued by the political elite of Bulgaria. This is quite in contrast to the formation of public opinion in relation to EU integration. In that case, public opinion was steered by dialogue. There was a simple explanation – public interest in this case is concrete and tangible, while public expectations were the product of increased personal expectations.

As early as mid-1992, when the NATO accession idea entered the focus of public attention, it was viewed realistically. People who were interviewed preferred the country to pursue its own way to integration into NATO, thus being independent from the position of other former socialist countries towards the Alliance. The idea of ‘en-block’ accession of former socialist countries was not very popular. The ‘en-block’ accession was viewed as a definite sign of delay and complication of the process, while Bulgarians did not hide their preferences for prompt accession.

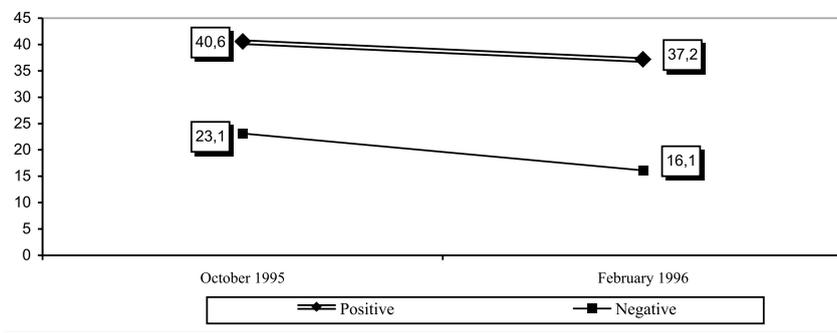
Bulgarians left, however, little doubt that the concept of independence is a cover hiding their uncertainty *vis-a-vis* co-operation with the Alliance. In 1992, only 8% supported the idea of Bulgaria forming a new

military and political alliance with former socialist countries as a substitute for the Warsaw Treaty. The staunch opponents to our country's membership in any military and political block, whatsoever, were 18%.

Public perceptions on the issue of Bulgaria's membership in NATO are characterized by sustainability of the basic parameters.

Adverse situations such as tensions of various types, both in terms of domestic and foreign policy, had a weak impact on positive attitudes towards NATO membership, while favorable situations clearly and distinctly increased the support for membership. In general, positive attitudes were expressed regarding opinions in favor of NATO membership. A degree of dissatisfaction increased only where public judgement is polarized by particular NATO military actions in the Balkans or worldwide.

### Attitude towards NATO membership 1995 – 1996



A very significant and positive trend seen in the last seven years is the twofold decrease of the share of the population who maintain they have no opinion as to whether Bulgaria should join NATO. Most of them turn out to have a positive answer to this question, a small fraction join the pessimists and opponents of the idea. The latter are a rather particular social stratum that struggles in labor market.

An immediate consequence of the positive changes in Bulgarian attitude towards NATO is the reconsideration of co-operation with neighboring Balkan countries. The Balkans have become a priority area in terms of national security and an integral part of the views

*The security guarantees that NATO member countries enjoy and provide in the Balkans instill respect in Bulgarians.*

on Turkey and Greece is related to the high level of support these countries receive in relation to their national security.

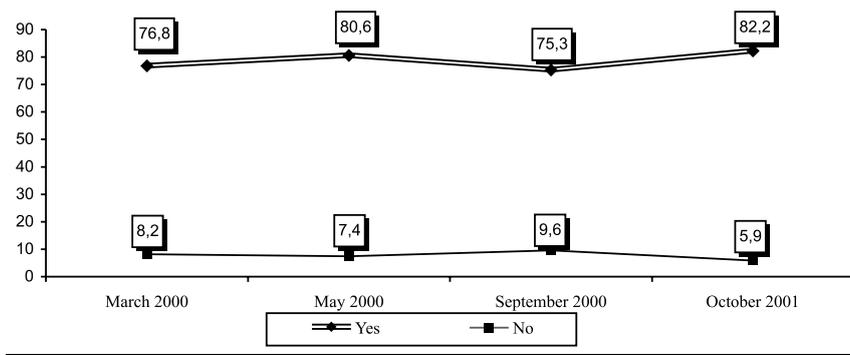
The image of NATO in the Balkans is not uniform but the security guarantees that NATO member countries enjoy and provide in the Balkans instill respect in Bulgarians. The more admired the NATO member-countries in the Balkans are, the easier it will be to understand NATO's mission, and the more successful NATO's mission among Bulgarians will be.

*In public perceptions, NATO membership is an integral element of the European integration of Bulgaria.*

In public perceptions, NATO membership is an integral element of the European integration of Bulgaria. In the last couple of years, NATO membership became a guiding bench-

mark and a bridge to EU membership itself. This is explained by the expectation of accession to NATO by the end of 2002, after the prospect of EU integration was postponed for the more distant future.

### Do you think that Bulgaria should become a EU member?



The past seven years have evidenced a gradual shrinking in the differences between the positive attitudes towards EU membership and the ones towards NATO membership. While at the start of transition, the share of the Bulgarian population approving our EU membership did not exceed 60% of the ones approving NATO membership, the latest survey conducted by NCSPO at the end of 2001 indicates that more than three fourths of the people who approve EU membership also approve NATO membership.

Public attitudes are dominated by the judgement that quick integration into EU and NATO would be based on recognition of efforts rather than an evaluation of full compliance with all requirements. Bulgarians believe that European integration would be possible if there is willingness to grant credibility to Bulgaria's future. Furthermore, we have found that if Bulgarians are to give credence to an outsider, they should prove by their deeds their desire to see us join EU and NATO. One-third adult Bulgarians in 2000 believed that we were presently full prepared for NATO and EU membership.

