Chapter 7: SLOVAKIA

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Slovakia has during the twenty years since its establishment passed admirable changes in many areas. It has changed from a post-communist country, which had as a part of the Czech-Slovak Federative Republic been struggling with its feelings of inferiority and political and economic insignificance, to a stable and established member of the European Union and the Eurozone, the North Atlantic Alliance, as well as of a range of international groupings. Slovak security sector has undergone significant reforms, too. Nevertheless, the results of this reform process and its present state in some respects show signs of inconsistencies and contradictions. Fundamental changes in the strategic direction are compensated by noticeable shortcomings in the legislative area, hence a relatively successful process of professionalization of the armed forces is being disrupted by the lack of civilian and military experts in certain specializations and a significant shift of focus of the armed forces in terms of equipping and training is being undermined by the lack of modernization and obsolete technology. However, the process of security sector reform in Slovakia can be in many respects regarded as a success story, from which other countries can learn many lessons.

Strategic direction and legislative framework

The end of the Cold War and the subsequent changes in the geopolitical world order had a clear impact on the strategic direction of Central European countries, including the then Czecho-Slovakia. In Slovakia this question re-emerged a few years later after the formation of an independent state in 1993. Back then, several alternatives for Slovak engagement in European affairs have been presented, two of them coming to the forefront: an alternative of integration into transatlantic structures (NATO and the European Union) and that of (especially military) neutrality. The first option had received formal preference by the political elites, despite the controversy surrounding the actual conduct of domestic and foreign policy. In relation to the European Union, an important milestone was achieved by the signing of the Association Agreement with the EU in October 1993, followed by the application for the accession in June 1995. The approximation to NATO was underlined by

the entry of Slovakia into the mechanism of Partnership for Peace (PfP) in February 1994, created on the basis of NATO`s Brussels summit decision in January 1994 as a mechanism for increasing defence cooperation between NATO countries and their future partners. However, even though the three neighbouring states (Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic) took full advantage of this format to secure their invitation to the Alliance already at the summit in Madrid in 1997, the accession process for Slovakia turned out to be considerably longer.

The reasons for the decision from Madrid not to invite Slovakia to NATO accession talks were both officially and unofficially stated clearly: "Failing in fulfilling fundamental political criteria for integration to European and transatlantic structures" (see for example Simon, 1997). In particular they were the deformation of parliamentary democracy, political machinations aiming to establish centralized control over state and society, targeted constitution-breaking and an unclear foreign policy orientation. The new Slovak political leaderships had to struggle with all of these shortfalls to convince NATO members to re-evaluate their decision.

The question which was in front of the new government was whether it was possible to push Slovakia in the direction of the accession talks. As statements of NATO authorities showed, however, the alliance was very negative about this possibility. NATO Secretary General Javier Solana in the end of 1998 said: "There are no doubts that Slovakia is a solid partner of NATO. We will work hard together to catch up on what we missed. But it does not mean that Slovakia will become a NATO member tomorrow" (Kmec, Korba, Ondrejcsák, 2004). Although his words were confirmed by the next NATO summit in Washington in April 1999 - no country has been invited to begin accession talks – albeit the Alliance at least agreed on launching Membership Action Plan (MAP). To aspirant countries it offered a basic list of recommended activities, the fulfilment of which would be a precondition for accession to the organization. But what was more important for the Slovak government, Slovakia was, in contrast to the previous summit, mentioned in the final communiqué that assessed the development of its internal politics very positively.

Regarding the Washington summit results, Slovakia started to implement MAP under its own conditions. In June 1999, the government ratified a Program for Preparation for NATO Membership (PRENAME) and agreed on a creation of Governmental Committee for this purpose. PRENAME outlined the entire mechanism of preparing for NATO membership involving MAP activities. In October 1999 the National Program PRENAME – as a list of detailed steps to be taken - was presented. This program was the outcome of a national effort

combined with consultations mostly within the Visegrad group and other NATO members, as well. It defined tasks, responsibilities, resources and deadlines in five chapters: politics and economy; defence and military; resources; and information security and legislation. In defence and military chapter NP PRENAME defined these priorities:

- Military system reform on the basis of NATO defence planning knowledge and experience;

- Command, control, communication, logistic, infrastructure and intelligence systems interoperability and compatibility; Increasing of military personnel language preparedness;

- Defence planning and resources management improvements;

- Arms and military equipment modernization and decreasing one-sided dependence on systems of Russian origin.

