

# The NATO and EU Relations of Central and Eastern European Nations



Edited by  
**GERGELY VARGA**

Dialog Campus

THE NATO AND EU RELATIONS OF  
CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN NATIONS

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# THE NATO AND EU RELATIONS OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN NATIONS

Edited by  
Gergely Varga

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# Introduction: The NATO and EU Relations of Central and Eastern European Nations

*Gergely Varga*

The negative developments in the security environment of Europe in recent years have placed NATO and the European Union's defence policy to the centre of political debates in East Central Europe. The renewed tensions to the East with Russia in connection to the conflict in Ukraine as well as the security challenges emanating from Europe's southern periphery – illegal migration, terrorism, failing states – produced a paradigm shift in the perceptions and policy decisions related to security and defence in the countries of East Central Europe. As emphasised by the increasing military expenditures, the reform programs launched within the armed forces and new initiatives for regional defence cooperation, security and defence matters are once again at the centre of high politics. Within this context, re-evaluating the role of NATO and the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in East and Central Europe is unavoidable, if one seeks a better understanding of the defining political features of the region. The primary objective of this volume is to be a valuable tool in this endeavour.

In order to provide a general overview, the essays in the volume will cover the most significant aspects of the security and defence policy of the respective countries in the region. Understanding the general perceptions of NATO and the EU is the foundation for any deeper exploration of the related issues. Therefore, each paper will explore the perceptions on NATO and CSDP, the role of NATO and the main strategic objectives of the respective countries' accession and also public opinion and domestic rhetoric towards NATO and the EU. In this regard, highlighting the role of NATO and CSDP in the national security and defence policy as reflected in key strategic documents, sectoral policies and public discourse will be at the center of focus. For most of the countries examined in the volume, accession to these organisations was and still is a critical strategic objective. Therefore, conducting a review of the most significant factors and the motivations that formulated the desire to join NATO and the EU – from a security perspective regarding the latter – will reveal the perceived value of membership in these Euro-Atlantic institutions. Similarly, for those countries where membership in one or the other organisation is not a strategic objective, the reasons for abstention are worthy of mention. Alongside the perceptions reflected by the strategic decisions, policies and political debates of the political elites, the trends that can be revealed from the changes in public opinion and domestic rhetoric also constitute a critical aspect of our inquiry.

Taking also a historical perspective, the development of the institutional relations will also be examined. Although at a first glance, in case of many countries in our study, accession to these organisations seems to have been inevitable in retrospect; in reality, in the early 1990s it was far from given that they would occur (ASMUS 2002). Hence, it is important to





take note of the fact that there were realistic alternatives for these countries concerning their security and defence policy orientation in the early post-Cold War period, with neutrality and closer security cooperation with Russia among the most common options. However, NATO and EU membership soon became the priority objective for most countries of the region (ASMUS 2002).

Significant emphasis will be given to the role of NATO and EU CSDP in the domestic transition and defence reform programs the countries have experienced after the end of the cold war. In this context, topics ranging from democratic oversight to reform programs and capability development programs will be discussed in the light of NATO and CSDP strategic objectives. Lastly, the volume also seeks to cover the most relevant policy-specific questions in the field, such as perceptions towards Russia, contribution to NATO and CSDP missions and perspectives on NATO–EU burden sharing.

Placed between the great Western European powers to the West and Russia to the East, and directly exposed to the instability emanating from the Balkans and beyond Europe's southeastern periphery, the countries in East Central Europe share core geostrategic features. Historically exposed to the expansionist ambitions of great powers around them, support for a rule-based regional order and the quest to be a part of a stable European security architecture was a primary objective of the countries in the region after much of them regained their sovereignty at the end of the Cold War. However, the ten countries under the scope of our research – Austria, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine – have quite significant differences in their strategic position and security and defence policy orientation. The perceptions and relationship towards Europe's two eminent post-War peace projects, NATO and the European Union have been a defining feature of the security and defence policy of the respective countries since the end of the Cold War. Seven of the ten countries have become members of both NATO and the EU, but even in their case, geography, diverging security perceptions, security challenges and domestic politics produce significant differences in their defence priorities. While the EU member Austria is unique in our study for its traditional neutrality, Serbia and Ukraine still remain outside NATO and the EU, and their future membership in one or both organisations remains uncertain.

## **Historical perspective: the transition period**

The road to NATO and EU membership was far from straight. On the one hand, as the Soviet Union dissolved but the future of Europe was still uncertain, Eastern European countries began to think about different options as to their future place in the European security architecture. Neutrality was also given a serious consideration. In the early years of the 1990s, NATO was more concerned in improving its relations with Russia and the countries of the region were still at the beginning of a long and difficult transition process. Democratic institutions, economic challenges, the underdevelopment of the defence sector all were considered to be significant barriers for a quick integration process. Initially, NATO chose to draw closer the countries in the region to itself while at the same time not granting them full membership. The Partnership for Peace Program was first intended to give something meaningful providing incentives to continue with democratic reforms, while at the same

time avoiding to take steps that would risk relations with Russia and give all the security guarantees. Once the decisions were taken in the major Western powers to open up the doors of NATO and the EU, the Central and Eastern European countries aspiring to become members went through a similar path. However, depending on the preparedness and strategic location of the countries at play, the timing of accession was different. The most qualified three countries, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary managed to secure membership in 1997 and became full members in 1999. The next round of NATO enlargement was not independent of the post-2001 environment where the United States was in a strong position to pursue its strategic interests and Russian–Western relations were relatively cooperative especially compared to the situation at present. Among the countries examined in the volume Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia successfully built upon the momentum and secured their membership at the 2002 Prague Summit.

The European Union took a different path. EU members decided that instead of a phased, gradual enlargement of the EU, Brussels would prefer a “big bang” enlargement. However, economic considerations, the quality of democratic institutions, and related political aspects played a much more significant role than the strategic–military aspects dominant from NATO’s perspective. Security interests certainly played a role in the drive for EU membership, but the impact and significance was considered more indirect and more of a long-term development in the context of the integration process. Even these security interests were embedded in the long-term political and economic benefits of EU membership than the security guarantees provided by CSDP.

## **Transition, reform and investments in the defence sector**

Except for Austria, the countries in the Central European region went through profound internal changes after the fall of the iron curtain. The transition affected all aspects of the security and defence sector, from the constitutional and legal conditions of the armed forces and their application to the primary tasks of the armed forces and their force posture. The requirements set out in the Copenhagen criteria in 1993 from the side of the EU and the Enlargement study set out the democratic functioning and the rule of law as basic requirements for accession to the organisations (COLE et al. 2005). The most important legal and institutional changes effecting the armed forces were undertaken even before the acceptance of the above-mentioned declarations (CAPARINI 2003). This included the adaptation of institutions, which ensured the democratic and civilian oversight of the armed forces. However, the complete, substantial transition and modernisation of the armed forces took much more time, and from many perspectives have not been completed yet. This included especially the modernisation of the armed forces. In much of the countries of the region, the “peace dividend” and the budgetary constraints as a consequence of the economic transition resulted in the underfunding of the defence sector. Within this context, the size of the armed forces was usually drastically reduced and the acquisition of equipment was delayed or abandoned. Ageing Soviet equipment unfit for NATO standards became a common feature of the armed forces of the region (CAPARINI 2003). However, the shrinking sizes and restructuring of the armed forces were not just the result of budgetary constraints, but the new security environment and the new tasks the armed forces were

required to undertake. This meant primarily participation in international peace support operations. Considering the leading role of NATO and the EU in such operations in the Balkans and elsewhere in Europe's neighbourhood, contributing to these missions became a requirement towards countries aspiring to be members of these organisations. Following also many old NATO and EU member countries, Eastern Europeans abandoned conscription and undertook a professionalisation process. The international peace support missions were also excellent opportunities to enhance interoperability between the forces of NATO members and applicant countries.

Restructuring of the Armed Forces also meant the implementation of new defence planning processes. After accession, capability development processes were largely driven by NATO force goals with a view on the commonly agreed missions of the Alliance. From the late 1990s, this meant putting a great emphasis on developing modest expeditionary capabilities and forces for peace support operations. Since 2014, a renewed emphasis on territorial defence and Article 5 has been driven not only by NATO requirements but also by direct national interests. In order to realise these force goals and improve capabilities, countries in the region have also developed multinational cooperative formats, such as the Visegrád Battlegroup. Although relatively modest in size and in their impact, these cooperative formats enhanced the reputation of the region and strengthened political relations among the countries in the region.

## **Security and defence policy**

Although geographically located in one region, the security and defence policy perspectives of Central and Eastern European Countries with regards to NATO and EU CSDP differ as much as they are alike. Certainly, some common features can be found in most of the examined countries. As small states, they have followed the agenda set by greater powers within the Alliance or the EU. In this regard, the conditions set by the core focus and activities of NATO have been defined primarily by the United States. In the 1990s, the United States set the stage for out-of-area interventions and stabilisation operations. All smaller NATO members and non-members followed the U.S. lead into the Balkans, and with some reservations, even into the greater Middle East. The actual military contributions of the countries were usually small and complementary. However, there were noticeable differences depending on perceived security interests in the crisis region or depending on other considerations. Hungary and Romania have for instance maintained a robust military presence in Kosovo due to their geographic proximity and special interests in the region. On the other hand, countries such as Poland or Romania punched above their weight in Afghanistan. The reason for that was not some special interest of these Eastern European nations in Central Asia. The threat of international terrorism remained much lower in the Central and Eastern European region than in Western Europe. Instead, it was the conviction that long-term U.S. support for their own national security depended on a strong defence partnership with the U.S. and robust commitments by them for NATO operations. Generally, the stronger the Russian threat seemed to appear, the higher or qualitatively stronger the contribution was. However, the emergence of ISIS and the new wave of terrorism in Western Europe, and related

challenges such as the migration crisis have made countries in the region more sensitive towards threats from the Middle East.

On the other hand, Russia has never ceased to be a security challenge for the region. The re-emergence of Russia led by President Putin after the Millennium caused concerns in the region. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the war in Eastern Ukraine sought to have vindicated the region's concerns with regards to the risks Russia poses for regional stability and to their security. Although the most concerned are the Baltics, even countries such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia or Hungary have remained supportive of those NATO measures which sought to reassure front-line NATO states and which strengthened the defence and deterrence posture of the Alliance. In this context, Allied solidarity overall has been strong from a regional perspective as well. Some countries in the region, such as Romania also seek to build robust bilateral defence ties with the United States as a double insurance policy. Generally speaking, NATO members in the region have continued to push for NATO enlargement, which they see as a guarantee for regional security and stability. Moreover, in light of the new security threats, recently, countries in the region have finally begun to invest more in their defence capabilities. Although the increases so far have been far from enough to offset decades of underdevelopment in military capabilities, at least the trends have reversed and some noticeable results from the renewed emphasis in defence have already appeared.

In this context, one noticeable development in the region is the openness towards European defence cooperation initiatives. This interest focuses primarily on military capability development and defence industrial potential. The term "strategic autonomy", emphasised by the French, is still seen with suspicion, therefore, Central and Eastern Europeans tend to focus on the smaller practical benefits of EU cooperation as not to raise concerns in the United States. Nearly all of the countries participate in some PESCO projects in order to develop or improve a niche capability. Nevertheless, the basic principles on European defence remain to be similar to those of twenty years ago, meaning that no duplication or decoupling in relation to NATO would be welcome by NATO members in the region, not simply for strategic reasons, but for the limited resources they have. In this context, Brexit also deserves to be mentioned, where countries in the region are pushing for a soft Brexit in terms of security and defence relationship with the U.K.