At the same time, a trend is discerned in the past few years towards the view that Bulgaria's chances of integration into NATO are equal to its chances for EU integration. This trend became particularly obvious at the time before and after the lifting of the EU visa regime for Bulgaria. In December 2001, as many as 77% of the people who fully backed EU membership also supported NATO membership. There were no respondents who supported NATO membership but stood against EU integration.

The situation was slightly different five year ago (in February 1996), when only 54% of the people approving Bulgaria's membership in EU also approved NATO membership, while as many as 92% of the supporters of NATO membership also declared support to EU accession.

Presently (December 2001) men are more likely than women to support Bulgaria's membership in NATO. Women usually demonstrate, to a greater extent than men, their sensitivity to adverse internal or external circumstances. The public attitude registered in several consecutive years that NATO is the surest and the shortest way to overcoming this country's isolation from Europe and alleviating domestic consequences from the long and hard post-totalitarian transition should be noted. Public sensitivity to the subject of NATO membership is rather strong and considerably exceeds, at this stage, the expectations in relation to EU. NATO membership is most strongly supported by the population of 30 to 40 – year old, by the highly educated and by the urban population.

Early in 2000, a very serious turn was made towards a pro-NATO orientation among BSP sympathizers. It is very important to note the role Bulgaria's participation in the Partnership for Peace initiative played in this context. As early as October 1995, 61% approved this participation, including more than 40% of the Socialist Party followers A

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little less than 40% of the BSP sympathizers committed themselves to a positive answer to the question about whether they approved of Bulgaria's membership in NATO. These supporters of NATO membership have increased from one fifth in the period 1995-1999 to a little more than 60% in 2001.

The support for Bulgaria's membership in NATO is high among younger people – about two thirds of the Bulgarians below 50 years of age. Even 41% of the oldest (over 60 years) approve NATO membership. There is no group based on education where NATO membership support would fall below half of the interviewed.

The years 2000 and 2001 mark a real turning point in public attitudes towards NATO. These are the years during which foreign policy efforts proved to be successful. These endeavors were publicized as a priority by Ivan Kostov's government and were so massive that Bulgarians got used to talking about Europe and NATO as well known subjects.

At the end of 2001, we noticed extremely favorable trends regarding the social strata supporting Bulgaria's membership in NATO. It was definitely in the years 2000 and 2001 when permanent, sustainable and high support of such magnitude for Bulgaria's membership in NATO was registered. Furthermore, if the support for EU membership was traditionally high, and as a rule dominant in all social strata, the approval of NATO membership for years continued to hold its share of supporters as well as its adversaries.

This was not the case, however, in the past two years, when the support for NATO membership rose to two thirds of all Bulgarians, according to research data. Cases where support for Bulgaria's membership in NATO fell under 60% are an exception. The first is the group of people of lowest education, where 40% have still not formed their position, and approval of NATO membership amounts to 49%. Second comes the group of BSP sympathizers – 41% of them back NATO membership, while every fifth

have not decided on a position. According to data of the sociological agency 'Alpha Research' at of end-2001, 62% Bulgarians are of the opinion that only NATO can guarantee the security of our country; 36% are not firmly convinced by this. A positive answer to the question "Can NATO guarantee the security of our country?" prevails even among BSP

supporters. This is a very important prerequisite for a change in their personal attitudes towards NATO membership. Bulgarians think there are

*62% Bulgarians are of the opinion that only NATO can guarantee the security of our country.*

two main advantages to NATO integration. The first, most generally speaking, is the chance for our army to be a modern army mastering new equipment. The second boils down to the expectations for peace on the Balkans and a better geopolitical position for Bulgaria.

## **WHAT FOREIGN POLICY CAN GUARANTEE THE NATIONAL SECURITY OF BULGARIA?**

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A year after the start of the transition, 45% of the Bulgarians saw a military and political guarantor of their security in the collective image of 'Western Europe'. Early in 1991, the supporters of the concept of protection by Russia were twice as much as the ones relying on the USA as a guarantor of Bulgaria's national security (30% to 15%). A strong imbalance was evident if the data were analyzed from a socio-demographic point of view. Underlying this imbalance was the way of thinking of different generations. Nearly half of the population who were then over 60 years old saw in Russia a guarantor of Bulgaria's security and did not see any other alternative. Such an opinion was held by only 13% of the interviewees who were under 30. Almost 90% of UDF supporters considered the guarantor of this country's national security to be Western Europe or the US, and only 6% – Russia. Sixty-eight percent of sympathizers of the socialist party were then of the opinion that Russia was the guarantor of Bulgarian national security. Each fifth socialist demonstrated a freer stance and shared the opinion that the countries of Western Europe could best guarantee our security.

The great breakthrough in public attitudes occurred in 1992, when the opinion that security could be best ensured by the US transformed into the opinion that NATO was the best hope of protection of sovereignty. NATO's rating as a primary guarantor of Bulgaria's military and political inviolability started at 11%. Russia and the USA are left far behind (with 5% and 4% rating, respectively). One is impressed, however, by the large share (34%) of the population who were then not committed to any view as to what military and political power could guarantee Bulgarian national security. Twice as many men than women viewed NATO as a military and political guarantor and twice as many highly educated held the same view compared to poorly educated respondents.

