

Features and Principal Stages of Entry of the Eastern European Countries into the NATO

Kamilla Sheryazdanova

External Policy Department, Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Institute of Diplomacy, Astana, Kazakhstan

Abstract: Eastern European countries gave the following block of strategically important objectives in favor of membership in NATO: strengthening of internal situation in the country; strengthening and enlargement of NATO by new approaches based on the existing geopolitical situation; strengthening and acceleration of democratic processes of regional reconstruction and establishment of new European order. All abovementioned objectives constituted the core of new geopolitics in Eastern European region. Benefits from the enlargement at the expense of Eastern European countries were obtained by NATO and it was dictated by geopolitical reality. Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary cover very unstable Balkans. Thus, they serve as a shield against possible distribution of instability of this region to Europe and NATO. Inversely, they suggest the comfortable bridge in the region to prevent conflicts, regulation of conflicts and elimination of conflicts in this region. At the same time, Romania and Slovakia jointly with NATO members as Hungary and Poland fulfill the same functions of bridge/shield in relation to more instable Moldavia, Ukraine and Belorussia.

Key words: Eastern Europe • Integration process • European integration • Political-economic reforms • Joining NATO

INTRODUCTION

Countries of Eastern Europe, considering global security and stability problems as the priority problems and focusing their attention on the priority of the development of national economies and financial sector, made a decision to join to general European structures as NATO and EC [1, P. 92].

Aspiring to the Euro-Atlantic integration by joining NATO, from the point of view of Eastern European countries, should assist in strengthening of internal state security, establishment of new security system of United Europe, exclusion of threat of regional conflicts, establishment of military shield around Eastern European countries. From the point of view of many authorities of post-Soviet space, position of Eastern European and Baltic states was stipulated by their unconditional pro-Western orientation and directed to legal, political and military transition of regional states to the zone of geopolitical influence of USA and developed Western

countries. This transition should assist in forced integration of these countries into economic and political structures of western world [2].

The end of “cold war” resulted in reduction of demand for armament and military equipment made in Western countries. Situation of manufacturers of arms was complicated by the increased competition in the traditional markets of arms and financial problems. In such conditions, establishment of new market of arms in Central and Eastern Europe was the perspective activity for western manufacturers of military equipment [3]. That’s why one director of the largest US aerospace corporation “Lockhid-Martin” B. Jonson was the cofounder of NATO enlargement committee; and in the course of the preliminary negotiations on entering of Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic into North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the representatives of White House tried to relate the solution of this problem to readiness of these countries to allocate large overseas orders to new aviation

Corresponding Author: Kamilla Sheryazdanova, External Policy Department, Academy of Public Administration Under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Institute of Diplomacy, 010000, Abai Str. 33a, Astana, Kazakhstan

engineering. Subject to investigations made by this committee, total costs to integration of new members of alliance constituted initially from 27 to 125 billion dollars during the nearest 10-15 years [4].

Poland has the experience of joining NATO. In 1994 supporting the program "Partnership for Peace's Sake", representatives of Polish Government declared that Poland intends to use possibilities specified in NATO program to prepare defense structures to become members of union. Declaration on active Polish-NATO cooperation within Partnership for Peace's Sake was reflected in annual Individual partnership programs (IPP). Number of joint measures fulfilled within Partnership for Peace's Sake increased in geometrical progression: 1994 – 40, 1995 – 130, 1996 – 240. National interests of Poland was projecting of IPP to direct maximum efforts to preparatory actions to integration into the union system and Polish armed forces – to interaction with NATO forces. Therefore, the attention was paid to preparation of military officer personnel of Polish army for membership in the alliance. Since 1997 Poland became the active participant of joint exercises; 25 joint Polish-NATO military exercises were conducted in 1994-1997. Moreover, joint seminars, conferences, courses and trainings for officers of Polish army were conducted within the program [1, P.86].

Poland undertook to keep its military costs at the previous level, modify its armed forces periodically and contribute a financial interest at the rate of 2.48% of total union budget in the sphere of financial obligations according to the principle of cost distribution proportionally to the possibilities of each member state, proportionately to its economic, military and demographic potential [1, P.86]. Terroristic acts in USA on September 11, 2001 were the reason of radical changes in the system of European and international security, review of security concept. The former minister of foreign affairs of Poland V. Chimoshevich performing at the meeting of Atlantic club emphasized that it's necessary to transform alliance, enlarge its political and military possibilities due to the cardinal changes of threats. NATO, according to Polish minister, shall be an organization capable to struggle with terrorism beyond the traditional zone of responsibility. Struggle with international terrorism served as the catalyst to accelerate entering of the second group of Eastern European states to NATO. Poland was the initiator and "conductor" to NATO for Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria [1, P.87].