Slovakia also had very active cooperation with NATO countries and other partners in defence matters (mainly through PfP). In its framework it executed Individual Partnership Program (IPP) and Planning and Review Process (PARP) as well as bilateral cooperation on different levels. Moreover, in foreign policy Slovakia endeavoured to act as "de facto ally." It wanted to project a better reputation in international politics and prove that it was worthy of its future accession. The most visible example of this strategy was Slovakia's contribution to NATO`s 1999 Kosovo campaign by opening its airspace. Slovakia contributed also very actively to SFOR operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thanks to all these efforts Slovakia, together with other six aspirants signed the Protocol to North-Atlantic Treaty in March 2003 by which the ratification process began. It was concluded officially on April 27, 2004 by its becoming a full member of NATO.

Changes in the country's strategic direction have also been manifested in the strategic security and defence documents of Slovakia. The first document in the chronological list had many shortcomings, both in terms of the actual content and how they were arrived at. They were not comprehensive and were prepared only by a small group of people from within the Department of Defense (thus were not consulted with experts from academia or other fields). Moreover, they failed to overcome the narrow scope of understanding of security and defense issues. This was due to the peculiarities of that particular period influenced by the then political power structure and constellation under which they have been created. Therefore, they touched on the country's relations to the process of EU and NATO integration only in

very general terms (although the doctrine declared that in terms of long-term prospects, the Slovak Republic could fulfill the required security guarantees and provide for its effective defense only by joining NATO), they focused on purely "national" (internal) objectives. Moreover, in terms of using the military they focused only on the preservation of the country's independence, sovereignty and inviolability of borders. Despite the shortfalls, however, at the time they were written they held great symbolic importance.

In 1998, after the changes introduced by the new administration and in the context of the assessment of certain strategic interests, the preparation of a trio of strategic documents had begun. There were several reasons for this: absence of implementation priorities in the previous documents; the need for a clearer characterization of the security environment; reaction to the non-inclusion of Slovakia among newly admitted members of NATO; and incompatibility of the threat assessment with the new threats, which became clear especially after the Washington Summit of 1999 and after the publication of the NATO Strategic Concept. Through this process of revision, Security Strategy, Defense Strategy and Military Strategy were gradually drafted. Especially Security Strategy had its own distinctive strategic importance, since it was the first comprehensive document with the content reflecting its title. Concurrently, it was the first paper where national security policy and requirements for the security system have been defined. In terms of security policy it is also worth noting that for the first time an active approach to shaping the security environment and membership in NATO and the EU was taken as part of one of the vital interests (interests divided into vital and important) were presented there (Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic, 2001). But the timing of their adoption appeared to be a problem (March and May of 2001), whereas only a few months later, based the terrorist attacks on American targets brought about a total global review of security threats. From the point of view of defence policy, essential characteristic of those documents was ensuring an effective defense of the country on its own by the time of accession to NATO. Although the ambition was to build armed forces that would already be fully compatible with allies to contribute to the full range of NATO missions (including collective defense) (Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic, 2001).

Accession to EU and NATO and acceptance of the obligations of membership was translated into pressure the review the documents adopted in 2001. The necessity to review long-term plans of the Ministry of Defence and highlighting of the need for new strategic documents appeared with regard to NATO requirements and adoption of the so-called Force Goals. The new documents saw the light of day in 2005 after some transitional phase. It was very positive

that the Security Strategy and Defense Strategy (military strategy has been incorporated into the defense one) were prepared in parallel, although under the auspices of different institutions. At the same time, relatively broad professional community was involved in the preparation process, which increased their general professional acceptance. Compared to the documents of 2001, there was a significant shift in the defined interests, a clearer expression of active security policy attitudes towards NATO and EU, and also more specific attitude towards certain countries or regions (USA, Russia, Ukraine, Balkans) (Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic, 2005). The country's defence policy also got a new dimension. According to the Defence Strategy, a collective defense creates a pillar of the national as well as transatlantic security (with the option to contribute also to ad-hoc coalitions). Its main features were defined as follows:

- Prevention - through active participation in conflicts and crisis prevention;

- Complexity - emphasis on building of such capabilities of the defense system that will allow to respond not only to the current but also to future threats;

- Euro-Atlanticism - membership in NATO and EU as a key factor of Slovak security;

- Proactivity - active participation both in NATO crisis management and multinational military operations led by EU in complementarity with NATO commitments (Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic, 2005).