The picture thus outlined remains comparatively stable in following several years. Change in the public position comes at the end of Zhan Vidonov's government. In September 1996, 25% answered that Bulgaria should

have a firm military and political orientation towards NATO. At the end of the socialist government, 19% commit themselves to seeking Russia as a military guarantor. The largest number of people, however, advocates that the country should itself guarantee its national security. On the one hand, a convergence is seen in the positions regarding NATO between the young and the elderly (except for the group of over 60 years old), and between urban and rural population – on the other. At this stage, the positions of UDF and BSP supporters remained irreconcilable. After the

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first successful steps made by the UDF government, and particularly after the successful efforts of our foreign policy and the intensified dialogue on EU and NATO accession, this issue exhausted its potential and was replaced by a personal position in relation to the specific intentions for NATO and EU membership.

According to 40% of the population in 1999 Bulgaria's full membership in NATO was the primary guarantee of its national security, and the share increased for over 60% in the past two years. The positions of the young and the elderly, of urban and rural population, of ed-

educated and uneducated, of the poor and the well-off converge. Presently, there is no demographic group in which the opinion that NATO is the primary guarantor of our national security is not shared by at least 50%. Almost half of the Bulgarians were convinced at the end of 1999 that if someone would attack us, we could definitely rely on NATO's support.

## **THE BULGARIAN ARMY – SPECIFIC FEATURES OF ATTITUDES AND DETERMINING FACTORS**

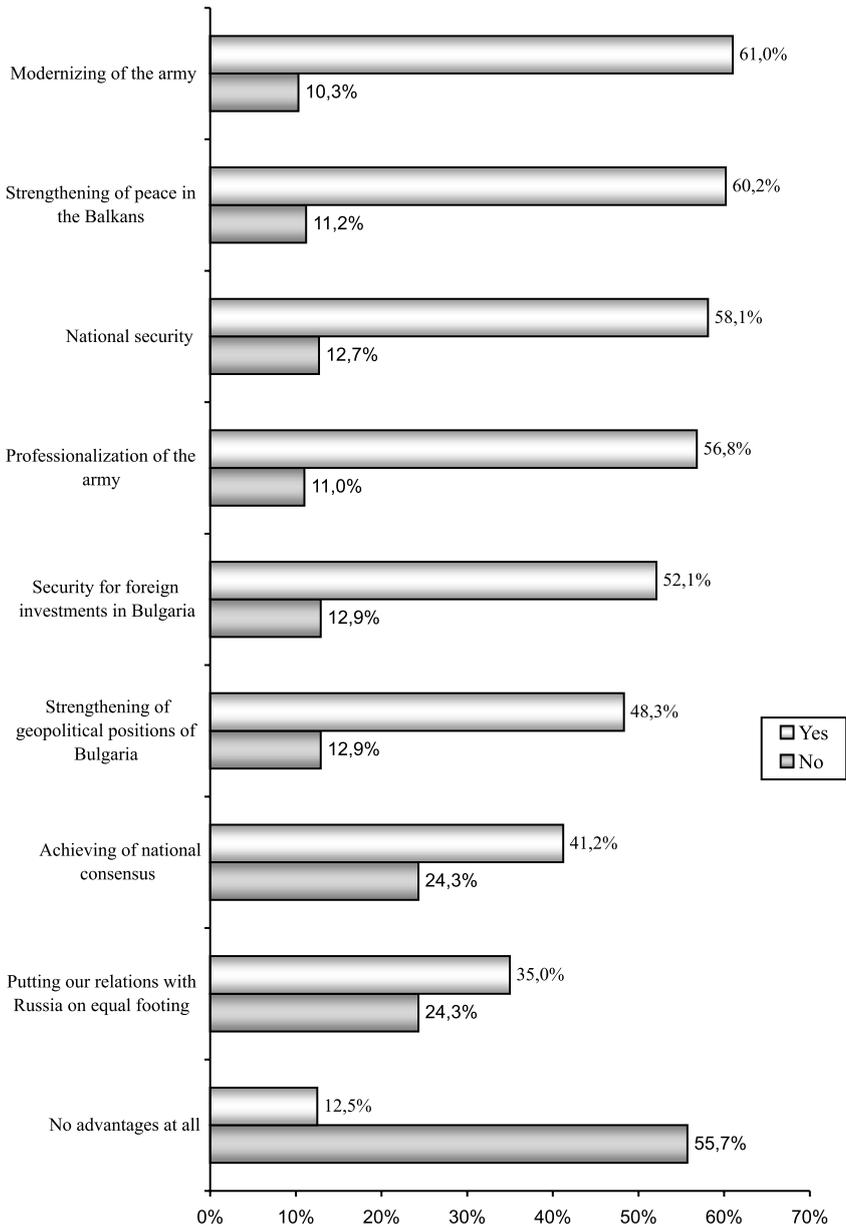
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*The army is among the institutions, which enjoy broad public support and approval for its activities.*

The army is among the institutions, which enjoy broad public support and approval for its activities. Although in the recent years, various levels of approval have been registered, there have not been any drastic downswings. The positive attitudes towards the armed forces of Bulgaria were sustained and high, even

in the periods of severe political confrontation. In November 1990, 59%

**Advantages of membership of Bulgaria in NATO:**



of the citizens approved of the work the army and the share of negative response amounted to only 14%. Provisionally, the army, unlike most of the other institutions, painlessly completed the transformation from a “people’s army” subordinated to the party-state into a truly national one. Society entertains no suspicions as to its loyalty to the constitution and subordination to the national interests. The army was not thought of as a repressive authority, even in the first months and years of democratic changes.