The countries in the Central and Eastern European region will continue to rely on greater powers and multinational institutions to maintain their security. None of the current geopolitical and security challenges, let it be Russia, failing states in the South, terrorism or illegal migration appears to be weakening in the years to come. Therefore, preserving NATO and EU unified and strong on security and defence matters remain to be a strategic interest for the countries in the region. However, as this volume will elaborate, each country has its unique characteristics with regards to its history, geographical location, political system and strategic culture. Therefore, the perspectives on NATO and the European Union's security and defence policy within the context of CFSP, ESDP, CSDP will continue to deserve attention with the purpose of better understanding those regional political dynamics which will likely continue to shape the region.

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# The Role of NATO and EU CSDP in the Hungarian Security and Defence Policy

*Gergely Varga*

## Introduction

Although Hungary's road to NATO and EU membership was long, it was a decisive element in the transformation of Hungary to a Western-oriented, pluralist democracy. The consensus that emerged around the objective of Euro-Atlantic integration was strong and wide within the Hungarian political elite and society. Membership in these institutions was perceived to be the best way for Hungary, which as a "ferry-country" so many times had drifted between East and West, would finally dock itself where it always sought to belong. Within this context, NATO meant the promise of security, while the EU the promise of modernisation and welfare. However, in recent years the significance of the EU CSDP in security has increased in the Hungarian perception. The main purpose of this article is to examine the role and impact of NATO and the EU on Hungarian security and defence policies since its transformation nearly thirty years ago.

The paper argues, that the notion that NATO is the cornerstone of Hungarian security and defence policy has remained unchallenged since the early 1990s until the present day. In this context, it was first the criteria outlined in the NATO accession process, and then the fulfilment of membership requirements in the Alliance which provided the decisive framework for Hungarian security and defence policy, including defence sector reform, military modernisation, force posture, contribution to international military operations. The paper will also outline the fact that the influence of the European Union and its slowly progressing security and defence policy structures were much more limited or indirect on the Hungarian defence policy. This has only partially changed from 2014–2015 with the significant negative changes in the European security environment and the growing ambitions of the EU in the field of security and defence. The article will present the decisive areas connected to Hungarian defence policy, including public perceptions towards NATO and the EU, defence sector reform, modernisation of the armed forces, Hungarian contribution to NATO and CSDP activities, and typical international security challenges and threats affecting NATO and the EU.

## Perceptions

The ambition to join NATO emerged after a short transition period following the downfall of communism. The Soviet occupation and the communist regime imposed on the country during the Cold War had a long-lasting impact on the security perceptions of Hungary. The new

Hungarian political elite, which came to power in 1990 was deeply sceptical towards Russia and stood for pro-Western sentiments (GAZDAG 2014, 2–3). However, at the beginning of the political transformation in 1989 and 1990, Hungary was still part of the Warsaw Pact, Soviet troops were still stationed in Hungary and the post-Cold War European security architecture was still uncertain. Within this European environment and with the legacy of 1956, neutrality seemed to be a favourable option. The defence of the newly regained sovereignty and the successful example of Austria made this option even more appealing. However, Hungary had to first exit the Warsaw Pact and convince the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops from the country. In order to achieve this goal, the Hungarian diplomacy played an active role in the first half of 1991 to reach an agreement on the dismantling of the military structures of the Warsaw Pact (VALKI 1999). As the objective was reached at the Budapest Summit of the Warsaw Pact in February 1991, the disintegration process quickly resulted in the complete cessation of the organisation.

During 1991–1992, the uncertainty on the future course of the Soviet Union and later Russia, in addition to the deepening conflict in the former Yugoslavia, prompted a re-evaluation of the long-term objectives of security policy (GAZDAG 2014, 3–4). The coup-attempt against Gorbachev in Moscow in August 1991 raised fears in Budapest that the favourable international developments of the previous years could quickly be reversed. At the same time, the conflicts between the Yugoslav federal states escalated in the summer of 1991, creating a war zone to the South of the Hungarian border. Hence, during 1991–1992, all alternatives were sidelined and a near consensus emerged in the Hungarian political elite that Hungary's security could only be assured through joining Western security structures and by positioning Hungary under the security umbrella of the United States (VALKI 1999). Euro-Atlantic integration, alongside maintaining good relations with neighbours and support for Hungarian minorities in the region became the three core pillars of the Hungarian foreign policy. Within this triad, the objective of Euro-Atlantic integration often enjoyed priority above the other two pillars during the 1990s. Since the security ambitions of the EU only began to take root in the form of CFSP and later the ESDP, the primacy of NATO in security and defence matters was unquestionable.

This presupposition did not change even after Hungary joined NATO in 1999. The geopolitical and internal EU developments only reinforced the notion that NATO will remain the only credible defence alliance and strategic actor in Europe: the failure of the EU in the Western Balkan wars, the unchallenged military power of the U.S. reflected during the war on terrorism, the continuing mistrust towards Russia and the slow progress of the ESDP (VALKI 1999). In addition, NATO's premier occupation at the time, its crisis management operations from the Western Balkans to Afghanistan provided a useful platform for Hungarian foreign and security policy to strengthen its relations with its Western allies (ASMUS 2002).

However, a certain level of modification of Hungary's course has taken place since the late 2000s. Although NATO was still perceived to be the only credible actor in terms of collective defence and high-intensity crisis management operations, there has been a greater openness towards enhancing CSDP's role in certain aspects of security and defence policy, especially with regards to common external security policy, low-intensity crisis management and defence capabilities development. Multiple factors contributed to this shift, including questions regarding the long-term commitment of the United States towards the Central European region, the dynamics of EU integration and Hungarian preferences, a more pragmatic and conflict-avoiding approach to Russia, and the changes in the security environment of Hungary.



The Obama Administration's "reset" policy with Russia, the sudden revision of the Bush Administration's missile defence plan in 2009, the decrease of U.S. military presence in Europe between 2009–2012, the "pivot to Asia", and increasing political tensions with the United States in connection with domestic Hungarian issues after 2010 were the main factors which raised questions regarding the long-term U.S. role in Central and Eastern Europe (RHODES 2012). This was coupled with an increasingly pragmatic, economic cooperation focused relationship with Russia since 2010, in which the Hungarian side sought to avoid any major political conflict with Moscow. This approach had implications for Hungary's policies in NATO. Although these factors did not question the central role of NATO in the Hungarian security and defence policy, they altered the Hungarian policy towards a less "Atlanticist" and initiative course within NATO. Although support for NATO membership has declined, it is still stronger with 47% approval then compared to the Czech Republic (44%) or Slovakia (30%) (GLOBSEC 2016). Support for the EU continues to be very strong in Hungary, with 61% perceiving EU membership as positive. At the same time, traditionally negative, distrustful perceptions towards Russia have not changed in Hungary, with more than 50% rejecting the idea that Hungary should engage Russia more to the expense of relations with the EU, and only 8% supporting such an option.

Concerning European integration, the Hungarian Government has increasingly taken an anti-federalist approach, supporting EU reforms only on an inter-governmental, nation state foundation, which created permanent tensions with EU institutions and more pro-federalist EU capitals. Within this tense political environment, security and defence was one area where Hungary could demonstrate its commitment to deepen cooperation within the EU. The Hungarian support for strengthening CSDP was also based on the changing security environment. The increasing post-Arab Spring instability in the escalating Middle East had a direct effect on Hungarian security in the form of a dramatic increase of illegal migration in 2015. Together with terrorism, these were the types of security issues that the EU had always been better positioned to provide comprehensive responses. Since the Hungarian Government emphasised the necessity of enhanced border protection, the staunch defence of EU member states sovereignty and the tackling of the complex problem of migration at the source of the problem strengthening the toolkit of CSDP, all this fit well into the Hungarian policy agenda. Public support for the European Union is one of the highest among EU members.

### *Institutional relations*

The first freely elected Hungarian Government after the fall of communism, led by József Antal, sought to strengthen political and institutional ties with Western governments and organisations. Within this effort, the formal relations between NATO and Hungary began with the visit of the Hungarian Foreign Minister to NATO HQ in Brussels in June 1990. However, the future course of the Hungarian security and defence policy orientation was still debated.

Before the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, the possibility of a new form of partnership with the Soviet Union was not excluded, nevertheless, this option quickly lost support as the domestic and the geopolitical circumstances changed. Some preferred neutrality and non-alignment based on the Austrian model. Another option supported by the first defence minister was based on the concepts of independence and "concentric defence",



highlighting the need to develop strong defence capabilities against possible threats from every direction. In opposition to this self-dependent approach, the concept of regional cooperation also appeared as a reasonable option. In 1989 Austria, Yugoslavia, Italy and Hungary formed the Quadragonale, which later, in 1992 was transformed into the Central European Initiative (NÉMETH 2014). In 1991, by the initiative of the Hungarian Government, the Visegrád Partnership was formed. Initially, there were hopes that these regional political initiatives could quickly develop into deep and wide ranging cooperation enhancing also regional security. However, these hopes were soon proved to be unfounded as these regional initiatives remained to be loose political forums inadequate to seriously deal with the urgent security and defence questions of the region and of Hungary. The Visegrád Platform instead served as a platform to support the integration process into NATO and the EU by enhancing the political cooperation of the respective countries (NÉMETH 2014).

A similar approach based its hopes on a European collective security system with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) – later OSCE – at its core. However, the CSCE's poor performance during the Balkan wars and doubts regarding Russia's future geopolitical orientation questioned the long-term viability of this latter option as well. Hence, by 1992–1993, for the overwhelming majority of the Hungarian political elite, Euro-Atlantic integration seemed to be the only viable option for a long-term solution of Hungary's security challenges. Since Hungary was considered one of the front-runner countries regarding eligibility for membership, the pace of the accession was fundamentally determined by NATO (ASMUS 2002).

Its leading status in the EU integration process also demonstrated Hungary's front-runner status among the former communist block throughout the 1990s. Together with Poland, and the then Czechoslovak Republic, it was among the first to sign of a special form of Association Agreement, the Europe Agreement with the European Community in 1991. Later in 1994, Hungary together with Poland was the first two countries to officially apply for membership to the European Union, and it was among the six countries to begin the accession negotiations in 1998 with the EU that led to the “big bang” enlargement in 2004.

When NATO introduced the Partnership for Peace plan in January 1994, Hungary was among the first nations to apply for participation in February the same year. The widening political and institutional relations between Budapest and NATO were reflected by the opening of a permanent liaison office at NATO HQ in January 1995. Hungary's accession process was given a big political boost by its role in the NATO conflict intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1995 (VARGA 2014). Hungary served as a major logistical base and supply route for NATO's IFOR/SFOR operations beginning at the end of 1995, and it also contributed with a military-engineering contingent to the peacekeeping operation.

Despite its good prospects to be among the first post-communist countries to join NATO, Hungary had to make considerable efforts to meet all the criteria for membership outlined in the “NATO Study on Enlargement”. The most challenging field among the criteria was maintaining good relations with neighbours and resolution of border disputes with a view on the problematic relations with especially Slovakia and Romania concerning the sizable Hungarian minorities living there. With American mediation and pressure, Hungary resolved these issues by signing a Basic Treaty with Slovakia in 1995 and with Romania the following year. Reforms in the economy and in the defence sector between 1995–1997 further strengthened Hungary's position to successfully apply for membership. In this context, Hungary, together with the

Czech Republic and Poland was invited to join NATO at the Madrid Summit in July 1997. The accession was supported by the majority of the Hungarian electorate, as a referendum on the issue in November 1997 vindicated, where 85% of those who voted supported membership. Together with Poland and the Czech Republic, Hungary gained full membership on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 1999.