Hungary took active participation in programs, conducted by the alliance. In October 1992 NATO planes equipped with tracking apparatus ABAKC began the patrol flights in air space of Hungary. In 1994 the first session of North Atlantic Assembly was in Hungary, beyond the countries of alliance. These events were the signal that the former socialistic country is ready to the membership in alliance. Conducting of various conferences, symposiums, seminars on discussion of problems of NATO joining provided for wide range of opinion exchanges, permitted to conduct a political dialog in the country and preparation of public opinion to the necessity of this idea implementation. Hungary conducted active internal explanatory campaign on its intentions in relation to NATO, new advantages and benefits for the country in case of entering into North Atlantic Block. Referendum conducted in Hungary on September 16, 1997 showed that over 40% of participants voted for joining NATO and this certified the adherence of Hungarian society to the objective of Euro-Atlantic integration [1, P.83].

Beginning from 1995 Hungary became the active participant of military exercises of NATO. NATO foreign language training center was opened in Budapest in September 1996. Joint Hungarian-NATO exercises were conducted in November 1996 in western Hungarian city Uidereg and in 1997 in Solnok. The former American president B. Clinton visited the Hungarian rear base Tassar in 1997 where more than three thousand soldiers of the American contingent of NATO peacemaking forces were allocated. These facts show the serious intentions of NATO to the Hungarian initiative of membership in its organization. During the preparatory period of entering into North Atlantic Alliance, Hungary fulfilled NATO terms which were the guarantee of acceptance into alliance. First of all, Constitution of Hungarian Republic set forth the civil control over armed forces; supervisory function of Parliament was effectively fulfilled. At the same time Hungary made the military reform.

Alliance comprehensively assisted in implementation of Hungarian projects and programs on joining NATO. In particular, representatives of NATO structures visited Hungary in 1995-1998. In this period the country was visited by all commanders of NATO united forces in Europe – generals J.P. Galvin, L.M. Shalikashvili, J.E. Joulvan, V.K. Clark. Since January 1998 Hungarian diplomats actively participate in meetings of North Atlantic Council [1, P.84].

Czech Republic took the active position in relation to joining NATO. In July 1996 on NATO summit in Madrid, Czech Republic was invited together with Poland and Hungary to begin negotiations for preparation of membership in the alliance. The next stage is an opening of Czech mission in NATO headquarters in October 1997. Moreover, Czech Republic reformed national legislation in order to adopt it to new standards and principles of legislation of NATO countries. Within the NATO program "Partnership for Peace's Sake", Czech Republic sent military contingents as part of peacemaking forces, participated in military exercises. Active diplomatic activity was conducted in European space on the promotion of alliance acceptance in Czech Republic [1,P.84]. Polarization of opinions increased in Czech society and political circles concerning reasonability and readiness of Czech Republic to join NATO at the moment of approaching of date of signing of Washington agreement in December 1997. Issue of Czech Republic's joining NATO was discussed in the Parliament of the country on April 14, 1998. 154 from 192 deputies voted for joining Washington agreement, 38 deputies voted against it. Discussion and voting in Czech Parliament continued two days. At this time demonstration of Czech people for and against NATO conducted all over the country. In such politically intensive situation Senate of Czech Republic voted for membership in North Atlantic Alliance. Document on joining North Atlantic Union was signed by the President of the country V. Gavel [1, P.85].

Basic principles of Euro-Atlantic integration of Slovakia were established in the period of public changes in 1989. Intention to join European structures, participate in them and be the developed part of Western Europe was born at that time. When the first democratic changes occurred in 1989-1990s after short-term period of hesitations political elite of the country understood that there was no other option for the country, but integration to European Union and NATO. These strategic objectives were included into all governmental programs of Slovakia.

Notwithstanding that there was difference in the understanding of the achievement of these objectives at the level of governments of different ages, strategically they were not changed. Except of far right and far left parties, basic parties in the Slovakian Parliament and other political forces voted for joining NATO. Only Government of 1994-1998 insisted on the special "Slovakian" course

and, therefore, Slovakia fell behind its neighbors (Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary) which received the invitation to join the alliance in 1997 and began negotiations on joining EC in 1998. In April 1997 Slovakia conducted a referendum on joining NATO. Referendum was considered as failed due to non-attendance of population. Only ten percent of electorate came to referendum while quorum constituted 50 percent. At that moment Slovakian Government made the only right decision – to wait when population would be ready to the membership in the alliance [1, P.87].