Of course, in situations of crisis of state institutions’ credibility, resulting in a change of the majority in Parliament, the share of positive assessments of the operation of the army also fell and the share of negative ones increased. In the last months of the governments of Fillip Dimitrov, Lyuben Berov, Zhan Videnov, and Ivan Kostov, the positive opinion of their operation range from the minimum – 16% for Videnov (September 1996) to the maximum – 35% for Dimitrov (June 1992). In spite of the crisis of

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credibility, at the same time, the positive assessments of the activities of the armed forces’ were shared by about, and even a little over, half of the population. In the past 11 years, the disapproval ratings of the armed forces have never been higher than the approval ratings. Most opinion polls have shown it has been 3-4 times lower. The highest approval rating was registered at the beginning of 1991 – 69%, and the lowest one – 36% was established only once – in March 1998. These data from tens of national and representative surveys conducted by NCSPO in a period of 13 years, justify considering support for the army as a positive constant value in public opinion, even further, as a public and institutional sphere of stability.

All social groups declare positive attitudes towards the army. Even among the oldest, those with primary and lower education, the ethnic minority communities and the rural population, the approval rate for the army is not less than about one third of the opinions gathered. The comparatively low approval among these groups is not on account of a larger share of negative opinions but is rather due to the larger number of people who find it difficult to form definitive opinions. Various social groups in Bulgarian society have their own cultural bias, awareness and motives, but all share a high degree of confidence in the army. For some, this is based on traditional values, for

others it is the heroic nature of the liberation struggles and wars. Greatest credibility is encountered among people over 50, and among people living without deprivation, among the population of Sofia (according to data from NCSPO opinion polls in September and December 2001). What is impressive is the fact that both approval and disapproval ratings are evenly distributed among the various social and demographic groups.

## **MILITARY CONFLICTS AND POLITICAL CRISES – ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE EXISTENCE OF POCKETS OF TENSION AND NATO OPERATIONS**

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In the early 1990s, Bulgarians were regarding the Balkans as a region of growing instability. An NCSPO survey during the first months of the Bosnian crisis, in January 1993, found that 81% of adult Bulgarians were concerned with the developments in Yugoslavia, 69% were afraid a new war would break out in the Balkans, and only 15 percent did not have such concerns. The apprehensive attitudes concerned all social and demographic groups and were most spread among the social elite, people with higher education, high incomes, the active population and the urban population of large cities. In 1999, fears were not measured directly, but public apprehensions were clearly seen from the views expressed in relation to the Bulgarian position and the desire for the conflicts not to spread out. Bulgarian public opinion was directly affected as the level of anxiety grew with the growing intensity of the conflicts in neighboring countries. The opinions expressed by people, however, reflect recognition of the difference between the situation in 1993 and the one in 1999. The Bosnian crisis developed against the background of a sense of disintegration of a system in Eastern Europe, in the Balkans and in Yugoslavia. Therefore, the prevailing feeling was of helplessness in a situation of escalating hostilities.

During the Kosovo crisis, the Bulgarians, although threatened again, felt somewhat protected by the new NATO-dominated security system. Even more, in spite of any differences of social status and political preferences, Bulgarian citizens viewed their country as associated with this security system. This

*During the Kosovo crisis, the Bulgarians, although threatened again, felt somewhat protected by the new NATO-dominated security system.*

*Nearly half of those interviewed in May 1999 believed that if Bulgaria was to be attacked by another country, NATO would defend it.*

is why, nearly half of those interviewed in May 1999 believed that if Bulgaria was to be attacked by another country, NATO would defend it. The 1999 data indicates that public opinion in the area of international security had become much more rational than in the beginning of the last decade of the century. In May 1999, about one third of the Bulgarians expected that the country would be compensated for its economic losses sustained

during the war and almost half of the interviewed were skeptical on the issue. Obviously, this time opinion was affected by the negative experience from the Bosnian crisis, which had a very adverse effect on the Bulgarian economy in the period 1993-1995.

In 1999, 79% of Bulgarians shared the view that the war in Yugoslavia would have a negative impact on the economic reforms in Bulgaria. About one third of the population was of the opinion that the war in Yugoslavia would delay Bulgaria's accession to the European Union. The above three assumptions were supported to a considerably greater extent by high-status groups, while the marginal strata found it difficult to judge. In spite of the political justification of opinions, the data provided indicate that in 1999 most of the Bulgarians were more concerned about the long-lasting adverse effect on our economy than about Bulgaria's direct involvement in hostilities.

The apprehensions and the sense of threat combined with the stereotype that the country is not in a position to defend itself from aggression influenced the opinion that Bulgaria should further seek guarantees for its national security. With each passing year after 1990, the share of people who believed that the armed forces were capable of driving an aggressor back decreased. During the height of the strikes against Yugoslavia in May 1999, only 14% of the population considered the army capable of defending the country from a foreign invasion on its own, while two thirds of those interviewed showed skepticism on the issue. The least confident in the strength of the army was the population from 30 to 40 years of age and low – income people. This is of key importance for understanding public attitudes regarding regional conflicts and particularly those in the immediate vicinity of Bulgaria.

## **SPECIFIC FEATURES OF PUBLIC OPINION ON SECURITY AND DEFENSE ISSUES**

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There is a widespread stereotype that foreign policy issues, particularly in relation to aspects of defense, are a subject of specialized knowledge. This is more characteristic for people with high education, of the middle-age generations, the most active social groups and, finally, of men. The survey of January 1993 established that the share of people who could not take a stance on the issues posed was twice as high among women, when compared to men. This was the case with the question whether people were concerned with developments in Yugoslavia, if any armed intervention of international forces might solve the problems, and whether Bulgaria should participate with its contingent in the UN peacekeeping mission. In October 1998, 41% of women answered that they could not judge who was to blame for the conflict in Kosovo, while 25% held this view. As part of the same survey, women indicated they were not aware of NATO's position in the crisis, while the share of uninformed among men was only 15 percent. The same proportion said that they did not have an opinion regarding the question whether military intervention by the North Atlantic Treaty member countries in Yugoslavia was justified. In April 1999, days after the onset of the strikes, twice as many women as men could not express an opinion on the advantages of the Bulgaria's possibility of being a NATO member.