### *Political and institutional transition, defence sector reform, defence planning*

The NATO accession process was a vital driving force of the defence sector reforms Hungary went through after the democratic transition. The fundamental constitutional and institutional guarantees of democratic oversight of the armed forces were built up and the depoliticisation of the armed forces took place in the early years of the 1990s. Formally, the President of the state became the commander in chief, but the powers of authority connected to command and control of the HDF was delegated to the government, while Parliament also gained powers for exercising democratic oversight (VARGA 2011, 32). Compared to the relatively quick formal legislative changes, the actual transition into a civilian-led staff concerning some of the key positions in the Ministry of Defence took several years (VARGA 2011, 33).

The Hungarian strategic documents also reflected the transformation of the Hungarian security and defence policy. The first such document after the transition, the Security Policy Principles was adopted as a Parliament Resolution in 1993. The principles already declared the intentions of Hungary to build and expand the relations with NATO in such a way that will gradually lead to full membership (Parliament Resolution 1993). It also called for the armed forces to take into account the requirements of Western standards and international peace support operations in their capabilities development plans (Parliament Resolution 1993). The security and defence policy principles adopted in late December 1998 after NATO accession was the first strategic document which was based upon the requirements of NATO membership (Parliament Resolution 1998). The document declared that Hungary's security is best served through the collective defence principles of NATO. It also mentioned that Hungary supported the efforts to strengthen the European defence identity in the context of allied cooperation and declared the intention to participate in the EU's foreign and security policy as soon as it will be a full member. The first National Security Strategy was drafted in 2002, which strengthened Hungary's Euro-Atlantic security orientation, and paid greater attention to global security threats and contributions to tackle them along the lines of NATO's developing strategy after 2001 (SZENES 2008, 71).

Subsequent strategic documents also declared the priority and significance of NATO in Hungary's security and defence policy and outlined the fundamental objectives of the Hungarian security and defence policy in a way, which would correspond to NATO commitments and responsibilities towards the allies. The latest National Security Strategy was adopted in 2012; however, a working group has been already established to review the strategy in light of the significant changes in the security environment. The 2012 National Security Strategy states that NATO and EU membership serves as the primary foundation of Hungary's security (Government Decree 2012). It declares Article 5 of NATO the cornerstone of Hungary's security; however, it also states that Hungary supports the development of the EU's security and defence policy in accordance with the responsibilities connected to the Washington Treaty.

The impact of NATO's and the EU's role in international stabilisation and peacekeeping was also reflected in the legislation on the tasks of the HDF. The first law that defined the responsibilities of the HDF in connection to NATO membership was adopted in 1998, and a similar legislation was adopted in 2004 after the accession to the EU. In order to simplify the deployment of Hungarian troops in NATO and EU missions from a legal point of view, changes were necessary for the constitution. Until 2004, Parliament had the authority to decide on the foreign deployment of Hungarian troops; however, that year the constitution was altered in a way that the cabinet was given the authority to decide on Hungarian deployments for NATO missions. A similar legislation was adopted in 2006 for EU CSDP missions (TÜRKE 2014, 84).

The Euro-Atlantic integration also had a significant influence on Hungarian defence reforms. However, significant barriers stood in the way for these reforms to be successfully implemented. The lack of financial resources was just one major factor, the inexperience of the new political elite and the new complex political and security environment also posed significant challenges (SZENES 2009, 34). The fundamental objectives of the military reforms were in line with the changes within the transformation of NATO armed forces: transition from a territorial defence towards an expeditionary – international peace support posture, downsizing, professionalisation, modernisation (SZENES 2009, 34).

During the first two democratically elected governments, the reform initiatives were weak and were implemented poorly partly due to budgetary constraints, partly to other priorities of these governments (VARGA 2014, 14). However, there were some considerable reforms, such as the transition in 1995–1996 from an all conscription force to a mixed force based on conscripts as well as professionals. The NATO accession process was a key driving force behind the transformation of the army chiefs of staff in 1995–1996 and the integration of the chiefs of staff to the MoD. The first substantive experiment to implement defence reforms took place under the first Orbán Government (1998–2002) in the context of a strategic defence review. The poor results of the military reforms became evident during the 1999 NATO Kosovo intervention when the state of the readiness and applicability of the Hungarian Defence Forces were revealed in an acute situation (SZENES 2009, 35).

Even greater changes took place in the subsequent years during the Medgyessy Government (2002–2004) (TÁLAS 2014, 16). A major defence review, the transition from conscription to a professional army, the abandonment of the concept of whole spectrum armed forces, and the declaration that the Hungarian defence policy relies primarily on NATO and EU membership, to name a few (VARGA 2014, 15). Another major organisational reform took place in 2007 with the establishment of the Joint Forces Command, which was to a large extent influenced by NATO's experience in comprehensive peace support operations (VARGA 2011, 37).

Alongside the above-mentioned changes, the professionalisation of the armed forces was also closely connected to the NATO accession process. There were many reasons behind the transition from a mass army structure towards a smaller, professional force, including budgetary considerations, the transformation of the European security environment and general international trends during the 1990s, but corresponding to NATO standards was certainly an important driving factor (TÁLAS 2014). The most visible changes in the armed forces after the transition were the drastic reduction of the size of the armed forces. The manpower strength of the Hungarian Armed Forces was drastically reduced from 120,000 to 52,000 by 1999, and further down to 29,000 by 2014 (SZENES 2009, 36). The actual number of active military personnel is 15,000.

Since the accession to NATO, the Hungarian defence planning has been based on the NATO Defence Planning Process. Unfortunately, this does not mean that Hungary always fulfilled its defence commitments in terms of the implementation of related decisions on force structure and capabilities development, but the targets were defined based on NATO requirements. From the late 1990s until recently, this force structure was determined largely by the commitments related to NATO's out-of-area operations. From this perspective, this meant that force structure and capabilities development reflected the requirements of NATO-led international peace support operations. During the socialist-liberal government of 2002–2006, capabilities destined primarily for territorial defence missions were significantly reduced, with complete arms systems – heavy artillery, armoured divisions – withdrawn from the HDF (VARGA 2011, 34). Within the Hungarian joint forces structure two joint forces battalions had operated since the late 1990s, and in 1998 Hungary offered one out of these two battalions for NATO operations (SZLOSZJÁR 2017). In this context, the ambition level of the HDF was to provide one deployable brigade for up to six months with a 90 day readiness (SZLOSZJÁR 2017, 26).

The legacy of the Warsaw Pact could not be quickly erased with regards to the equipment and capabilities of the HDF. Much of the equipment and hardware of the armed forces were Soviet-made, but there was no possibility to quickly modernise the military (VARGA 2014, 35). This situation prolonged the dependency on Russia, which had obviously negative effects on meeting NATO standards and interoperability. The reliance on Russia in terms of maintenance and procurement remained so even during the 1990s. These major acquisition programs during the time only happened as a part of the reimbursement of the Russian state department (TÁLAS 2014, 20). The first major acquisitions of Western military equipment were realised only at the turn of the millennium, involving the French Atlas-2 Mistral missile defence system and JAS-39 Gripen fighter aircraft (TÁLAS 2014, 17). However, the modernisation of the Armed Forces went extremely slow due to budgetary constraints and only picked up pace in recent years, as the conditions for acquisitions in the defence budget improved.

Hungary was not alone in the region experiencing budgetary challenges in the defence sector, but even at the level of regional comparison, defence was rather underfunded in the past three decades. The lack of major external threats, the priority of social and economic security concerning the perceptions of the Hungarian society, and the frequency of financial crises in the state budget (1989–1992, 1995–1997, 2006–2014) all contributed to the poor budgetary conditions in the sector (TÁLAS 2014, 17–18). Within this context, the criteria of NATO membership and then the pressure of meeting NATO commitments as a member was probably the single most important factor, which had some minor positive effect on the defence budget. However, even the major pledges towards NATO before the accession (1998), and at the time of the Prague capability commitments (2002) were not met. The gradual shrinking of defence expenditures was clearly visible trend until recent years. During the time of the transition in 1989, Hungary spent 2.6% of GDP on defence, at the time of NATO accession the figure was 1.65%, and after the financial crisis in 2012–2013, it stood at 0.83%. With these figures, Hungary found itself among the worst performing NATO members in terms of budgets. The trend has only begun to change in 2014 as a consequence of deteriorating security environment and improvement of the conditions in the Hungarian state finances. The Orbán Government has pledged to reach the Wales Summit commitment of 2% by 2024, and it is on a right track to do so.

## Policy questions

### *Peace support operations*

Even prior to its NATO accession, Hungary was actively contributing to NATO's out-of-area operations. During the 1990s, this support was not only stemming from meeting NATO accession criteria, but advancing Hungarian security interests. As a neighbour of the Balkans, the security and stability of the region has been a core Hungarian interest. Therefore, contributing to NATO-led military efforts in the region became a priority for Hungarian security policy. In 1995, after the Dayton peace accords were signed, Hungary provided its territory and airspace to help the reinforcement of NATO troops destined for the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina (SZENES 2014, 112). Furthermore, it contributed with an engineering battalion to the IFOR, and later SFOR efforts. The successful participation in the NATO-led mission played a significant role in enhancing Hungary's membership prospects in the Alliance. Since 1999, Hungary has also significantly contributed to the KFOR mission in Kosovo. The Hungarian forces serving under KFOR have undertaken numerous tasks, including HQ protection, patrolling and crisis intervention roles. The level of Hungarian troop numbers varied throughout the years usually between 200–300 personnel, but recently, Hungary has further increased its presence there to 390. These deployments provided an excellent opportunity for Hungary for training and preparing its forces to integrate into NATO forces and also for transforming the peace support operations of its forces. Although Hungary's contributions were well received and the performance of Hungarian soldiers generally raised respect, the HDF was faced with significant challenges in its efforts to fulfil the commitments, related to capability shortfalls and financial constraints (SZENES 2008, 77).

As a consequence of NATO's transforming agenda after the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001, Hungary's military contributions to international peace support operations have geographically shifted towards the greater Middle East. Although Hungary did not participate in the Iraqi invasion, it contributed to NATO's Iraq training mission with a small force between 2003–2011. Since Afghanistan became the focal point of NATO military engagement in the region, Hungary has actively participated in the ISAF forces, and later from 2012 in the Resolute Support Mission. The HDF has been involved in numerous roles throughout the years since then. Kabul was one of the focal points, where medical, protecting, guarding and airport engineering roles were needed. In 2006, Hungary overtook the leading role of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Baghlan Province. HDF forces also served in mentoring and training roles in Baghlan Province and in Kabul, and in the later years of the ISAF mission, Hungary also sent special forces to the country (WAGNER 2011). Between 2010–2014, Hungary's mission within ISAF became the largest international engagement of the HDF. During the peak years of the ISAF mission, about 300–400 troops served in the ISAF mission; since 2014 that number is closer to about 200. However, the mandate given to the HDF in the different roles within ISAF usually was stricter than some of those allies where there were deployed units even in combat roles (WAGNER 2011). There were often heavy debates about the roles of HDF in Hungary; however, Hungary generally managed to follow the expectations of the United States and other allies, and never let a gap emerge in the overall force posture and engagement in Afghanistan (SZENES 2014, 110). Whenever Hungary withdrew its support from a certain commitment, it sought to compensate that by increasing

its role in other areas within the ISAF. Overall, the performance of the HDF was considered a success by experts and by NATO allies.