At almost the same time, in addition to the completion of the strategic framework, also a new legislative framework has been created. Based on the Security Strategy (2001), the parliament approved the Constitutional Act on security in time of war, state of war and state of emergency in 2002. Along with it, other laws having a direct impact on transforming the security system and crisis management have been adopted: Act on Defence of the Slovak Republic and Act on Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, approved the same year, as well as Act on functioning of the Security Council of the Slovak Republic in the time of peace, approved in 2004. Although many amendments have been adopted in the following years, they had just minor influence on the whole security sector. Thus, many problems (mostly regarding competences and mutual relations of institutions) that have been identified since then, have still not been solved.

Eight years since their approval not only significant changes in the security environment occurred, but were also accompanied by a partial reassessment of the needs and focus of the armed forces and overall national defence. In particular, the current political-military ambition

for use of armed forces is already out of date, whereas it only defines the requirements for their readiness to work in operations. Therefore, it would be desirable that the Slovak Government makes a decision about the preparation of new security and defence strategies, which will take into consideration the current situation of international security and the security needs of the Slovak Republic.

Security System

The aim of the security system (sector) of Slovakia is defined in the already mentioned Security Strategy from 2001. It states that *the security system of the state, [which] will represent a complex, integrated system with purposefully arranged functions and structures, with the division of authority specified in concrete terms, and with a mechanism of interrelations between the elements* (Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic, 2001). According to the above, the structure of the security system can be defined at several levels:

- State level: National Council of the Slovak Republic, President, Government and National Security Council as a specialized body;

- Governmental level: central government authorities and other institutions;

- Regional level - county, township (offices at the county and district level), local governmental bodies;

- Companies and other private actors

Having in mind the provisions of the Constitution of the Slovak republic, the bodies of the legislative and executive power – namely the National Council, president and government - deal with strategic decisions of national security policy (security strategies, partial strategies and concepts); adopt security legislation and are responsible for the responding to emerging crises. At the lower level the governmental policy is conducted by institutions of the central government (ministries and institutions with the status of the central state administration), heads of district offices, mayors and statutory representatives of legal entities.

The Security Council of the Slovak Republic (SC SR) is the only specialized body regarding the security system. It acts as an advisory body to the Government, which is in peace time involved in creating and implementing the security system of the Slovak Republic and international commitments in the field of security. It evaluates the security situation in the Slovak Republic and all over the world and prepares proposals for governmental action in

security in the Slovak Republic, in crisis situations and prevention, as well as in post crisis situation. Of course, there are many other components of the Executive Sub-system of the security system in the competencies of various ministries and institutions:

- Ministry of Interior - Police Force, Fire and Rescue Service, Railway Police, Mountain Rescue, control chemical laboratories for civil protection,

- Ministry of Defence - Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic (consisting of Land Forces, Air Forces and Training and Support Forces),

- Ministry of Finance - Customs Administration,

- Ministry of Justice - Prison and Court Guard,

- Ministry of Health - Emergency Medical Services providers,

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Foreign Service,

- Ministry of Economy - Mining Rescue Service,

- The National Security Office

- Intelligence Services - Slovak Information Service and Military Intelligence

- Institutions in the competencies of the villages (municipal police and fire departments) and humanitarian public institutions (such as Slovak Red Cross, voluntary fire protection units, medical emergency units, Public Health Service, Caving Rescue, Water Rescue Service, Forest Guard, Fishing inspection etc.).

