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Book review

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SECURITY STRATEGIES OF MILITARY-NEUTRAL COUNTRIES AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Kostić Šulejić, Marina. 2024. *Vojna neutralnost i nuklearno oružje: između posedovanja i zabrane – slučaj Evrope i opcije za Srbiju*. Beograd: Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, 247 str.

Although each country has different national interests, their most fundamental and common interest is survival. However, the interest in survival can be pursued through various strategies (policies and means). Dr. Marina Kostić Šulejić, in her monograph "Military Neutrality and Nuclear Weapons: Between Possession and Prohibition – The Case of Europe and Options for Serbia," specifically examines the ways in which states can secure their survival, particularly those that are militarily neutral and do not benefit from the protection of military alliances. The additional value of the monograph lies in the fact that the subject of analysis is narrowed exclusively to nuclear weapons, thus linking military neutrality and nuclear weapons directly. This is because states that possess nuclear weapons believe that their primary value lies in providing a deterrent effect. In line with this belief, the question arises: "Should a militarily neutral country be primarily focused on strengthening its military capabilities so that it can independently deter any potential attack, including with nuclear weapons, and in case deterrence

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fails, prevail in a conflict, or should it be primarily focused on promoting a policy of peace, arms control, and disarmament, without strong military offensive capabilities?" (Kostić Šulejić 2024, 21-22). Since this concerns nuclear weapons, it implies considering whether a militarily neutral state should aim to acquire or prohibit nuclear weapons to secure its survival. In addition to the strategic choice itself, it is also discussed "what determines the neutral state's decision on whether it will turn to one or the other model of the relationship between military neutrality and nuclear armament?" (Kostić Šulejić 2024, 22). Given that some militarily neutral countries in Europe – all three militarily neutral EU member states – have opted for the policy of banning nuclear weapons by adopting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (adopted in 2017 and entered into force in 2021), while others have stayed outside of this Treaty, the central question posed in the monograph is: Why did all three militarily neutral EU member states choose to adopt the ban on nuclear weapons while others have not yet done so, and is the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons by Serbia, as a militarily neutral state and a candidate for EU membership, a "logical choice" for it?

The monograph "Military Neutrality and Nuclear Weapons: Between Possession and Prohibition – The Case of Europe and Options for Serbia" consists of five parts, with the first being the Introduction and the last the Conclusion. In the central three parts, the author first examines the relationship between security strategies based on deterrence and disarmament, presents the process of formulating the ban on nuclear weapons through the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and constructs a model of military neutrality that favors nuclear disarmament. The third chapter of the book is dedicated to determining the connection between military neutrality and nuclear weapons in European countries, with an emphasis on analyzing those factors that influence the decision on (non) possession of nuclear weapons, which the author has previously identified. These factors are: a) the origin of military neutrality, b) the attitude toward the Non-Aligned Movement, particularly India and the USSR in the early phases of their independence; c) public opinion on NATO and the concept of deterrence; d) the level of development of the defense industry (especially considering whether a militarily neutral state was restricted in developing its armed

capabilities); e) the attitude toward nuclear energy; f) nuclear weapons programs; g) views and activities regarding nuclear disarmament (Kostić Šulejić 2024, 14-15).

In the case of the militarily neutral countries Switzerland and Sweden (which was a militarily neutral country when it developed its military nuclear program), the following common characteristics can be observed: a long history of military neutrality, which is not an end in itself but a tool in achieving interests, i.e., a form of practical foreign and security policy, and therefore not part of the constitutions of these countries; good relations with countries from the Non-Aligned Movement; a tendency towards interoperability with the NATO alliance; a positive attitude towards the concept of deterrence (a strategic approach to neutrality based on the development of their own forces through compulsory military service and the development of the defense industry); a positive attitude towards nuclear energy and the construction of nuclear power plants; the existence of nuclear weapons programs; as a result, giving central importance to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and not adopting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. On the other hand, when it comes to EU member states that prohibit nuclear weapons (Austria, Ireland, and Malta), the following observations are made: in the cases of Austria and Malta, neutrality is internationally agreed upon and included in the constitutions of these countries; a positive attitude towards the Non-Aligned Movement and the significant role of the USSR; a negative stance on NATO membership; a negative stance on the concept of deterrence in favor of positive/active neutrality, i.e., promoting a peaceful policy (diplomacy and disarmament); low levels of investment in defense systems; a negative attitude towards the construction of nuclear power plants; the absence of nuclear weapons development programs in their history, and in the case of Austria, a contractual prohibition on creating such weapons; both the NPT and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons have been signed. Finally, when it comes to countries in Europe that are not EU members but support the ban on nuclear weapons (the Holy See, San Marino, and Liechtenstein), the author identifies the following common characteristics: a negative attitude towards the concept of deterrence in favor of positive/active neutrality; low investment in defense systems; a negative attitude towards nuclear energy; both the NPT and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons have been signed. From the above,