Since NATO has also become engaged in Iraq in recent years in connection to the international efforts in countering the Islamic State, Hungary has contributed to the NATO mission there. Hungary is also part of the international coalition outside the NATO framework fighting the Islamic State, with nearly 200 troops in training roles. In NATO's latest engagements to the greater Middle East region, Hungary is also participating in the capacity building programs helping Jordan and Tunisia. These efforts demonstrate Hungary's efforts in countering threats emanating from the South, which has become even more significant for Hungary's own national security interests in light of the migration crisis and terrorism.

As described before, Hungary has always perceived the significance of CSDP secondary to NATO, and this was reflected in Hungarian contributions to the much more modest CSDP missions. At times, Hungarian participation was rather symbolic, but from this perspective, Hungary was far from an outlier compared to other countries in the region. In the first CSDP missions, in the Concordia, in the Artemis, and in the Proxima missions Hungary participated only with 1–5 personnel (TÜRKE 2014, 84). This was not the situation in the case of the Althea mission in Bosnia, in which Hungary participated with about 300 troops from 2004. Since 2012, some of the Hungarian units assigned to the EU mission in Bosnia are stationed in Hungary and are in a mode in case of a crisis. Alongside the military contributions, Hungary also sent police units to the EUPM mission in Bosnia. This engagement demonstrated the Hungarian interest in the stability of the Western Balkans. Hungary also participated in other smaller EU peace support operations, such as the EUSEC RD Congo, the EUJUST Lex for Iraq and the EUFOR Chad (TÜRKE 2014, 84–85). However, as the security environment in 2014 drastically changed in Europe due to the Russia–Ukraine conflict, Hungary's contribution to NATO and CSDP defence efforts were transformed.

### *Reassurance, deterrence and southern challenges*

The annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine had an impact on Hungarian security and defence perceptions. Although the changes in these perceptions were not as dramatic as in other neighbouring countries, such as Poland, or the Baltics, Hungary noticed the significance of conflict from the perspective of NATO and European security. Hence, it has supported all the major NATO decisions aimed at strengthening the Alliance's presence in NATO's Eastern flank, the reassurance package of the Wales Summit in 2014 and the deterrence package of the Warsaw Summit, and the related decisions of the Brussels Summit (NOVOTNÝ 2017). Within this context, Hungary has participated in many of the related NATO activities: the HDF has participated in assurance measures in the Baltics almost every year since 2014, it has set up a Force Integration Unit in Székesfehérvár, it has contributed to military exercises in the region and it has hosted a NATO Centre of Excellence (NATO 2018). Meanwhile, it continued to host the Strategic Airlift Capability in Pápa, which is an important hub for logistics and military mobility not just concerning out-of-area operations but also a reinforcement base of the Eastern flank. In 2019, it will again participate in the Baltic air-policing mission. At the same time, demonstrating the differences in the perceptions of Russia, Hungary's activity was less visible within the Alliance. Hungary did not take a leading role in any of the new NATO initiatives



focused on the Eastern flank, and did not initiate any major additional bilateral U.S.–Hungarian defence cooperation or larger U.S. presence in the country but supported maintaining a dialogue with Russia parallel to the defence and deterrence measures. Russia was seen more as a security challenge than as an imminent threat, and in this regard, it did not completely share the threat assessment of some of its allies in the region.

Although NATO and U.S. security engagement in Eastern Europe remains to be a cornerstone of Hungarian security and defence policy, Budapest has become more open to European options in the area of security and defence. This shift in the Hungarian position stems partly from questions about long-term U.S. commitment towards the region. These questions were to a large extent fuelled by the Obama Administration’s “reset policy” and lack of attention to sensitivities and interest of the Central European countries (RHODES 2012). The U.S. continues to be the most important security and defence partner for Hungary; however, Hungary has become more selective in its support for U.S. requests towards Hungary.

What also deserves attention is that the geographical focus of these reassurance activities has been North Central and Eastern Europe from a Hungarian perspective. The related Hungarian forces serve under the command of the Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin. This Northern focus demonstrates the significance of the Visegrád Four’s political and defence cooperation as well as Germany’s role in regional security from a Hungarian point of view.

The emphasis on Germany and the V4 is also reflected in other aspects of the Hungarian defence policy. The participation in the V4 Battlegroup in 2016 is just one example of Hungary’s support for regional defence cooperation. Although there have not been substantial follow-ups of the Battlegroup, the potential is there for the V4 to further develop such defence cooperation. With regards to Germany, defence procurement and defence industrial cooperation has come forward recently as an area of common interests. The Hungarian Air Force has recently bought Airbus transport planes as well as Airbus rotary wing light attack aircraft, and defence cooperation is likely to continue to develop in the near future as Hungary implements its Zrínyi 2024 modernisation program. This development is all the more noticeable that so far there has not been any major Hungarian arms procurement from the United States, which has been strongly advocated by the U.S. behind closed doors.

Meanwhile, the significance of threats emanating from the Southern flank of the Alliance has increased in Hungarian security perceptions. The 2015 migration crisis hit Hungary unprepared and hard. While the terrorist threat remains to be low in Hungary, Hungary has been used as a transit route for ISIS related fighters and terrorists. Protecting the borders, controlling the flows of illegal migration and tackling the causes of migration have been important features of Hungarian security policy. From this perspective, Hungary has also urged the EU to strengthen its border protection, law enforcement as well as military capacities in order to successfully challenge migration flows. Apart from the previously mentioned shift in Hungary’s Atlanticist standing, these comprehensive security challenges were important factors in making Hungarian security policy more open for European security and defence initiatives.

Hungarian activities within both NATO and CSDP reflect the importance of the Southern dimension as well as keeping the options open for CSDP. Although outside of the NATO framework, Hungary has been a member of the global coalition against the Islamic State, and in this context, has sent troops to Iraq to assist in training Kurdish forces in Iraq. Hungary will also contribute to the NATO training mission in Iraq, which has been agreed upon between the Allies in 2017. Hungary has recently announced that it will increase the troop numbers not

just in Iraq to 200, but also in Afghanistan to about 130. As a result of recent NATO decisions, the Alliance is also engaged with Jordan and Tunisia for military capacity building, to which Hungary will also contribute. There is also a strong support from the Hungarian leadership for the establishment of a Southern hub in Naples. As a sign of the traditional focus towards the Western Balkans, Hungary will also further increase its troops serving in Kosovo to 300.

## Conclusions

NATO and the European Union has been the cornerstone of Hungarian security and defence policy since the early 1990s, and this will likely remain so in the foreseeable future. During the 1990s, NATO and EU accession was an important component of the defence sector reforms with regards to civil control, democratic oversight, as well as modernisation of the armed forces. However, in a paradox way, the security benefits of NATO accession derailed the urgency and the need to invest the necessary resources into modernisation programs. Even among many other NATO allies with shrinking defence budget and military capabilities, Hungarian performance in terms of funding for the defence sector was poor. Hungary sought to compensate this by engaging above its weight in NATO missions. The operational experience gained through the participation contributed to the professionalisation and modernisation of the HDF. Moreover, it strengthened the security relationship of Hungary towards its NATO allies and the military integration into NATO structures.

Even though NATO continues to remain the bedrock of Hungarian security and defence, the importance of EU CSDP has strengthened in recent years. The most significant factor in this shift was the negative change in the European security environment, the concerns about the long-term U.S. role in Europe and the potential financial and military benefits of enhanced European cooperation. Another major feature of current Hungarian security and threat perceptions is the combined sensitivity connected to Eastern and Southern security challenges given Hungary's geography and historical experience. Sensing the implications of the deteriorating security environment around Europe, and the growing pressure from the United States to invest more in defence, Hungary has begun to increase its defence expenditure and started to implement the long awaited military modernisation program.

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# **The Changing Role of the Common Security and Defence Policy of NATO and the EU in Central European Security: The Czech Republic**

*Josef Procházka*

## **Introduction**

The Czech Republic's (CZR) unprecedented social transformation was launched in the specific historical conditions of the disintegrating bipolar world after 1989. The international fame of the Velvet Revolution underscored the peaceful way of the division of the state and outlined a wider spectrum of reforms of the CZR from 1 January 1993, including defence policy (PAJER 2013). The political reality, the objective to develop a modern liberal–democratic state, reflected the revolutionary shift in the political system (PROCHÁZKA 2015). Since then, NATO and the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) have influenced the CZR defence policy adaptation in several ways and the ambition of this study is to assess the role of both organisations in this endeavour.

There are several aspects to be taken into consideration when it comes to the research of these matters. First, the attitude of the political elite in the CZR to defence has been evolving and defence safeguarding always had to compete for politicians' attention, who were predominantly occupied by the problems of political, economic and social transformation (JANOŠEC et al. 2009). Second, the regulatory and organisational structure of Czechoslovakia's defence policy and military in 1989 was completely different as we can witness today. The military was an instrument serving entirely the purpose of a totalitarian regime dominated by one ruling political party (JANOŠEC et al. 2009). It was built and prepared to fulfil a grand strategy with predominantly offensive objectives in relation to a potential superpower conflict. A robust military potential was kept in a high readiness mode supported by reinforcement plans to mobilise all state resources. The trends of the main weapon system are depicted in Table 1 (JANOŠEC et al. 2009) (see below). Third, the state-owned economy was organised in a way that would allow sustaining the wartime military structure according to the concept of high intensity military confrontation.

It was a complex task for the new political and military leadership after 1989 to ensure the creation of a new structure for the defence sector and the military organisation in accordance with the different strategic context. At the beginning of the 1990s, there was the utopian vision that the end of the Cold War would mean a beginning of conflict-free relations in the world. Following the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in 1991, opinions were also voiced that it would be helpful to abolish NATO as well, and that the CZR could become a kind of a neutral bridge between the East and West. Such ideas were fortunately soon forgotten (PROCHÁZKA 2009).

Table 1.  
*The number of major weapon and equipment systems 1993–2015*

	Main Battle Tanks MBT	Armed Combat Vehicles ACV	Artillery Systems AS	Combat Aircraft CA	Attack Helicopters AH
1991	3,315	4,593	3,485	446	56
1993	1,617	2,315	1,516	227	34
1995	1,011	1,451	893	215	36
1997	952	1,367	767	143	36
1999	938	1,219	754	114	34
2001	652	1,211	648	97	34
2003	541	1,235	528	125	34
2005	298	747	362	103	32
2007	181	580	321	38	38
2009	178	490	259	42	29
2011	166	494	244	38	25
2013	123	501	182	39	24
2018	119	439	179	35	17
<b>CFET Ceilings</b>	<b>957</b>	<b>1367</b>	<b>767</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>50</b>

*Note:* The figures in 1991 are related to the Czechoslovak Armed Forces.

*Source:* Ministry of Defence 2015.

## General Perceptions of NATO and EU CSDP

Since 1989, the CZR's relations with the West has always been a critical component of the country's trajectory towards the establishment of the rule based liberal democracy, prosperity and security. Both the preparation phase and the period immediately after the CZR joined NATO have had a profound impact on defence policy in terms of defining the strategic interests and objectives, institutional adaptation, resource allocation, armed forces innovation and participation in crises response operations (JANOŠEC et al. 2009). The overall progress in the transformation of the country was recognised by Western democracies. The CZR belonged to the first group of the former communist states who joined NATO (1999) and the EU (2004).