The main problem in connection with the functions of the Slovak security system is that there are many discrepancies between the security system itself and the crisis management system. There are many deficiencies in the responsibilities and mutual relations of the particular bodies of the system as a consequence of absence of a complex law on addressing both military and non-military crisis situations. In other words, the current management of the security system is loaded with a number of institutional complications, unclear horizontal and vertical interface and the absence of adequate information and communication flow and analytical elements. It means that there is a requirement to form a more comprehensive and integrated system that will enable the full utilisation of isolated systems such as the defence system, system of internal security, system of economic and financial security, as well as the crisis management system. However, in spite of different initiatives coming especially from the expert level since 2002, no comprehensive document has been adopted so far. The most

promising draft of the Security System Concept has been prepared in 2009 and 2010; nevertheless there was not enough political will for this draft to be presented to the Government for ratification.

Transformation and professionalization of the Armed Forces

Although Slovakia has not been invited to NATO accession talks at the Madrid summit in 1997, Slovak Armed Forces were assessed relatively positively, which was testified by a statement of Deputy Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff of US Armed Forces General Ralston just four months after Madrid summit: "US did not have any concerns regarding to preparedness of Slovak Armed Forces because Slovak soldiers and officers had earned great reputation in Partnership for Peace and UN peace operations, as well." (Kmec, Korba, Ondrejcsák, 2004). Therefore US promised to support Slovak accession as early as it would be possible from the political point of view.

Nevertheless, the reality was not so positive as there was still much to do in the armed forces reform process. That was – paradoxically when compared to the previous statement – also pointed out in a very critical report of the General Garret`s team and 2000/2001 MAP Progress Report, as well. That is why a much stronger effort was needed to fulfil all the conditions in the following two years. It started by ratifying so-called Model 2010 (Long-Term Development Plan of the Armed Forces) in 2002 aiming to establish relatively small, properly equipped and well trained armed forces. Although it was oriented mostly to the territorial and individual defence of the Slovak Republic, it already created the space for NATO integration. For the first time, the framework for needed resources guaranteed by governmental and parliamentary resolutions was defined in this document. Only three years later, and in the situation of notable delay in fulfilling the goals of Model 2010, new conceptual long-term document titled Long-term Plan of the Development of the Ministry of Defence until 2015 (Model 2015), was adopted. It emphasized building of expeditionary forces, but compared to the Model 2010 it predicted a lower level of defence spending. However, its implementation was also lagging behind, which was negatively reflected mostly in the process of modernization of the armed forces and capabilities development.

The transformation process was also slowed down by the negative effects of the economic crisis, but also by the general decline of interest in security issues by politicians. This was further reflected in the decreasing share of expenses devoted for defence (budget). This was

far from the level corresponding with the growth of military capabilities requirements. Those were affected mainly by increased quantitative and qualitative participation of Slovakia in international crisis management operations and their demands on the human, material and financial resources in particular. Therefore, the incoming government after the general elections in 2010, motivated by this negative situation, initiated the process of Strategic Defence Review (SDR). Its primary aim was to conduct a consistent and unbiased analysis of the state of the armed forces, and consequently outline the future developments in the horizon of 10 years. SDR revealed, as notes a White Book on Defence as one of the main products of the process, that given the years of existence of the Slovak armed forces the quality parameters of the Armed Forces transformation have not been met in several key areas:

- In the field of military personnel - despite a substantial reduction up to one-third and the professionalism of the Armed Forces, career growth of military personnel was halted, the aging of soldiers is deepening and manning of units is being reduced – all of that having an impact on the level of training, professional readiness and scope and quality of the tasks to be fulfilled;

- In the field of armaments and equipment - more than 70% of land armaments and equipment is over its life-cycle because no bigger modernization project for replacement of any of the main types of armaments and equipment has been conducted during the last twenty years. In other words the modernization has basically stopped;

- In the field of military capabilities - the loss of some of these capabilities occurred gradually, leading to a situation when the armed forces have only a limited range of capabilities of a limited quality level - interoperability with other allies according to NATO standards achieves only 54% of these capabilities, which substantially limits their ability for joint action in operations (White Book on Defence, 2013).

