

NATO Enlargement, The Balkans and Russia

By [Viktor Milinkovic](#)

Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

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The following text is the first in a series of articles which will present an analysis and evaluation of NATO enlargement in the Balkans, the interests that are driving this policy and the implications this has for Russia.

The escalation of tensions between the NATO military alliance and Russian Federation has become the most critical issue within the domain of contemporary international relations. The potential for devastation on a global scale as a consequence of an eventual direct military confrontation has increased exponentially.

The prospect of such a scenario occurring is no longer a remote possibility and as such demands an objective evaluation as to the origins of discord and sources of contention. The evolution of an antagonistic atmosphere between NATO and Russia emerged in tandem with events that immediately followed upon the culmination of the Cold War in 1991. The NATO military alliance interpreted the disintegration of the Soviet Union as its 'victory,' thus proceeding with a formal policy of enlargement into the domain of former Warsaw Pact and Soviet republics.

In effect, NATO utilised the new circumstances advantageously, in abandoning its ostensibly defensive character as prescribed by its own charter. In so doing, the military alliance assumed an openly offensive position in preparation for aggressive Eastward expansion, which would be consolidated by a series of military interventions and an extension of its basing system. The security conditions in the world over a decade later had deteriorated to such an extent, that President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin was inspired to assert in his 2005 address to the Federal Assembly, that: "we should acknowledge that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century" [1]. The instability that has engulfed much of the world since the end of the Cold War is a direct consequence of military operations initiated by NATO or by leading NATO member states in a variety of coalition arrangements, namely the US, UK, France and Germany. The principal objectives that have never been formally acknowledged by NATO, but are apparent from the resulting reality of an openly offensive strategy, are:

1. The prevention of the emergence of a rival to NATO in political as well as military terms
2. The incorporation the entire Eurasian landmass into a NATO allied military structure
3. The establishment of a NATO-led protectorate administrative authority in strategic locations

Immediately upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, NATO embarked upon its first such post-Cold War 'out of area' conquest, or extra territorial operation, within the Balkan

Peninsula. The former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was located upon NATO's Western-most frontier at that time and subsequently became a priority target for destabilisation. NATO's operations within the former Yugoslavia instigated a Third Balkan War, which would set a precedent, as well as a standard, for its later actions.

The history of the reality of Yugoslavia's dissolution as opposed to the mainstream media presentation, has been documented in Diana Johnstone's book *Fools Crusade*. [2] The Third Balkan War consisted of a series of secessionist aggravated conflicts, based upon sectarian agitation, in which territories of the former Yugoslavia were amputated and reconfigured under NATO supervision. Military interventions led to troop deployments and permanent base installations in Bosnia and in Kosovo, where the largest US/NATO military base in Europe has been established, Camp Bondsteel. [3] NATO's advance has proceeded in accordance with the 2010 Strategic Concept document formulation, a key objective as stated, is to: "facilitate the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans." [4] Serbia however, with the exception of Kosovo-Metohija, alongside Montenegro, has resisted incorporation into the NATO structure, albeit at great cost and significant loss of life.

Former Yugoslavia



Montenegro, nonetheless, received a formal invitation to join NATO on 02 December 2015,

invoking vocal objections and appeals to desist on the part of the Russian Foreign Ministry and Federal Assembly. [5] NATO enlargement in the region is therefore nearing completion, leaving Serbia increasingly isolated and under intensifying pressure to yield in the face of encirclement and encroachment. The implications of Montenegro's prospective accession to NATO was cogently evaluated by retired Yugoslav (Third) Army General, Goran Jevtovic, at a public meeting of the Strategic Culture Foundation, held in Cacak in Serbia on 05 December 2015. Jevtovic explained that in isolation, Montenegro is of negligible significance for NATO from a political, economic, financial, and even territorial perspective, given its size (13,812km²) and current population (6220,029 according to 2011 census). Geostrategic significance however, is evaluated in accordance with criteria concerning geographical physical space and location, coordinates and communication networks, transportation routes and force projection staging positions. In this context, Jevtovic contended, Montenegro is of high priority and high value significance to the NATO military alliance.

This reasoning conforms to a military doctrine which apprehends the world in terms of a permanent battlefield or theatre of war and military operations, and in this perpetual state of war the world is segregated into respective operational command areas. Montenegro is located within the NATO Joint Force Command area (previously designated as Southern Command prior to reorganisation in 2004), which is centred at the Military Command base in Naples, Italy.

According to Jevtovic, on the basis of classified and partially secret documentation he had access to during his military career, NATO is in a potentially defensive position in relation to Russia. NATO Joint Force Command (JFC) could effectively be severed in the hypothetical event of a landing of approximately one airborne division of Russian combat forces in Montenegro. From the perspective of NATO military analysis therefore, Montenegro would require the combined armed forces of two member states for an adequate defence of this territory, in the event that it is incorporated formally into the JFC area. Jevtovic thus contended that the geostrategic significance of the Western Balkans region is quite unique from the perspective of global military powers generally, but particularly for the military alliance. The Balkan Peninsula in its entirety falls within two highly strategic military command areas, according to NATO geostrategy, those being both Southern Europe and the Middle East. Hence the urgency with which NATO currently seeks to fulfil the objectives outlined within its 2010 Strategic Concept document. [6]

Notes:

1. Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, April 25, 2005, The Kremlin, Moscow
(http://www.archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2005/04/25/2031_type70029type82912_87086.shtml)
2. Diana Johnstone, *Fools Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions*, 2002, Pluto Press
3. <http://www.army-technology.com/projects/campbondsteel/>
4. NATO, *Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, Adopted by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Lisbon 19-20 November 2010, NATO Public Diplomacy Division 1110 Brussels - Belgium
(http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120214_strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf)
5. Launch of process of Montenegro accession to NATO regrettable — parliamentarian, 02

December 2015 (<http://www.tass.ru/en/politics/841026>), Russia's NATO envoy: Balkans should stay away from NATO's geopolitical rivalry, 07 December 2015 (<http://www.tass.ru/en/politics/842040>)

6. Fond Strateske Kulture, ФСК Трибина - Чачак - 05.12.2015, (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x38i3qyu4vM>)

Viktor Milinkovic is a criminal justice professional and specialist with over a decade of experience within the field of law enforcement, public protection, risk assessment and security analysis and strategy.

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Articles by: **[Viktor Milinkovic](#)**

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