### *Hard and soft security provider*

NATO membership, strong transatlantic link and collective security as instruments of hard power have been emphasised as the main guarantee for the security of the CZR in all defence strategies adopted by the Government (National Defence Strategy of the Czech Republic 1997; Military Strategy 1999). EU CSDP has always played a rather complementary role. However, EU CSDP as an instrument of soft power security has also enjoyed political support in terms

of the institutional emancipation of the military pillar as well as concerning the significant Czech military contributions to the EU Battle Group (EUBG) and EU operations.

The NATO accession process speeded up the modernisation of institutional arrangements as well. New legislation on defence and crises management was introduced in 1999. Also, new strategic documents were elaborated, institutional changes in the defence sector were carried out and wide-ranging reforms of the armed forces were launched reflecting NATO requirements and standards.

The political and military assistance of the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and France was of utmost importance for the defence sector. Bilateral cooperation embraced preparation of personnel, exercises, advice in conduct of institutional reforms, material support and operations. These activities set up the conditions for the execution of defence policy reflecting strategic interests, changing defence needs, new international obligations and available resources (FRANK–PROCHÁZKA 2007).

The one set of forces principle has dictated the CZR's attitude to capability development. The NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP) as a top-down approach (NATO 2018) alongside with the participation in NATO Response Force (NRF) and alliance operations and missions (AOM) have played the most significant role in shaping the Czech Armed Forces (CZAF) structure and its capabilities. The EU Capability Development Mechanisms (bottom-up) has never become the game changer in CZAF development. Nevertheless, preparation for the EUBGs (2009, 2012, 2016) proved to have a transformational effect and reinforced interoperability mainly with the Visegrád (V4) countries (Council of the EU 2003).

When the CZR joined NATO, the commitments of collective defence burden sharing became a political priority. There were several elements of this construct: 1. the defence budget meeting 2% of GDP; 2. institutional adaptation in line with best practices applied by NATO embracing civilian oversight of the military; 3. capability development; planning, programming and budgeting; human resource management (HRM); 4. contribution to the AOM.

### *Transatlantic link*

Relationship with the United States was carefully maintained and enhanced through all instruments of national power (diplomacy, military and economy). This was specifically meaningful during the era of President Vaclav Havel and the Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (in office from 1997 to 2001 under President Bill Clinton), when the CZR sought NATO membership.

In recent years, the CZR's relationship with the United States has shifted. On the United States side, it was the shift in foreign policy priorities towards the Asia-Pacific region and the emphasis on the *America First* policy that drove this change. On the side of the CZR, it is mainly due to the increasing political inconsistency in foreign policy orientation and security threat perception (namely Russia) by political elites.

What is more pressing though is Trump's desire to end the perceived free riding on U.S. security guarantees and to encourage other NATO members to increase military spending (The Economist 2017). The Obama Administration had taken a similar approach. America's allies are supposed to magnify the power of the United States and to help protect

shared interests. The United States expects them to take greater responsibility for addressing common threats (National Security Strategy of the United States of America 2017). The Czech Minister of Defence announced that reaching 2% of GDP is likely in 2025 (Lidovky 2017). Nonetheless, so far there was only a commitment on behalf of the Czech Government from 2014 to progressively increase defence spending in order to reach 1.44% of GDP in 2020 (HOLECEK 2014).

### *Towards EU strategic autonomy*

There are indications, that besides NATO – the traditional main pillar of the CZR's defence – the EU CSDP is also gaining higher political visibility. There are several building blocks of evolving EU defence cooperation as it seeks its strategic autonomy: 1. Pooling and Sharing of defence capabilities (P&S); 2. the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC); 3. the European Defence Fund (EDF); 4. European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP); 5. the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD); 6. Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). They have all made progress – each following a strictly functional logic driven by shared interests as well as practical needs. It is to be seen whether these initiatives will advance in a dedicated institutional structure (FIOTT et al. 2017). For the time being, the speed and determination with which the EU and its member states including the CZR have (re)engaged on defence cooperation prove that Europeans are now becoming aware of what is at stake in a rapidly mutating security environment (GILLI–GILLI 2017).

The EU Global Strategy (EUGS) released in late June 2016 in the immediate aftermath of the 'leave' vote in the U.K. provided a new comprehensive narrative for building a more credible, responsive and joined-up Union. There is a strong emphasis on making defence cooperation among EU countries 'the norm'. In this context, the opportunity to create PESCO is provided by Articles 42 and 46 of the Treaty on European Union and Protocol No. 10 of the Treaty. A common feature of all these initiatives within the EUGS framework is stress on the gradual synchronisation of national defence planning cycles and capability development practices (FIOTT 2017).

The CZR understands PESCO as an ambitious, binding and inclusive European legal framework for investments in the security and defence of the EU. PESCO provides a crucial political framework to improve military assets and defence capabilities that will also benefit NATO. It will strengthen the European pillar within the Alliance and respond to repeated demands for stronger transatlantic burden sharing. PESCO could be an element of a possible development towards a common defence. A long-term vision of PESCO is to arrive at a coherent full spectrum force package – in complementarity with NATO, which will continue to be the cornerstone of collective defence for its members. The CZR joined PESCO in 2017.

It is generally recognised that Brexit is creating space for strengthening military cooperation among EU member states. They need to step up defence cooperation. Because of structural changes in both the strategic environment (demand) and the economics of defence (supply), when it comes to technology, procurement and weapons manufacturing, there is a strong case for European countries to move beyond their traditional approach to defence cooperation and this is a window for opportunity for the CZR as well (GILLI–GILLI 2017).

### *The strategic leadership of Germany*

Currently, traditional strategic partnership with the United States is augmented by Germany. The affiliation of a Czech mechanised brigade to German units can serve as one of the many examples taking place under the umbrella of the NATO Framework Nations Concept (FNC) initiative built on the strategic proximity of nations (MAJOR–MÖLLING 2014). The CZR's support to FNC represents its contribution towards transatlantic burden sharing. However, concerns have been voiced that affiliation requires a high degree of interoperability that may dictate operational requirements and modernisation of the CZAF and that Germany's hidden agenda is to advance its industrial interests.

There are also historical reservations in the CZR to the increasing role of Germany in Europe. The initiative was heavily criticised by the Czech opposition as well as by influential magazines such as *Foreign Policy* (BRAW 2017) due to misunderstanding of its implications. The affiliation has been wrongly seen as putting the CZAF under German command and integrating both armies (Czech Parliament 2017).

### *V4 cooperation – more vision than action*

Despite the creation of the V4 EU BG in 2012 and 2016, the cooperation of the V4 countries has offered more vision rather than tangible outcomes. In terms of capability, there were several ambitious modernisation projects as MBT T-72 or rotary airlift of the Mi family. However, these initiatives failed mainly due to the lack of political will and incompatible industrial interests.

The V4 cooperation is considered as meaningful and important by 70% of Slovaks, compared to about 50% of the Czechs and 40% of the Hungarians and the Poles. The V4 cooperation actually does not have any opponents. The highest degree of trust towards the United States is in Poland (50%), the lowest one in Slovakia (27%). The Polish public feels the highest level of distrust towards Russia; contrary to this, Slovaks feel the highest level of trust (GYÁRFÁŠOVÁ–MESEŽNIKOV 2016).

Nevertheless, the V4 format has a role to play when it comes to force preparation (education, training, exercise), operational deployments (EFP) and creation of high readiness units (EU BGs, NRF). There is a certain level of scepticism to advance practical industrial cooperation for the purpose of multinational capability delivery.

## **The role of NATO and EU CSDP in the Czech defence policy**

### *Democratisation*

The democratisation phase spans the period of the armed forces democratisation process from November 1989 until the division of the state on 31 December 1992. The main objective was to introduce civilian oversight of the military according to approaches proven in Western democracies and create the legislative framework to minimise the probability of its misuse against democratisation. The appointment of a civilian minister, personal changes in the top

military leadership and the abolishment of political structures in the armed forces were the most significant measures taken (RAŠEK 2004).

Since 1989, the armed forces have developed as a reliable and credible instrument of national power, loyal to the political leadership, trusted by the public and seen as a stabilising factor in the society. However, the newly established political parties did not have an adequate pool of qualified experts in defence matters. The unexperienced political leadership created a conceptual vacuum concerning the long-term development of the armed forces. Consequently, systematic defence planning and mechanism related to R&D, armament and analytical support to decision making were abolished and replaced by short-term budget-based management. This had a devastating effect on the modernisation and HRM. Both processes lost their functional effectiveness and had to be re-established again in later years during the preparation for NATO membership.

The defence policy's main conceptual construct during this period was to defend the state territory from all direction against unknown enemies.<sup>1</sup> At the end of this phase, the CZR's trajectory towards NATO membership became even more obvious in the evolving state of European security namely the outbreak of the civil war in the former Republic of Yugoslavia.

### *Integration*

The integration period is associated chiefly with the institutional preparation and the very accession of the CZR to NATO on 12 March 1999. This phase commenced immediately after 1 January 1993 upon the peaceful division of the country and its armed forces. Defence policy focused on the integration to the political-military structures of the West. It was not the only option taken into political considerations. However, neutrality or individual self-defence were found too risky in the wake of the country's geographic location at contested crossroads in Central Europe.

One of the main defence policy priorities for this period was to implement best practices on institutional adaptation and to ensure proper functioning of the entire defence sector in line with NATO standards (National Defence Strategy of the Czech Republic 1997). Nevertheless, this effort was negatively influenced by frequent changes in the top political leadership, accompanied with unclear conceptual ideas, unmaturing political guidance and several waves of questionable reorganisations balancing shrinking resources with enormous operating costs of a still very large CZAF and growing demand on its modernisation.

Affordability of the CZAF rather than its operational effectiveness prevailed. Defence policy objectives were driven by the concept of reasonable self-defence. As a result, the military potential of the country was further reduced in terms of military personnel, equipment and infrastructure and material reserves.

The Czech Republic joined the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program on 10 March 1994. In 1999, the Parliament of the Czech Republic adopted a set of defence laws and the Government issued strategic level documents (Security Strategy 1999; Military Strategy 1999).

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<sup>1</sup> Concept on the Development of the Czechoslovak Armed Forces by the end of 1993, adopted by the Government in November 1990 and the Czechoslovak Federal Republic Military Doctrine, adopted by the Federal Parliament on 20 March 1991.



### *Reforms*

The main objectives of defence reforms were to prepare the conditions for and create an all-volunteer force – smaller in size, but young, modern, highly mobile and able to meet fair burden sharing of collective defence. During this stage, the CZR advanced also its economic integration with the West and accessed the EU on 1 May 2004.

Reforms were introduced to provide updated strategic direction for further development of the CZAF to meet challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The main impetus for reforms was provided by the lessons gained from NATO membership. The participation of the CZAF in AOM increased significantly in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the United States.

Since 2002, there has been a new worrying trend. After a period of stable defence funding as the outcome of sound political commitments during the NATO accession process, the decline in defence spending became a political reality. It was partly influenced by the reprioritisation of the Government spending after the floods in 2002. As an excuse, the enhanced participation of the CZAF in Afghanistan and other AOM was articulated towards NATO.

Based on NATO's advice, several initiatives were introduced to save money mostly in supporting functions (outsourcing) and the core functions of military organisation (fighting capability) was emphasised. Furthermore, aging and not-used infrastructure was sold in larger scope and the modernisation pattern of the CZAF slowed down significantly.