As was already mentioned, a crucial problem that significantly affects the extent and quality of the main activities of the Ministry of Defence is the discrepancy between the declared tasks on the one hand and the amount of resources allocated for their implementation on the other. This is a long-term problematic trend which had been continuously deepening over the 20 years of Slovakia`s existence. Above all, a declared governmental commitment to allocate at least 2% of GDP for defence, which should ensure a favourable course of modernization and transformation of the armed forces, was never met. The government started to retreat from this commitment already a few years after Slovakia's accession to NATO. This is confirmed

by the Ministry of Defence`s budget data over the past decade. While in 2003 the share of the defence budget was 1.87% of GDP, in 2006 it was only 1.62% and dropped further to 1.53% (967 mil. EUR) in 2009.

Considerably faster decline, however, occurred in the next two years. Defence budget for 2011 did not exceed 1.08% of GDP (763 mil. EUR), which meant a decline from 2009 to 2011 in absolute terms by about 27%. But more importantly, these figures differed significantly compared to the long-term development plans approved by the government. Unlike the reality, the planned figures for the years 2002-2005 (the Model 2010) ranged from 2% to 1.89% of GDP and for the period from 2006 to 2010 (the Model 2015) were at the level of 1.85 %. Newer drafts (the Model 2020 prepared in 2009) assumed the allocation of 1.53% of GDP starting in 2011. But as stated in the document Starting points of the Strategic Defence Review from August 2011, also this level of funding - substantially reduced compared to the commitment of Government - was not achieved in any given year. Consequently, the deficit in allocated resources has only in the period from 2002 to 2008 reached the figure of about € 970 million. During the next two years, this deficit it was even increased by around a further € 550 million, justified by an argument that it was due to the impact of the economic crisis. Thus, the total deficit in the allocated resources for the period 2002-2010 represents twice the budget of the Ministry of Defence in 2011 (Starting points of the Strategic Defence Review, 2011).

Equally worrisome is the development of a percentage comparison of the expenditure share on personnel and modernization. While the cost of personnel increased from about 50% to 65% in the last 5 years, the share of modernization spending decreased from about 16% to 8%. By this, Slovakia substantially moved away from a general NATO ambition to have all allies investing about one-fifth of their budgets to the development of their armed forces. Although the efforts of the current government to reverse this negative trend and once again move Slovakia closer to the expected figures are positive, the question is, however, how will these efforts translate into reality. Past experience encourages being cautious about it.

To stay objective, it has to be said that growth of personnel-related costs has very much to do with the professionalization of the army. Armed Forces of Slovakia are fully professional since January 2006, which has raised the overall expenditures for military personnel in the following years. But professionalization had also several other consequences. Firstly, the total number of armed forces that fell from about 25,500 to the current level of almost 16,000. It also had an essential impact on the changes in the composition of military personnel, whereas

there was a substantial reduction of senior ranks and officers' functions in favor of lower ranks. The number of women in the armed forces was gradually increasing, too. It currently stands at around 9%. Rapid introduction of professionalism also did not allow resolving all conceptual and legislative aspects of professional services, which was later confirmed by numerous un-systemic changes in legislation. Professionalization has also significantly influenced the way of recruitment of soldiers, which was connected to the limited interest of young people (especially in some of the specializations), as well as to the available resources. The resources were largely drained by expenses for pensions for departing soldiers, which is a long-term problem in the budget allocation process. At the same time all of these aspects have resulted in the aging of military personnel and created undesirable "generation waves." To conclude, the potential of professionalism, which was at the start a positive step, has not been fully taken advantage of when it comes to the quality and stability improvement of military personnel.

Creating a list of shortcomings and missed opportunities of the Slovak defence transformation effort, the quality of armaments and equipment of the armed forces is a necessary exercise. The already mentioned declining share of nominal and absolute expenditures on modernization had a significant impact on the acquisition of military equipment, which was not in accordance with the prepared long-term and medium-term plans. The negative consequence of this development was that in the entire period since 1993, no extensive modernization project of select main types of weapons and equipment has been completed. Although over 180 different types of weapons, equipment and materiel and communications and information systems has been put into use in the Armed Forces since 2003, this modernization has been too fragmented – producing a wide range of commodities mostly in small numbers. Despite the various political and professional ambitions and affirmations to ensure wider and conceptual modernization, adequate financial resources to enable successful completion of projects have not been allocated. Particularly critical appears to be the future of air force equipment (mostly transport helicopters and aircrafts as well as fighter jets), but also of some ground forces components (especially armored vehicles). But prospects for a fundamental change under the current unfavorable economic situation are not positive enough at least for two reasons: first, because for almost all the ruling administrations defense was far from one of their priorities; second, it is completely impossible to carry out the exchange of this equipment purely from the budget of the Ministry of Defence.