The initial studies on the subject of Yugoslavia found out that there were considerable and significant differences of opinion between men and women on the question whether the crisis might be terminated by the use of force. In January 1993, 53% of men gave a positive answer to the question, while this share among women was smaller by 10%. The proportion of people who gave a negative answer was the opposite. Twenty eight percent of women answered that the problems would not be solved by military force, while 20% men shared the same opinion. This interdependence is also clearly seen in the NCSPPO survey of October 1998. At that time, 36% men considered such eventual (at the time of the survey) military intervention by NATO in Kosovo justified, while 22% women were of the same opinion. Immediately after the Military Doctrine of this country was passed by Parliament, the prevailing view among men was one of approval while women said they were unaware.

Yet, public opinion polls in recent years establish that there are no statistically significant differences between the opinions of men and women

when it comes to questions of political issues of national significance. The issues of international relations, and security and defense are exactly of this type. Obviously, Bulgarian women look at this sphere as a typically ‘male’ one, most probably due to the general and, until recently, rather long military service for men.

In cases where the main political forces in Bulgaria have clearly declared and firmly defended positions on one conflict or another, this automatically differentiates the views of these parties’ supporters. For example, in October 1998, a prevailing share of 82% of the BSP voters were of the opinion that the clashes between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo were a domestic problem for Yugoslavia, while 55% of the supporters of UDF (in power at that time) upheld the opposite opinion. The largest part of the Socialist Party supporters believed that the Albanians were to blame for the conflict, while the people voting for the majority in Parliament deemed the Serbian government responsible for the conflict. Answering to a question in the same opinion poll, 55% of UDF sympathizers approved the position

*A majority also supported the policy pursued by the Bulgarian government, including its decision to provide air space for flights of the Alliance aircraft.*

taken by NATO in the conflict, and as many of the voters for the leftists condemned it. The situation led to a curious phenomenon, whereby the majority of Bulgarians disapproved of the military intervention by the Alliance in Yugoslavia, while at the same time, a majority also supported the policy pursued by the Bulgarian government, including its decision to provide air space for flights of the Alliance aircraft. Even among the BSP supporters, however, about 10-15% approved NATO’s actions and the policy of supporting the efforts

of the Alliance pursued by the Bulgarian government. These data indicate that even the staunchest stereotypes were overcome to a certain extent by a pragmatic and rational vision about the national interests of Bulgaria.

In 1998, and particularly in the spring of 1999, public opinion in Bulgaria was polarized, divided between ‘the affirmative and the negative regarding NATO’s operation, “for” and “against” the activities of the Serbs, “for” and “against” the policy of the majority in power in Bulgaria.

The NCSPO poll of April 1999 found out that 42 percent of Bulgarians believed this country’s national security would be guaranteed by a full-fledged membership in NATO, and 41 percent were of the opinion that the optimum solution was to declare Bulgaria a neutral state. The specifics of opinion on this issue had clearly generation-related character as

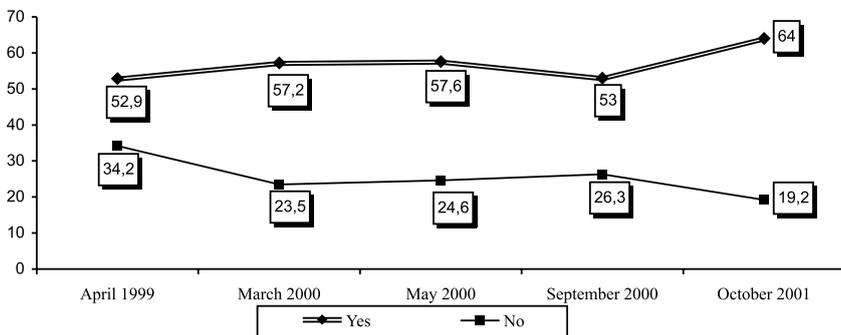
45% of the population below 30 years of age supported NATO membership, while 46% of the pensioners advocated neutrality. The correlation of judgements to the level of education was particularly great. Fifty-two percent of university graduates interviewed found effective guarantees in our accession to NATO, and as many of the respondents of lower than primary education believed that the country would be best protected if it declared neutrality. The NCSPO poll of May 1999 found that that in spite of the war tens of kilometers away from the Bulgarian capital, 46% of the citizens believed that NATO would protect the country in case of aggression. Significantly the percentage of people sharing this opinion among the well off (55%), people with higher education (58%), and UDF supporters (77%) was well above average.

These 1999 data prove that the idea of NATO accession then supported by the elite groups would soon become prevalent in the society. In 2001, this is already a fact.

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**Do you think that Bulgaria should become a NATO member?**



Against the background of positive attitudes towards NATO and Bulgaria's interest in EU membership, public opinion in the 1990s remained rather tentative on the issue of Bulgarian participation in military or peacekeeping operations. In December 1993, twenty percent of the respondents declared themselves in favor of Bulgaria's participation in UN peacekeeping forces.

In May 1999, half of the Bulgarians agreed that Bulgaria should put maximum effort to terminate the conflict in Yugoslavia, and 39% were of the opposite opinion – that Bulgaria should refrain from any activities and expressions of opinion. The same survey found that public opinion in Bulgaria makes a clear differentiation between operations based on two criteria: participation or non-participation in military action, and such conducted under the auspices of UN or other more closely supported. The greatest support, 61%, was given to the involvement of the country in humanitarian operations.