### *Transformation*

The transformation period is typical for its effort to create a modern multipurpose military force with expeditionary capability without geographic limitation (Military Strategy 2008). Despite financial constraints, the priority was to ensure participation in AOM. There was also a mounting pressure to rationalise internal business processes under the motto "do more with less". Several initiatives were outlined to streamline supporting functions (property management, HRM, finance, acquisition) and avoid non-core business activities (civil protection, military sport, orchestras, forestry, state owned enterprises). However, resistance to change resulted in a limited implementation of these measures. The financial crises followed by substantial financial cuts in government expenditures with a reduction in the military budget of more than 20% impacted CZAF preparedness, readiness and capabilities (White Paper 2011).

The more than decade-long operational deployments related to the fight against terrorism worn out the CZAF. Substantive *price tag* was issued in terms of tiredness of personnel as well as material operability. On the other hand, participation in AOM enhanced the prestige of the CZAF in the society. However, it has changed the attitude of both ordinary people and political leadership to defence. In fact, the traditional understanding of territorial defence and preparation of the whole society for high-intensity military confrontation has disappeared (mobilisation, reserves preparation, high-end military capabilities, functionality of critical infrastructure). The responsibility for defending the country was wrongly assigned purely to military professionals with a limited military capability.



### *Deterrence*

The deterrence phase is the course of actions in the country's defence policy following the unlawful annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. Russia is seen as a risk to the country's security using subversive measures to weaken the credibility of NATO, undermining transatlantic unity and weakening European institutions and governments (the Gerasimov doctrine) (Defence Strategy 2017).

In response to this challenge, there is a renewed political commitment to boost capabilities and capacities of the CZAF. Efforts are being made on political and military levels to keep the defence system and CZAF relevant and fit for the whole spectrum of potential NATO and EU operations.

Since 2014, the CZR's defence policy has been dominated by the outcomes of NATO Summits in Wales and Warsaw, chiefly by reassurance measures, deterrence, enhance forward presence and many others. In practical terms, NATO commitments influenced the amendments to the defence strategy. This created the groundwork necessary for enhancing the overall resilience of the government bodies and agencies, local administrations and citizens. Defence strategy includes several important measures such as the increase of political-military ambitions, the establishment of new units and the increase of the number of soldiers by 5,000.

The CZR is able, depending on the nature of crisis, to deploy a land brigade task force without rotation for a six-month period. If such a task force is not deployed, the CZR will be able to simultaneously deploy a sustainable battalion and company size land task force, or an air force component, with rotation, for AOM. This is a significant increase on the level of political and military ambitions. So far, the previous defence strategy counted with the deployment of a brigade to secure NATO's collective defence only.

Despite the fact that the period of resource driven strategy seems to have passed away, responsible political behaviour should ensure to get the most out of each Czech Crown spent on defence. There is no doubt about the continued worsening of the security situation of the CZR and its allies demanding capable armed forces. Nevertheless, there is no shared vision among policy makers and military leadership in the CZR on the future force posture, as well as on the capabilities this country should exactly invest in.

This sort of dilemma is underscored by the so far limited ability of the MoD administration to implement already agreed plans and modernisation programs and of our military to justify their capability needs. In terms of long-term adaptation, the CZAF pursues the implementation of its Concept of the Czech Armed Forces 2025.

The most critical realm is the command and control function. For more than two decades, the CZR was cutting the positions of higher officer corps and reducing the command structure. In this regard, the NATO recommendations have always been taken into consideration. The original intention was to introduce lean management in military functions and turn the rank pyramid inherited from the Warsaw Pact era. Therefore, the CZAF has currently a limited ability to provide balanced military advice to politicians, capacity for long-term strategic planning and preparation, planning and execution of larger military operations (small joint operation – SJO). Furthermore, the military should react to the changed strategic assumption – no reaction time for managing crisis. The peacetime establishment of the CZAF must be capable to build up, and mobilise command and force structures in case of war faster than in the past.

The reappearance of geopolitics and hard power rhetoric (assertive Russia) in international relations accompanied by migration from North Africa and the Middle East and Terrorism and Cyber related threats with other implications such as Hybrid, Asymmetric and Information Warfare will shape the Czech defence policy in the years to come. Provision of credible defence of the CZR in the new era requires a fair contribution to collective defence (financing, capabilities and operations), strong transatlantic link, meaningful deterrence potential of multinational arrangement provided by NATO and its complementarity with the EU CSDP (enhanced cooperation, capability and innovation).

## **Institutional architecture**

The defence system of the CZR is institutionally conceived in concordance with the constitutional order. Its basic elements are mainly the constitutional institutions and functionaries: The President, the Parliament, the Government and the National Security Council and its regular working bodies. Relationships among state institutions are set by the highest legal norm – the Constitution of the CZR. Among its parts, there are the Constitutional Act No. 110/1998 Coll., on Security of the Czech Republic and Constitutional Act No. 300/2000 Coll. According to this law, securing the sovereignty and integrity of the CZR, protection of its democratic foundations and protection of lives, health and material values are the fundamental obligations of the country.

These regulations are further elaborated in a series of so-called military acts. (One of them is e.g. Act No. 222/1999 Coll., on Securing Defence of the CZR, which states the obligations of state bodies, regional governing bodies and physical and legal entities to ensure the defence of the Czech Republic or Act No. 240/2000 Coll., on crisis management.)

### *The President*

The second summit of the executive power in the CZR in addition to the Government is the President. Its role in the constitutional system is relatively weak. The President is the commander-in-chief of the CZAF and his competence covers commanding the Military Office and the Castle Guard. The Military Office ensures the performing of administrative tasks connected with executing the function of the commander-in-chief and the Castle Guard is an autonomous unit, in fact independent of the CZAF, and its obligation is the protection of the President and ceremonial functions.

### *The Parliament*

The supervising role in defence issues is entrusted to the two-chamber Parliament. The Government is obliged to inform both chambers of the Parliament about all related important decisions. The Parliament can rule over the Government's decision in case of disapproval. The Parliament decides to declare the state of war if the CZR is attacked or if it is necessary to fulfil international commitments of collective defence. Further on, it gives its consent to

sending the CZAF outside the territory of the CZR and to deployment of other countries' armed forces on the territory of the CZR unless such decision is exclusive to the Government.

Both chambers of the Parliament have committees dealing with the security and defence policy. Their main task is to assume standpoints towards discussed legislation, defence budget, significant acquisition programs, strategic and conceptual documents.

### *The Government*

The primary responsibility for security and defence of the country is entrusted with the Government that assesses the risks of threats to the country and takes necessary measures to reduce and possibly eliminate such risks, passes the strategic concepts of the country's defence, directs the process of defence planning, decides on basic measures for preparation for defence, decides on basic directions of construction, preparation and use of the CZAF, passes the concept of mobilisation, passes the concept of preparation of citizens for defence of the country, assigns tasks to ministers and heads of other administrative offices and municipalities to carry out its decisions.

The Government also decides on sending the CZAF outside the territory of the CZR and deployment of other countries' armed forces on the territory of the CZR for a maximum period of 60 days.

### *The National Security Council*

An important institution from the point of view of creating and carrying out a comprehensive defence policy is the National Security Council (NSC). The NSC was re-established by Act No. 110/1998 Coll., on the security of the CZR as a regular working body of the Government for the coordination of activities related to ensuring security and defence.

The Czech defence system went through significant changes after 1989. From the beginning of the 1990s to 1997, marginal attention was paid to defence. These problems were lying in the shadow of the deep political, social and economic transformation of the CZR. New challenges, upcoming membership in NATO and the EU entailed the rapid redress of the appalling state in this area. A flexible legislative framework and operational institutional defence system was created.

## **Operations and mission commitments**

On 23 September 1990, the Federal Assembly of Czechoslovakia expressed its consent to the participation of the NBC unit in the solution of the Persian Gulf crisis. Participation in operations *Desert Shield* and *Desert Storm* in 1991 laid the foundations of the modern military tradition.

Since the first deployment alongside Western militaries, the CZAF has deployed and sustained a variety of capabilities in many theatres around the Globe, *inter alia*, mechanised infantry, fix and rotary airlift, air policing capability, METEO and CBRN niche capabilities,

special forces, EOD teams, military police, medical component, CIMIC and PRT teams and logistic support elements under the UN, NATO, EU and OSCE flag or within coalition of the willing to support international crisis management, humanitarian relief and capacity building of failed states or to demonstrate solidarity with allies (air policing in the Baltics and over Iceland).

The coexistence within a large multinational family was a great lesson for our soldiers and impacted innovation of the CZAF. During deployments in the Balkans (UNPROFOR, UNTAES, IFOR, SFOR, KFOR, UNMIK, AFOR, Althea and many others), in the Middle East (ISAF, RSM, Enduring Freedom, NTM-I), Africa (MONUSCO, EUTM in Mali), Sinai (MFO)<sup>2</sup> and Kavkaz (OSCE mission in Georgia and Nagorno Karabakh) individuals, including civilians and units of the CZAF have always provided meaningful contribution and earned recognition from allies, partners and local communities. The Czech medical team's deployment was remarkable as a part of the first and so far last NATO Response Force (NRF) activation to ensure consequent management after a large-scale earthquake in Pakistan in 2005 (PROCHÁZKA 2009).

The political willingness to support NATO and EU operations demonstrates strong commitments to both organisations. Participation in AOM has always been understood as a fair contribution to Alliance cohesion, the strengthening of its transatlantic link. CZAF participation in the CSDP operations has remained at a relatively low level on the military spectrum in terms of the degree of complexity, intrusiveness and coercion. EU operations have remained far from the original idea of developing a 'common defence policy', as stated in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty.

Individuals, units and platforms were usually made available with little, if any, operational caveats. Operational deployments are subject to Parliamentary decision. Mandate is provided usually for one year. However, it includes a one-year outlook for planning purposes and timely preparation.

The precise numbers of deployed individuals in AOM is difficult to assess, nevertheless, there were more than fifteen thousand military and civilians involved in those endeavours since the early 1990s. Despite that, the main defence policy conceptual idea, the containment of threats to the country's security and defence alongside with our allies and partners far from our homeland has also had its opponents. Not only public but some political parties as well have opposed this concept continuously. Nevertheless, surveys have proved long-term public support of more than 60% with the deployments of the CZAF abroad. Public opinion concerning missions hit its bottom in 2004 when only 33% of respondents expressed their support. The main reason for that drop was the U.S. invasion of Iraq under rather unclear circumstances dividing the Alliance on the future of war against terrorism (PAJER 2013).

## Defence planning and capability development

Defence planning is a critical MoD business process with direct impact on effective and efficient capability delivery, preparedness and readiness of the CZAF. As already mentioned

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<sup>2</sup> The Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) Organisation supervises the observance of security conditions of the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel.

earlier, the long-term planning was abolished in the early 1990s. The task to rebuild this capability again cannot be seen as mission accomplished, yet.

Despite the direct assistance provided by the United States to the MoD via a private company CUBIC, most of the conceptual ideas and solutions offered to internal business improvement, especially to defence planning were only partially implemented. The Czech MoD has usually operationalised its own solutions while emphasising specific national conditions. However, the level of their maturity has influenced the institutional performance and its effectiveness.

Capability development has been mainly driven by the outcome of the NDPP. The CZAF had demonstrated limited ambition to develop the sound analytical support necessary for conducting effective capability-based planning embracing 1. identification of capability gaps against multiple set of scenarios; 2. prioritisation of capability requirements based on operational risks; and 3. assessment of alternative solutions in terms of operational effectiveness, costs and technical feasibility.