Combination of the above-mentioned factors had enormous implications on the capabilities of armed forces and on fulfilling NATO`s criteria, as well. Many of them, promised continuously to the Brussels HQ in the framework of the so called "Force Goals" were postponed because of the inability to achieve them at the scheduled time. This fact causes that the interoperability of armed forces is far from the required quality, posing great limitations for their potential deployment with other allies. Moreover, it has consequences for the number of military tasks Slovakia is able to perform in the proscribed extent and quality. During the Strategic Defence Review out of ten tasks resulting from the legislation and strategic framework, only four have been identified as the crucial priorities for the future. These are as follows: 1. contribution to the international crisis management operations (up to 600 persons) including NATO Response Force and EU Battle Groups, 2. Protecting the air space in the framework of NATO Integrated Air Defence System (NATINADS) 3. keeping mechanized battalion in high readiness and host nation support, 4. domestic crisis management (so-called "assistant tasks").

International Engagement

The active participation of the Slovak Armed Forces in international crisis management operations to support and promote peace in conflict resolution, world security and the fight against terrorism belong to the main components of foreign and security policy of the Slovak Republic. Since its establishment as an independent state Slovak Armed Forces successfully performed their tasks in 31 peacekeeping operations with the overall involvement of more than 10,000 soldiers.

The emphasis on active participation in international operations resulted from the concept of national defence after joining NATO which changed from the individual territorial defence towards its combination with the collective defence. This shift was defined in the above-mentioned strategic documents. Slovakia's participation in operations is legally binding mainly by the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. Based on its Articles 86 and 119, members of the Armed Forces can, with an agreement of the Slovak government, participate in humanitarian relief operations, observer missions, military exercises or international commitments of the common defence at longest for 60 days. For engagement in all other kinds of operations and mission, the agreement of the National Council is required. From international point of view, Slovakia is as a United Nations member and based on the UN Charter, committed to contribute to the protection of international peace and security. In

addition, Slovakia as a member of NATO is bound by the Washington Treaty and the principle of collective defence obliged to provide appropriate assistance, as well as a direct deployment of its armed forces in the event of an attack on one or more member states (in case these states ask for such assistance).

Slovakia is now officially taking part in seven operations, in two of them however, it provides no real contribution. A total contribution approved by the Parliament was determined in the first half of 2013 - and is 717. The real deployment is at the level of 438 soldiers stationed as follows:

- ISAF operation (NATO) in Afghanistan – 252 mandate, 242 real contribution;

- ALTHEA operation (EU) in Bosnia and Herzegovina - 176 mandate, 35 real contribution;

- UNFICYP operation (UN) in Cyprus – 280 mandate, 158 real contribution;

- UNTSO observer mission (UN) in Syria and Israel – 5 mandate, 2 real contribution;

- EUMM observer mission (EU) in Georgia – 1 mandate, 1 real contribution;

- OSCE observer mission in Moldova – 1 mandate, 0 real contribution;

- OSCE observer mission in Georgia – 2 mandate, 0 real contribution.

A specific commitment is involvement in the NATO and EU Response Force. Currently, Slovak Republic participates in the preparation process of Visegrad Four countries` battle group, which should be at the stand-by stage in the first half of 2016. It builds on the previous experience with the preparation of a multinational force in the Czech and Slovak battle group in the second half of 2009 and combined battle group of Germany, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia in the first half of 2010. So far, Slovakia has also contributed four times to the original form of NATO Response Force (NRF 7, NRF 8, NRF 10, and NRF 11) and committed to contribute 150 soldiers to this cluster after the revision of the method of its creation in 2010.