# APPENDIX 10

## **BULGARIAN VOLUNTEER COMPANY IN NATO (1951 – 1964)**

The hottest topic of today's political life in Bulgaria and of the media is the country's membership candidature for the EC and NATO. But few Bulgarians know that some of our countrymen participated in the very founding of the NATO's structures. Along with the top European politicians of the time like Leon Blum, Winston Churchill, Paul-Andre Spaak the first meeting of the Council of Europe in Hague was attended by the Chairman of the Bulgarian Committee on European Movement and the Head Secretary of the International Agrarian Union Dr. G. M. Dimitrov. Bulgaria has a long time presence in the NATO's structures in the face of the Bulgarian volunteer Company 4093 in the American army, which existed for 14 years



*A honourable platoon of The Bulgarian company led by the American captain William Hatcock, who was commissioned in the company by AMF in the period 1953 - 1956*

(1951 – 1964). This is one of the most important activities of the Bulgarian political emigration united by the Bulgarian National Committee (BNC) and carrying on an active, anti-Communist political life. This fact could not be denied for it is backed up by documents filed in the archives of the US Army. Let us retrace the origin, the organisation and the functions of the Bulgarian Volunteer Company 4093.

The aggressive plans of the international communist conspiracy became clearly outlined after the end of the World War Two. The Soviet dictator Stalin (Josif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili) enforced the communist regimes in Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, East Germany and the Czech Republic

with unheard brutality. These countries were turned into mere satellites of the Soviet Empire. At the same time the Soviet Union was frantically arming itself. As a countermeasure, twelve states from the free world established the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on April 4, 1948. The US Senate allocated USD 1.5 bln. for the rearming of the member-countries.

On June 25, 1950 the communist North Korea, supported by the USSR (Union of Socialist Soviet Republics) and China, invaded South Korea. The Communists have undoubtedly declared their aspirations to conquer new territories and to enslave new nations. The US Defence Ministry responded by the mobilization of 100 000 volunteers at the beginning of 1951. The raising of national volunteer companies in the US armed forces was also decided. These companies were to be composed of political emigrants from the enslaved countries in East Europe. The long-term purpose of those companies was to serve, in an eventual war in Europe, as the kernel of national liberation forces of the countries under Soviet domination.

In 1944 – 1945 Dr. G. M. Dimitrov was politically persecuted by the Bulgarian communist authorities upon the instructions from Moscow. At that time he was Head Secretary of the Bulgarian Agrarian Na-

tional Union (BANU) - the biggest political force in Bulgaria at the period. G. M. Dimitrov was persecuted for his opposing the plans of the USSR to turn Bulgaria into a satellite. He managed to escape the arrest and immigrated to the States with the help of the US Embassy in Bulgaria. In the States he restored the Bulgarian National Committee "Free and Independent Bulgaria" on January 20, 1949. The goal of the Committee was to unite all emigrant Bulgarian anti-fascist and anti-Communist forces in a resistance movement for the liberation of Bulgaria from the communist regime.

The leader of the BANU and Head of the United Opposition in Bulgaria Nikola D. Petkov was hanged by the communists on September 23, 1947. The communists began a large-scale persecution of the opposition to their regime. Many people were arrested, thousands were killed or sent to the death



*The area of the transport section in the garrison in Gernersheim. From left to right Victor Dzembalsky, Lozan Karamfilov, Vladimir Petrov, Pavel Tochev and Eftim Haralampiev (april 1955)*

camps set up in Bulgaria. Hundreds of Bulgarians left the country preferring the hard life of political emigrants to the satellite status imposed on their fatherland. Between 80% and 90% of them are members or sympathisers of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union or to its youth organizations (Agrarian Youth Union). Those emigrants were accommodated in refugee camps in Istanbul (Turkey), in Greece, Rome and Trieste (Italy), Paris (France) and in the American, British and French military zones in West Germany.

The American authorities consulted the Bulgarian National Committee, chaired by G. M. Dimitrov at that time, and asked the assistance of the organization. Mr. Dimitrov was very enthusiastic about the idea and he appealed to the Bulgarian emigrants to enrol. His words "We'll be allies, we would not be mercenaries", inspired the Bulgarians who were ready to join the unit believing that this would be their personal contribution to the liberation of the fatherland.

A requirement for enlisting in the Company was the political and the military reliability of the candidate. The volunteers filled in special application forms issued by the HQ of the 7th American Army's North Command in West Germany. Later, the filled-in papers were sent for verification to all emigrant centers.

Those who passed the tests successfully were gathered together in the city of Zeilsheim – Frankfurt am Mein in October 1951. The Bulgarian Volunteer Company No 4093 was formed on October 20, 1951 according to Order No 53 issued by the HQ of the United States Army (USA) ZIP code 757. The code numbers of the unit were "Cteator Hesse" (Cid Coord 56, 65, 7) and it was enlisted in 112 Military center, ZIP code 757, USA.

The Bulgarian Volunteer Company was created after the pattern of an infantry regiment of the United States Army. The permanent effective were 200 soldiers assigned in four platoons of 40 men each for guarding military sites and one administration platoon. The separate national companies formed a whole regiment with its own Head Quarters and Commanding Officer.

The first Bulgarian commander of the Company was Lieutenant Stefan Boydev, son of General Boydev, commander of the Bulgarian Air Forces. Lieutenant Boydev was commanding officer of the Company from its set-up till April 1952. He was replaced by Lieutenant Borislav Boychev who was Commanding officer from April 17, 1952 till March 1957. Borislav Boychev was a former Captain of the Bulgarian Air Forces. The third and last commander of the Bulgarian Volunteer Company 4093 was Dimitar Vulkov Krustev – from March 1957 till the disbandment of the unit in 1964.

