

## **SUMMARY**

### **OF HABILITATION PAPER**

**of Chief Assistant Professor Michael Minev Dimitrov, PhD**

submitted for review and participation in a competition for the occupation of the academic position of “Associate Professor” in National and International Security Department of New Bulgarian University in field of higher education “Security and Defense”, professional field “National Security”, announced in the State Gazette, Issue №84 of 21.10.2022, p. 38, item 2.

#### **The Western Balkans in the Battle for the Rimland, Sofia: Sci.-techn. Union of Mechanical Engineering “Industry – 4.0”, 2022, ISBN 978-619-7383-24-9**

The monographic work elaborates the thesis that the Western Balkans remain at the center of the geopolitical confrontation for the control of the Rimland, as a result, confronting states there with an overlapping, top-down configuration of enabling and restraining factors regarding the processes and phenomena guiding their behavior in the international environment. Furthermore, internal actors influenced by the region’s “geographic destiny” are in turn dictating an agenda that unlocks a series of vulnerabilities, creating a picture of synergistically amplifying malevolent influences that leave the geographic confines of their origins.

By analogy with the works of Friedrich Ratzel, at the beginning the prerequisites of the “geobiological” environment of the region and its impact on the internal political picture in the societies most affected by conflict potential able to become a resource for the argumentation of military aggression, are examined. This allows a subsequent delineation of the “spatial meaning” representing in motion the main conflict axes in the region and the interdependence between the dynamics along the Belgrade-Pristina interactions, the centrifugal processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina along with the increasing (probably externally influenced) role in this regard of the Croatian element which in cooperation with the ideologues of the “Serbian world”, might threaten the existence of this state.

In addition, the conditions under which the energy security of the countries in the region transforms itself into a determining factor for the lack of homogeneity in their foreign policy

behavior have been revealed, as well as the mechanism through which this leads to stagnation in the efforts to complete the regional security complex.

The monograph concludes with a formalized presentation of the competitive space in the Western Balkans, derived by using the computer-assisted method MACTOR, outlining the direct and indirect influences, along with the main points of convergence and divergence in relation to the pursued goals.

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