The funding of these contributions remains to be a problem to some extent because possible deployment is covered on an ad-hoc basis from defence budget and often at the expense of development and training of the armed forces. As was calculated during SDR, the cost of deployment of the unit size of a company (about 150 people) is estimated at about 60 million Euros, which is a significant part of the budget. Desirable solution would be to finance the

deployment and maintenance of armed forces in operations from resources outside the budget of the Ministry of Defence, as it is the case in many other states.

Another problem in terms of the potential impact of the participation of Slovak soldiers in operations abroad on the capabilities of the armed forces was the deployment of predominantly inorganic units formed by professional soldiers from several units. A negative aspect was also in the characteristics of tasks being fulfilled - they were mostly support, engineering and guarding tasks due to the unavailability of the desired range and quality of capabilities of the Armed Forces. The consequence of this fact was that the benefits of participation in these units in foreign operations for capabilities development were lower than in case of other types of tasks. However, it is quite positive that in the past two years more emphasis is placed on more rigorous selection of units as well as the type of missions and tasks these units are going to perform abroad.

Instead of conclusions: Civil-military relations and "security community"

In the first years of the existence of Slovakia, the relations of civilians and civil society on one hand and armed forces on the other were to a great extent influenced by the culture of the previous regime. There was only a limited public control of the internal development of the Armed Forces and all the processes in the security sector (system) were seen as too distant from the interests of the ordinary people. Really interested in the defence issues were just a small number of professional associations and organizations based on the reminiscences of the former groupings. Thus the actions of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces have been influenced only by the legislative framework adopted in the period before the establishment of the Slovak Republic (1990-1992). In that time the defence sector was predominantly under the control of the parliament (National Council) with several committees also having direct responsibilities towards security and defence matters: Committee for Financing and Budget, Committee for Defence and Security, Special Control Committee for Control of the Action of Military Intelligence, Special Control Committee for Control of the Slovak Intelligence Service, and Special Control Committee for Control of National Security Bureau. Nevertheless, the Army remained the most trusted among all state institutions in Slovakia and has kept this position to this day. In the early 1990s the situation in the civil-military relations was influenced also by the limited transparency of defence issues and by very antagonistic position of the state leadership towards international and domestic non-governmental organizations and other professional institutions.

The situation has changed in the late 1990s when more open position of the government towards the Euro-Atlantic integration created the space for opening up the communication on the problematic issues to the wider public in Slovakia and abroad. That was a time when the germs of the real civil society in the security and defence sector have been established and the security community started to emerge. It had very much to do with at least two factors:

First, there was a wide support of external actors including significant role of international donors. Since 1998, the developments in the security sector in Slovakia were closely supported by a number of institutions from abroad, mostly, by NATO and the EU because it was in the general interest of the Western countries for the democratization process to continue.

Second, there was gradually a growing number of people educated in the spheres of international relations, political studies and security studies. These topics started to be incorporated in the curricula of several universities, including those which have almost no tradition in teaching and researching these subjects. Newly established Faculty of International Relations at the Matej Bel University, Faculty of European Studies at Comenius University or Faculty of International Relations at University of Economics are producing the majority of the decision-makers in this sector. Also the position of the Military Academy in Liptovsky Mikulas, specializing in military education, has an important position in the security sector of Slovakia.

Third, in general greater attention was paid by the public and the political leadership towards the issues of international position of Slovakia and developments on the international scene. Mostly the accession process to European Union helped this situation. And although security was not of primary public interest (rather issues of common currency or dismantling of borders), it exploited this positive attention, bringing about something like a "strategic security communication" helping to bring many important decisions into reality (e.g. the commitment to contribute by 2% of GDP to the defence budget). Unfortunately, all the security actors involved were not able to keep this positive momentum in the long-term perspective and the positive gains have gradually disappeared just several short years after NATO and EU accession. One of the crucial consequences is the lack of professionals able to make relevant decisions on the political level among members of parliament, representatives of political parties.

Therefore, the biggest challenge for community of Slovak security sector in the upcoming years is to brink issues of security and defence back among the national priorities. For further

development and keeping the ability to transfer knowledge in this area to other regions it is highly required Slovak governments and political leadership to pay more attention to the questions of modernization of Armed Forces and conditions for training of soldiers. Otherwise Slovakia`s position as a good example for others would be in jeopardy.

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