Company 4093 was safeguarding important military sites of NATO situated on the territory of West Germany and storehouses of ammunitions, weapons, rockets, military equipment etc.

The first volunteers who arrived in 1951 were accommodated in a three-storied building on 300 "Pfafenwiese" Str. In the spring of 1952 the Company was relocated closer to the city of Zeilsheim, in the newly built barracks for the

US Army. The new buildings had large rooms, separate administration of-fices, medical and supply departments and a transport detachment.

Each of the volunteers received two sets of black uniforms like those of the American soldiers during the World War II. In fact the only distinguishing feature between the Bulgarian Company and the US Infantry was the uniform. At the end of 1953 and the beginning of 1954 the black uniforms were replaced by dark grey (worn while on official duties, celebrations, parades etc.) and olive green daily uniforms. Both included a beret of the same color. Special shoulder patches were designed for the officers and the soldiers in the Company. Those of the officers were of red-colored enamel with a golden frame. The Commanding officer of the Company wore two joint broad stripes, the first lieutenant – one broad and one narrow stripe also joint together and the second lieutenant - only one broad stripe. The soldiers' stripes were worn on the left sleeve – a red strip bordered with an embroidered dark-gray frame. The Sergeants had one big strip, the Junior Sergeants – a big and a small one, the Senior Sergeants and the Platoon Commanders - two big strips. The emblem of the Company was worn by the officers and the privates on the left shoulder and it was of fabric of embroidered patterns.

The military training of the volunteers began at the very moment of their arrival at the barracks. They attended lectures on their personal and their companions' safety when on duty as well as on how to protect the military areas. They also were trained how to give an emergent medical aid and how to use different types of protective equipment. They were given the basic knowledge and understanding of the chemical and the nuclear warfare and the consequences of the usage of these devastating weapons.

Their initial theoretical introduction to the firearms was facilitated by the fact that some of the volunteers were former Sergeant Majors in the Bulgarian Infantry who had fled from the communist regime. Those First Sergeants were Valkan Skerlev, Kiril Predov, Dimitar Avdzhiev and Dimitar Yanev.

The camp set-up, drills and other kinds of training on the barracks ground started in April 1952. The Bulgarian soldiers were also trained to use the modern weapons introduced in the West armies – the semi-automatic carbine MA 1; the automatic MA 14, NATO carbine, etc. Not a single accident occurred for the fourteen years of existence and training of the Bulgarian Company.

A Transport Department was established in 1951, consisting of four trucks – 2.5-ton capacity; four light trucks and five Jeeps. As time passed and the number of the sites to be guarded grew, the trucks in the Transport Department also rose in number. At the beginning of 1955, when the Volunteer Company in the US Garrison finally settled in Germersheim, the 2.5-ton trucks were replaced by ten trucks "Ford" of a 5-ton capacity. Since 1957 the Jeeps had become ten with the introduction of motorized sentries, guarding three of the sites, ammunition storehouses and military equipment in Southeast Germany near Schiefershtand, Kandel and Burg. Sergeant Bozhin

Gramatikov was Head of the Department during the last years of the Company's existence.

The drivers who had covered 100,000 km without causing or being involved in an accident, were given special certificates. During the fourteen years of existence of the Company and the millions of kilometers covered by the drivers, the record of the Company remained clear of accidents or damages caused by the Transport Department. Almost 85 percent of the soldiers had passed the driving test and obtained driving license before Company 4093 was disbanded in 1964. Many of them became familiar with mechanics, which helped them later to be hired as operators or drivers in industrial enterprises in Europe, Australia and the US.

At the very beginning the Medical Department of the Company was presented by Lieutenant Dr. Kiril Stanchov, who had graduated from the Medical Academy in Bulgaria. When the Company was transferred under the US Army West Command, the Medical Department was reorganized. The Medical Officer's position was closed. They appointed Kostadin Ivanov Kostadinov a Medical Sergeant in the Department. Each soldier was equipped with a first aid medical kit. In 1961 a Bulgarian officer, Sava Sevov, was appointed in the Medical Department by a special order of Germersheim Garrison's Commanding Officer.

The Fifth Platoon of the Company had administrative functions mainly, coordinating the activities of the other platoons as well as of the Supply and the Transport Departments. Senior Sergeant Dimo Karadimov was appointed a Company Sergeant.

On April 7, 1953 the Volunteer Company 4093 was moved from Zeilsheim to Eschborn (not far from Frankfurt am Main) according to Order No 4 issued by the HQ of the North Command, ZIP code 757, US Army. Less than two months later, on June 22, the Company was transferred from the North Command and 112 Military Center back to the West Command and 110 Military Center, ZIP code 227 and 6950 Labor Service Center, ZIP code 227, US Army. The Company was moved from Eschborn to the Rhine Ammunition Depot – Misau ZIP code 180. The transfer was carried out according to Order No 11 issued by the HQ of the North Command, on June 20, 1953. The Company was included administratively in Military Unit 7906, ZIP code 180, US Army.

The West Command, ZIP code 227 US Army, issued Order No 7 of October 19, 1953 according to which Company 4093 was once again moved on October 20, 1953, this time from Misau to the Arms Depot in Germersheim, ZIP code 403. The Company remained there till its disbandment in 1964.

The intelligence of the Soviet Military Mission in West Germany became more active during the second half of the 50's. As a countermeasure, every soldier was given a Military ID (identification) card. The soldier on duty was to present the so called General Order.