Dr. Kostić Šulejić concludes that what most divides militarily neutral states advocating nuclear disarmament from those with a positive attitude towards nuclear weapons are a negative attitude towards the concept of deterrence, low investments in defense systems, a negative attitude towards nuclear energy; the previous absence of nuclear weapons programs, and as a result, the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

In order to determine whether Serbia is closer to the "model" of militarily neutral countries that have a positive or negative attitude towards nuclear weapons and whether the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is a logical choice for it, the author in the fourth chapter first examines the historical relationship towards nuclear weapons. This relationship fluctuated between two options: from Yugoslav activities aimed at acquiring nuclear weapons after the failure of the international community to achieve complete nuclear disarmament to the full prohibition of nuclear energy. From 1945 to 1948, the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FNRJ) aligned its stance with the USSR and supported its ideas on nuclear disarmament. Following the deterioration of relations with the USSR, from 1948 to 1955, Yugoslavia pursued an independent policy on nuclear disarmament. It was emphasized that nuclear disarmament was a technical matter in relation to the true goal, which was the improvement of relations among states (it was not enough to just eliminate nuclear weapons, but also the incentives for war). In the later period, from 1955 onward, the attitudes toward nuclear energy and nuclear weapons changed. A clear intention emerged within the Yugoslav leadership to develop the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes but also to explore the possibilities for the development of Yugoslav nuclear weapons. Due to a lack of finances and uranium, as well as the onset of the state's disintegration process, the nuclear weapons program never reached higher levels. Although plans for the construction of a larger number of nuclear power plants in Yugoslavia were made, only one, in Krško, was built, and in 1989, the complete halt of new nuclear power plant construction was implemented. Additionally, during Tito's leadership, Yugoslavia was a proponent of creating nuclear-free zones in Europe, including the Balkans and the Mediterranean, and proposed and supported numerous resolutions at the United Nations related to nuclear disarmament. Yugoslavia was also a member of the Non-Aligned Movement but with an ambivalent stance towards

the USSR. Moreover, one of the factors influencing the choice of a militarily neutral country regarding nuclear weapons was Yugoslavia's developed defense industry.

Finally, regarding Serbia, Kostić Šulejić highlights its similarities with the countries of the "nuclear deterrence model" (Switzerland and Sweden), which are reflected in the following aspects: neutrality as a form of pragmatic policy to preserve security and expand foreign policy options, and therefore not part of the constitution; a positive attitude towards the strategy of deterrence; a desire to maintain a strong military through increased investment in the defense system; historical experience in the nuclear weapons program; membership in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and rejection of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (due to the significant influence of nuclear powers on Serbia, which reject this Treaty, and Serbia's desire to maintain good relations with them). What makes Serbia similar to the countries of the "nuclear weapon ban model" are its history of advocating for nuclear disarmament, the existing ban on the construction of nuclear power plants in Serbia until 2024, and its continued strong opposition to potential NATO membership. Considering all of the above, the author concludes that Serbia is closer to the Swiss-Swedish "model," which is why the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is not entirely a "logical" choice for Serbia. However, there are elements of historical experience and policies towards nuclear energy, both in foreign policy and security terms, that may lead Serbia to choose the prohibition of nuclear weapons as the only option for ensuring survival and reducing the possibility of a nuclear conflict.

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