

Abstract

On 5 June 2017, the Prime Minister of Montenegro, Duško Marković, deposited the instrument of accession to the North Atlantic Treaty of Montenegro in Washington DC, making the accession of this country to the Atlantic Alliance official. Montenegro, one of the smallest of the post-Yugoslav Western Balkans republics, was thus welcomed into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as its 29th member.

This thesis analyzes the process Montenegro has been undergoing throughout its path to NATO accession and the underlying conditions which have impacted this process. It argues that the relationship between Montenegro and NATO, which started in the early 2000's and has been revolving primarily on the integration process, which started soon after the independence of the country in 2006. This integration process has profoundly modified the security and defense sectors in Montenegro, has impacted the politics of the country and is embedded within what has been a larger strategic approach of NATO to the Western Balkans and Central and Eastern Europe in general.

The Montenegrin integration process, as analyzed in this thesis, is considered to have revolved around three dynamics. The first has been an endogenous dynamic linked to the political attitude of the Montenegrin Government since the 1990's which has put Euro-Atlantic integration at the forefront of its policy. This is confirmed by the extensive reforms that have been carried out within the Montenegrin public sector, and in particular in the security and defense sector. These reforms, along with efforts to allow the country to reach European standards in terms of democratic practices and rule of law, have been driven by an internally and externally fueled Euro-Atlanticization of the country. There has also been a Euro-Atlantic dynamic which has corresponded to the strategy of NATO which has aimed to gradually integrate the countries of the region within its security community. Lastly, there has been an endogenous dynamic coming from the geopolitical state of affairs in Europe which has been heavily modified by the resurgence of Russia, the annexation of Crimea, and the civil war in Ukraine.

The various implications and impacts that this integration process has had on Montenegrin politics, on NATO as an international organization, and on the Western Balkans region are also assessed throughout this thesis.