Joining NATO stabilized situation in the country, made it attractive for the investments, involvement of foreign capital and development of economic life [5]. Joining NATO confirms that country fulfilled all required political obligations and would develop stably. Alliance is the guarantee from external problems. This factor stabilizes the country.

Another Eastern European country – Bulgaria – became the full member of NATO on April 4, 2004. The first steps on joining to NATO were made by Bulgaria in 1990 after overthrow of totalitarian regime. In the July of the same year the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria approved the declaration which gave the positive answer to the invitation of alliance to establish permanent diplomatic contacts. After one year the Atlantic Club – the first club beyond the territory of NATO member state – was established in Sophia. Since 1994 Bulgaria is the member of pact program "Partnership for Peace's Sake". In February 1997 the Prime-Minister of the government Stefan Sofiyanski presented the official application of Bulgaria for membership in NATO. Bulgaria and another six Eastern European countries were invited to begin negotiations on joining at the summit of alliance in Prague in November 2002. Protocols of accession were signed and ratified in 19 member states and seven candidate states prior to these documents were deposited in USA [1, P.88]. Bulgarian government, as the Slovakian government, required the definite period of time to convince the society in the necessity of membership in the alliance, make the process of joining NATO less traumatic for Bulgarian citizens. In course of time the public opinion recognized the North Atlantic Alliance as possible and necessary option on the way of democratic development of Bulgaria that resulted in application to membership in the middle of 1990s. From the beginning of new century and especially after the country became the full member of NATO, even the most devoted opponents

of the alliance with prejudice of totalitarianism era had convinced that NATO is not the aggressive organization; it pursues common modern objectives, namely: peace keeping and stability keeping in Europe and world, struggle against terrorism [6].

After voluntary dissolution of Warsaw Pact in June 1991, Romania as other countries of the former pact was forced to search new ways of security assurance. The first step on this ways was Romania's signing of the document of program "Partnership for Peace's Sake" on January 26, 1994. Active participation in measures stipulated by this program allowed Romania to prepare to the future integration into NATO. It should be mentioned that the desire to see the country within North Atlantic Alliance was approved not only by Romanian authorities, but by the majority of population as well. When Romania was not included into the list of countries received invitation to enter the North Atlantic Organization at the summit of NATO in Madrid in July 1997, the attention of the Romanian authorities was paid to practical actions on preparations to enter NATO [7].

Washington initiatives were accepted, Action Plan on NATO Accession (MAP) was established with objective to assist to candidate countries in their preparation to join the organization at the summit of NATO in the US capital in 1999. Romania was in the process to join NATO at that time in the second round of enlargement and fell within the scope of MAP. Preparation to membership in NATO through the achievement of MAP objectives confirmed that this was the effective means to accelerate the entire process of reforming and modernization of country [2, P. 101].

The majority of Romanian political analysts hold the opinion that active accession of Romania to Anti-Terroristic Force Alliance along with the devotion to democracy values, principles of market economy and construction of legal state was the constitutive element in the decision-making to invite Romania to NATO on November 21, 2002 [1, P.89]. "Romania, – said the former Romanian Prime-minister Adrian Nastase in interview to the newspaper "Adevarul" before the decision on the enlargement made in Prague, is the largest candidate to receive invitation to join NATO from all points of view. This reality forces us to concentrate the energy in the subsequent period to accelerate the entire process of reforms, first of all, in economy, army modernization and use of positive results achieved during the last years"[8]. Romania became the full member of NATO on April 04, 2004.

So, assessing the perspectives of Eastern European countries from Euro-Atlantic integration, it should be mentioned that being the members of NATO, these countries have the most important security assurance and participate in the politically significant decision-making on Europe security. Certainly, integration to NATO assumes less financial efforts that financial efforts which countries of Eastern Europe shall make to assure their security independently. Membership of Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria on NATO favorably affected the development of international political and economic relations of these countries with other European states. But the principal "benefit" received by these countries from membership in the alliance is a great international confidence which positively affected all objects of foreign policy, first of all, the process of joining to European Union.

From the military point of view, participation of Eastern European countries in NATO in the process of joint peacekeeping operations assists in the strengthening of military readiness Eastern European countries. This participation in joint operations was diversified in the course of time and now includes a wider range of participation forms, namely: direct participation in military actions, delivery of technical and medical assistance, assignment of territorial air space to allies [9]. Membership in NATO introduces associated members of European Union into "European Club" and gives them a feeling of European identity. EC abilities of crisis settlement could be the special priorities of enlargement. Membership in NATO, anticipating the membership in EC, could improve abilities of crisis settlement of those countries which want to join EC [10].

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