The CZR has always been willing to contribute to NATO and EU CSDP initiatives aiming multinational capability development. It has usually offered its niche capability for multinational cooperation, chiefly the CBRN, radar passive systems and medical units. Later, it has also developed rotary airlift capability for AOM in the framework of the users of Mi transport helicopter fleet.

The CZR joined and financially contributed to the Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) Programme and NATO Early Warning Programme (AWACS). It also supported several projects under the umbrella of EU Pooling and Sharing and NATO Smart Defence initiative. The Alliance recognition of the CBRN capability advanced in the establishment of Joint CBRN CoE in Vyškov. Furthermore, the Multinational Logistic Cooperation Centre was built up to provide unique expertise for NATO concepts and doctrines development for multinational logistic support.

Additionally, there are the strategic capabilities, which the CZR will never have resources and know-how to develop on its own and it will rely on multinational arrangements e.g. strategic airlift, air refuelling, satellite communication, strategic level intelligence and many others.

During the early years of NATO membership, the CZR profited heavily from the NATO Security and Investment Program (NSIP). Several projects were implemented to enhance communication within the Alliance, prepare critical infrastructure for reinforcement (airfields), integration into NATO airspace system (3D radars installation and Air C2 modernisation). Multinational cooperation within NATO and EU CSDP and bilateral cooperation with strategic partners in the area of capability development has always enjoyed high political visibility. Initiatives have been regarded together with the participation in AOM as meaningful contributions to collective defence and as a mitigation tool to existing capability gaps of the CZAF.

## **Resourcing defence needs**

There were clear political commitments to provide the required resources before the CZR joined NATO. After the CZR became NATO member, some of these promises were forgotten.

In general, during most of the period after 1989 the CZR exercised resource driven defence policy. It means that defence policy objectives, force structure, capabilities and activities have been adjusted to the level of resources allocated. This trend has changed after 2014. It seems that the political leadership is willing to allocate resources against well-justified military requirements to meet the changing defence policy objectives.

### *Finance and defence budget*

The amount of defence expenditures (Figure 1) is only one part of the equation. Political representation in the CZR is seriously concerned about the effective and efficient use of allocated resources. In this regard, the internal structure of the defence budget is of utmost importance. The so-called 50/30/20 formula for defence expenditures, with 50% of the budget going for personnel costs, 30% for operations and maintenance, and 20% for modernisation has long been seen as an ideal goal in the CZR. However, defence expenditures in 2016 in proportion of 59/30.5/10.5 clearly indicate that the investment level is still unsatisfactory and the pattern of modernisation of the CZAF is rather slow.

In addition to these fundamental set of benchmarks within NATO context, there are also other criteria being followed e.g. by the EU and the European Defence Agency (EDA). They emphasise the need for enhancing investments in R&D, which should comprise 2% out of all defence investment, and multinational cooperation through cooperative modernisation programs (35% out of all the money spent on modernisation of main acquisition programs) and 20% out of the total R&D (FIOTT 2017).

### *People and human resource management*

It is generally acknowledged that there is a significant underfinancing of military equipment and infrastructure (Concept of the Czech Armed Forces 2025). However, the most devastating effect caused by the shrinking defence budget in the past occurred in the human resource domain. Figure 2 depicts the evolution of quantitative personnel characteristics. The trend of slushing personnel stopped in 2014. In the pattern of many reforms spanning the entire period from 1989, the CZAF lost many well-qualified and capable officers (TÚMA 2006).

NATO and to some extent the EU membership provided several incentives for military professionals and for their career development, *inter alia*, better career prospect, competitive salaries, improved living and social conditions, awarding multinational cooperation including assignments in NATO Command and Force Structure, deployments in NATO and EU-led operations, variety of training opportunities in prestigious military schools abroad.

The HRM has struggled to introduce sound career control reflecting both the needs of the CZAF and fair and objective assessment of the performance of individual soldiers. In the meantime, new laws on the active duty of military personnel and civil servants introduced new set of rules aiming at the central control of military personnel and civil servants.

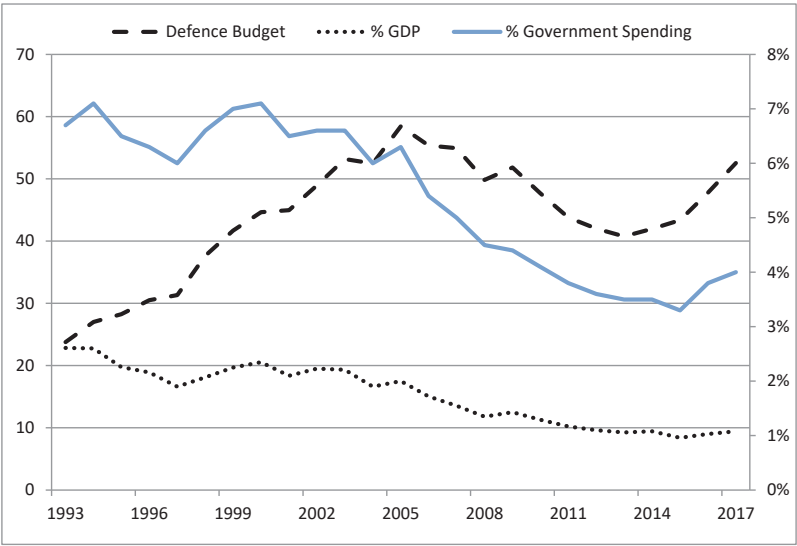


Figure 1.  
*Defence spending of the Czech Republic*

Source: Ministry of Defence 2018.

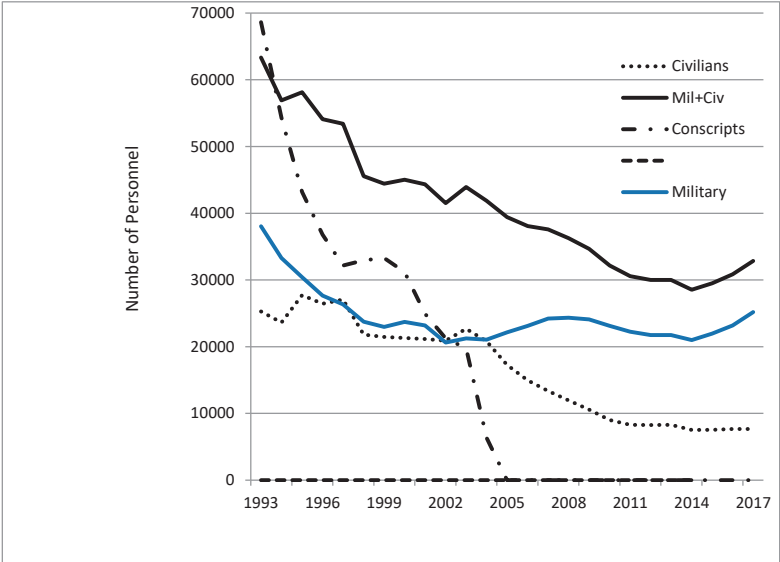


Figure 2.  
*Ministry of Defence personnel of the Czech Republic*

Source: Ministry of Defence 2016.

### *Innovation of materiel and provision of services*

Innovation of materiel and provision of services is a critical MoD function. In the pattern of institutional adaptation, several reorganisations were conducted aiming at on-time capability and services delivery in the budget with required parameters, while ensuring the required level of transparency, effectiveness and efficiency. Several concepts of organisational arrangements of armament and acquisition functions were introduced embracing centralisation or decentralisation of responsibilities. The national armaments strategy adopted by the government in 2004 and 2015 (National Armaments Strategy 2004; MoD 2016) reflected NATO best practices and SMART acquisition principles. Although, the MoD participates in CNAD, NIAG and NATO STO activities and can capitalise on exchange of lessons learned, the acquisition process performance is rather weak (Supreme Audit Office 2016). Despite the fact that more money is allocated, the MoD is unable to spend them in line with the existing legal framework and internal procedures. In the last few years, at the end of the budget executive period about 10% of the budget remained unspent, mainly investments (MoD 2017).

The armaments strategy of the MoD emphasised the need for security of supply and support to preservation and development of a stronger national defence industry while taking into consideration national security interests and using the flexibility of the EU legal framework.

## **Conclusion**

The CZR has transformed its defence sector as an integral part of its political, social and economic evolution from a totalitarian to a democratic country. Both NATO and EU CSDP have played an undisputable role in this process.

NATO's collective defence arrangement (hard power) is the main guarantor of the country's defence and there is no alternative to it. This mechanism allows minimising defence costs and the scope of the CZAF without putting the country's defence under a considerable level of risks. The EU CSDP as a soft security provider has always played a complementary role in the country's defence. EU integration and the common market is beneficial primary to the economy of the CZR. However, there are several external and internal drivers with the potential to enhance the EU CSDP's role in the CZR defence policy in the foreseeable future. Among those drivers belong, *inter alia*, the *America First* policy, Brexit and the rapidly deteriorating security environment (Russia, instability in the Middle East and North Africa, terrorism, migration, hybrid warfare, etc.). Europe must be able to do more in the area of defence to exercise its strategic autonomy while remaining complementary to the NATO collective defence arrangement.

NATO and EU CSDP influenced the following areas: 1. creation of an institutional arrangement; 2. formulation of defence policy objectives compatible with NATO and EU strategy and commitments; 3. cooperation and assistance in capability development; 4. rationalisation of internal business processes; and 5. participation in AOM. The defence policy of the CZR followed the principle of fair contribution to collective defence. There are three lines of fair burden sharing: 1. resourcing of collective defence needs; 2. capability development; 3. participation in AOM.



Participation in AOM has not only raised the prestige of the CZAF internationally and at home, but also acted as a spur to military reform and transformation. International cooperation and assistance provided by NATO and EU member states helped to introduce new skills, technologies, standards and way of thinking. Despite several ways of reorganisation, the CZAF have always been able to support defence policy objectives and contribute to Euro-Atlantic peace and stability. It offers a considerable amount of forces to the international crisis management around the globe.

The attitude of the Czech political leadership to defence matters has been evolving via phases of: 1. democratisation; 2. integration; 3. reforms; 4. transformation; and 5. deterrence. Different political objectives were followed and commitments to defence were not always exercised in a responsible manner.

NATO's collective defence and transatlantic link will continue to play a principle role in the defence of the CZR. Despite the new dynamics in EU CSDP, this instrument remains complementary. The CZR will develop a single set of forces for overlapping NATO and EU missions (besides collective defence). It will exercise multinational cooperation under NATO and EU umbrella. It will use bilateral arrangements with strategic partners (the United States, the U.K., Germany, Poland, Slovakia) and advance cooperation within the V4 format mainly in operational deployments, exercises, training and education. Within the EU CSDP, it will continue to create favourable conditions for small and middle size enterprises (SMEs) to preserve the national industrial capability and security of supply.

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# **Between Two Pillars: Slovak Security in the Light of NATO–EU Cooperation**

*Dusan Fischer*

## **Introduction**

Slovakia's stand towards the EU and NATO oscillates between two pillars – one is pro-Atlantic, strongly seeking EU/NATO membership and active participation in their activities, and the other one is more reserved, relaying on a sceptical domestic audience still full of uncertainty and suspicion towards both organisations and nostalgia for the Soviet times. Given its size and political power in the international arena, Slovakia's role in European security and defence has been minimal. Regardless of the leader, the country's policy was to wait for the allies and repeat what was suitable. The following article will introduce the beginnings of Slovakia's debate on international security, its positions, first aspirations as a candidate country and transformation of its security sector. The article will then conclude by addressing the most crucial issues of today's security environment from the point of view of both organisations and attempt to sketch the future relations and identify milestones of Slovakia's perception of the EU as a security actor.