The Bulgarian soldiers of Company 4093 were largely engaged in charity. They supported financially German children – orphans, sick members of the



*Dr. G. M. Dimitrov on one of his frequent visits to the Bulgarian army*

Company, newly arrived Bulgarian emigrants, donated for the Red Cross. This activity of the Bulgarian Company 4093 was honored by the German and US authorities who issued special letters of grateful acknowledgement. The charity of the Bulgarian emigrants played an important role for keeping up the name and the prestige of Bulgaria.

After Stalin's death, the contacts between the new leader of the Soviet Empire Nikita Khrushchev and the leaders of the West democracies became more frequent. Khrushchev was continuously repeating his appeal to the US President to disband the national companies of the political emigration from the East European countries. Eventually, America conceded to the appeal in order to preserve the warming relations between the USSR and the West countries. As a result the Bulgarian Volunteer Company 4093 was also dismissed. That happened on June 30, 1964. Each member of the staff was given a letter of gratitude, signed by the Company's American Commander.

The constituting of the Bulgarian National Company 4093 in the US Forces in Europe under the NATO's High Command was a sign of credit to the Bulgarian political emigrants and the Bulgarian people, fighting for freedom. Through the Bulgarian National Company 4093, they were symbolically accepted in the community of the free nations and considered an ally in an eventual war between the freedom and the slavery and in the struggle for supremacy between the Democratic World and the Soviet Empire.

If we consider the participation of the Bulgarian democratic resistance movement abroad, represented by the Bulgarian National Committee, in the earliest organized efforts for uniting Europe, we may say that the current steps and aspirations of Bulgaria for joining NATO and the EU have their historical grounds and motivation.

By courtesy of *Bulgaira & NATO Magazine*.

# APPENDIX 11

## **DECLARATION OF NATIONAL CONSENSUS ON NATO MEMBERSHIP**

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*Promulgated, State Gazette, No 38, May 13, 1997*

We, the Members of the XXXVIII National Assembly, willing to promote Bulgaria's welfare, declare our determination to overcome the existing political, economic, and moral crisis in the country.

For this purpose, we shall continuously seek consent on major national problems.

Sharing the belief that the adherence to the Constitution of the country and the respect for the rights of all citizens underlies the way out of the crisis,

Recognizing the national political consent reached on February 4, 1997 with the mediation of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria for holding early parliamentary elections,

Affirming once again the Declaration of the political forces from February 11, 1997, regarding the principles for finding a way out of the crisis, and the subsequent Decision of the XXXVII National Assembly (February 13, 1997) on authorizing the caretaker government for leading negotiations and signing treaties and agreements with other countries, international organizations and financial institutions on foreign loans, financial stabilization, and social protection with provisions not worse than these of the already ratified treaties and agreements,

And expressing our readiness – presented in the Declaration of the political forces (March 18, 1997), for prompt adoption of the laws required for the realization of the agreement with the IMF after a constructive dialogue in the Parliament.

Declare that we shall support as follows:

1. By principle, the agreements between Bulgaria and the international financial institutions, including introducing currency board, as necessary tools for ensuring foreign support for overcoming economic catastrophe.
2. Fair distribution of social burden of the reforms.
3. Speeded up and real restitution of the arable lands and creating premises for their effective usage.
4. Resolute fight against crime – organized crime, in particular, and corruption at all levels and authorities within the state, excluding any exception on the ground of political affiliation.
5. Disclosing the records of the politicians, supreme justices and state officers in order to neutralize their dependence on former security services.
6. Bulgaria's full-fledged membership in the European Union and all its relevant activities.
7. Bulgaria's membership in NATO.

The Declaration was adopted on May 8, 1997 by the XXXVIII National Assembly and was sealed with the official stamp of the National Assembly.

# APPENDIX 12

## **DECISION CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA AND THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION ON THE TRANSIT OF NATO FORCES AND STAFF**

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*Promulgated, State Gazette, No 36, April 12, 2001*

Under the provisions of Article 86 (1) as referred to Article 84 (11) of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria and taking into consideration the forthcoming dissolving of the National Assembly, the National Assembly

DECIDED as follows:

Requests the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria, when necessary, to implement future agreements with NATO on concrete parameters of the transit and temporary stationing of NATO forces and staff, in compliance with the Agreement between the Republic of Bulgaria and North Atlantic Treaty Organization on the transit of NATO forces and staff, ratified by the National Assembly on April 6, 2001 in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Decision was made by the XXXVIII National Assembly on April 6, 2001 and is sealed with the official stamp of the National Assembly.

# APPENDIX 13

## DECLARATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

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**CONCERNING NATO'S OCTOBER 4 DECISION FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 5 OF THE WASHINGTON TREATY, RELATED TO THE SEPTEMBER 11 TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST THE USA**

*Sofia, October 6, 2001*

Taking into consideration the presented convincing evidences that the October 11 terrorist attacks against USA were organized and conducted by external forces, the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria fully supports and adheres to the North Atlantic Council October 4 decision for the implementation of Article 5 of Washington Treaty.

Implementing the already enunciated position of the Government and the Parliament, that Bulgaria is going to cooperate as a *de facto* ally of the USA and NATO in measures related to the fight against international terrorism, and that it will stick to the commitments, deriving from the Washington Treaty, including Article 5, we declare that when necessary and according to our national capabilities and legislation, Bulgaria is ready to participate in the implementation of the corresponding measures described in the NAC Decision.

Bulgaria highly values the determination and the commitments of North Atlantic Council for providing individual or collective assurances of Allies and other countries, which are, or might be subject to increased threats as a result of support they are providing for the antiterrorist campaign. We consider this as a sign of principle mutual solidarity and as relations between *de facto* allies based on the shared values, which Bulgaria firmly holds.