## **From independence to partnership**

When the communist regime collapsed in Europe, the question of the future of the Slovak security came in place. Although the domestic reforms were a priority, there was an attempt to define Slovakia's foreign policy and set the goal at least on the declaratory level. From the declaration of independence, Slovakia publicly sought Euro-Atlantic integration. Nevertheless, it is important to say that it was not the only option discussed. Among others, a less likely trajectory was also neutrality. The integration into the EU was not a problem. The European Union was viewed positively. But NATO integration for its military nature was a hard-hitting issue for the public. Switzerland and the Nordic countries such as Sweden and Finland, also members of the EU were used as an example of successfully avoiding NATO integration. It would be naïve to think that a country between the Russian Federation and the countries of now Western Europe could stay neutral for a long time. Slovakia did not have the resources and means to maintain its neutrality. It was necessary for the country to choose its path and start a regional cooperation to achieve its goals of security.

After decades under the communist leadership that was acting in a way to satisfy the counterparts in Moscow in almost all areas of life, Slovakia emerged as an independent

country, yearning to be free in its decisions. It was for the first time that the freely elected parliament led to the composition of a government, which set the course for the republic in both domestic and foreign policy. Together with the foreign policy, also questions of security and defence policy came along. Slovakia's security was no longer guaranteed by a questionable partner, the Soviet Union, but it could choose the path for a common defence provider. From the beginning of the republic, Slovakia's government declared its focus on the European Union and NATO. They saw the two organisations as guarantees of economic and social development in terms of the EU and security guarantees that would ensure this development protected under the umbrella of common defence within NATO.

Before even thinking about joining the EU and NATO, the Slovak authorities had to build military and political structures. The first Slovak Government established shortly after the Velvet Revolution in December 1989 did not have a post of minister of defence or foreign affairs. The government lasted until 26 June 1990, the Prime Minister was Milan Čič. The frequency of short-term governments was not an anomaly during the first years of Slovakia.

This revisit of historical events is important to illustrate the transition, which brought along some political instability as the governments did not last very long. It is an example of a young country trying to find its rhythm. Given the peacefulness of the Czechoslovak divorce, there was no need for a strong political, let alone military involvement from foreign countries or institutions. However, the process was closely watched by many actors who wondered about next steps of Slovak governments.

The first government elected by the Slovak people and lasting full four years came into power on 13 December 1994. During that period, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had altogether four ministers. The high number of ministers responsible for foreign affairs reflected the inconsistency of the ministry. The Ministry of Defence was not yet established. In its declaration, the government stated its interest in maintaining continuity and "to build upon the current policy of convergence of the Slovak Republic with the European and transatlantic political, security, and economic structures, to intensify it and to emphasize our preference to become a full member of these groups" (Vláda SR 1994). This rather vague statement was put in place to make a case in front of the allies about Slovakia's future foreign and security policy positions and prepare them for future conversations.

The two most important factors in this declaration were continuity and integration. Continuity of the governments was one of the crucial pre-conditions of a successful path to a membership of both NATO and the EU. The second declaratory statement contained integration. The new government declared that it was ready to join the transatlantic groups as an equal partner and was willing to undergo necessary reforms in order to achieve required results. The process that started in 1993 and concluded during 2004 had not always been smooth. Nevertheless, the declaration of continuity and progress assured that the new country is on the right path to achieve a transatlantic integration and it was also a strong signal to the nations neighbouring Slovakia that it was calling for help in the process as the importance of regional cooperation saw a new revival.

Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar signed the Partnership for Peace Framework Document at NATO Headquarters on 9 February 1994. For some, the period between independence, Partnership for Peace and NATO membership could seem like a short time.

It is true that it took one year for Slovakia to be in the PFP, and then another ten to join NATO. However, it is important to note that the real transatlantic push on the trajectory was done between the years 1998 and 2006. It would be ignorant to claim that the whole integration process with transformation of institutions took place between those years, but it was the key period for the future of the Euro-Atlantic integration.

During the 1990s, both NATO and EU membership became a *res publica* – a public matter. In 1997, there was an attempt to conduct a referendum regarding NATO membership. The questions were focused on membership, nuclear and military installations. This referendum was later considered “thwarted” because of a controversy that did not arise from the questions regarding NATO, although they were misleading. The last of four questions was concerned about the publicly elected office of the president. The turnout was eventually below 10%, so the results of the referendum were not valid. Mečiar admitted in 2001 that the 1997 referendum was poorly performed, but came “from a good idea”. He also granted himself with raising the support for NATO integration among the general population (NICHOLSON 2001). For Mečiar, it was already clear that Slovakia would not be invited to join NATO regardless of the referendum results. Later in the year, the North Atlantic Council confirmed that Slovakia will stay out of the round of enlargement and the European Commission achieved a similar decision regarding Slovakia’s EU membership.

From security and defence perspective, the first step of Slovakia was to create an army that would be independent from the burden of the previous regime and be able to be shaped in a way to fulfil future potential requirements for Euro-Atlantic integration. The national parliament passed Law No. 3/1993, which defined the role of the Slovak Army as to “defend freedom, independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity of the Slovak republic, and help eliminate consequences of natural disasters and disasters endangering human lives or property on a larger scale” (Slov-Lex 2018). The law maintained the conscription. In 1994, the National Council also passed the Defence doctrine replaced after seven years in 2001 by the Defence strategy. The armed forces commanded 53,000 soldiers. In 1995, the new limits were set at 46,667 soldiers. Eventually, by 2015 the number of soldiers decreased to 16,000.

With great power comes great responsibility, as they say. After the creation of the Slovak Army, the initial ideas about their employment abroad started to appear. Slovakia decided against sending troops to Bosnia and Herzegovina as a part of the Implementation Force (IFOR) under NATO’s leadership between 1995 and 1996. This added to the fact that Slovakia started to gradually fall behind other partner countries seeking NATO membership. Eventually, Slovakia did contribute to the Stabilisation Force (SFOR), a successor mission to IFOR with one helicopter unit to the South-West of Bosnia. It was the first deployment of the Slovak air force to a peace operation (MoD 2018a).

The immediate post-transition period of Slovakia was characterised by declaratory statements and steps suggesting positive development towards Euro-Atlantic integration, but the period was also full of confusion, international dispatches criticising the government of Vladimír Mečiar for his domestic policies of close connection to organised crime, political intimidation of the president’s office and for his foreign policies and his government’s close relations to Russia. Slovakia that required NATO and EU membership needed a new change of domestic politics situation.



## Pre-accession cooperation

From the early 1990s, the integration into EU and NATO was more focused on domestic politics than on foreign policy. For illustration, on declaratory level there was no difference between the governments. It was the concrete actions on the domestic scene that drove Slovakia away from the opened door. At times, it seemed more difficult to prove Slovakia's intent towards the public than to assure future allies of its capabilities. Therefore, to understand the Euro-Atlantic integration of Slovakia, we need to understand domestic policy and politics. The parliamentary election in 1998 caused a second revolution after the period from the Velvet Revolution in 1989 to independence in 1993. The election not only led to the change of government, but it turned the whole country's foreign policy, security and defence structure towards a different direction.

One of the main contributions to the Euro-Atlantic aspiration coming from the new government was its consistency towards a common goal. At high political levels, including the prime minister's office, ministries of foreign affairs and defence and most importantly, the leadership of the National Council were all behind the Slovak aspirations to join the EU and NATO. This confirmed two key assumptions. First, it clearly meant that the Euro-Atlantic integration is as much an internal as external process for a country. The complexity of reforms and issues a candidate country must undergo is challenging and the bar is set high enough for the country to level with the rest of the EU and NATO. This process was achieved, but not fully finished by formal joining to the Euro-Atlantic structures.

In order to continue with the story we need to get back to the late 1990s. The country was speeding towards integration. The first step was to gain confidence of the international institutions and create a plan for military transformation to achieve interoperability with the rest of the allies in NATO. After the election of 1998, six parties reached the threshold to join the parliament. The government also created a new post for deputy prime minister for European integration. It is interesting that the Defence Ministry was under the leadership of a political party with sceptical views on NATO and its activities. The first significant problem after the decision to include a left-leaning party in the government came with the decision of the cabinet to allow allied forces to transfer its equipment through the sovereign airspace of Slovakia in April 1999 to support an ongoing operation in Kosovo. It was decided on a governmental level with the minister of defence abstaining from voting. Later at a press conference, the chair of the party responsible for the MoD said that the decision against military movement did not change the party's pro-Atlantic position.

Slovakia had to prove its intentions to be a reliable ally in NATO by supporting its activities. The support was not always met with support from the general public. NATO's 1999 activity in Kosovo had an impact on the public opinion in Slovakia. The intention of the government was to cooperate with NATO; the public was against intervening into the affairs between Serbia and Kosovo. 64% of the respondents disagreed with the decision to provide assistance to the Alliance in a form of opening Slovakia's air space for NATO forces, only one third saw it as a good step. The government eventually contributed by allowing the free movement of allied forces. The Kosovo crisis occurred two years after the Madrid Summit where Slovakia's efforts to join NATO were blocked. Slovakia also contributed to another NATO activity which was initiated after the 9/11 attacks. The United States began its military operation in Afghanistan. In 2003, NATO took over the International Assistance Force in

Afghanistan (ISAF). The government agreed to support the allies. During the pre-accession period, after receiving an official invitation, it was understandable that the incoming ally will provide assistance.

Despite minor setbacks, the government continued working towards its goal. The defence section of the governmental declaration for the years 1998–2002 declared its interest to achieve full membership in NATO to ensure the security of Slovakia. The foreign policy section focused also on the EU membership, which the declaration considered “a strategic target” and “one of the most important political and economic priorities of the Slovak Republic” (Vláda SR 1998). It particularly mentioned Slovakia’s efforts to the effective use of the PHARE program and ensured the creation of mechanisms to apply the EU’s *acquis communautaire*. The government took things with NATO membership seriously, particularly in the light of the 1997 Madrid Summit decision. In the declaration it was stated that Slovakia would utilise all possibilities to move closer to NATO membership, among them cooperation on the level of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and Partnership for Peace program, a waiting room for NATO future members. It is important to note that the sections focused on the EU membership did not mention common security or defence as a reason for achieving membership. It would be safe to presume that NATO remained the sole institution for a collective defence and security for Slovakia.

The continuation of the Slovak foreign and security policy served as a paramount condition for entering the EU and NATO. This was also true after the parliamentary elections in 2002. The pro-Atlantic parties formed the government following the elections, preparing the country for its last lap on joining NATO. Slovakia was on the path to join the EU and NATO. However, the path was rocky and Slovakia was entering NATO not fully ready. As the Garret Report from 2000 concluded, there were still some gaps in capabilities and military service:

1. Slovakia is currently reviewing its basic documents, which even now no longer correspond to current defence requirements and concepts. The revised documents (the constitutional Security Law, the National Security Strategy and the National Military Strategy) should provide the basis for the launching of military reform.
2. A deficit exists in the planning and distribution of military resources.
3. In order for Slovakia to be capable of integrating into Western military structures, it needs to build smaller, more professional and combat-ready forces. A shortcoming in this area has been created by ‘empty’ forces with little or no combat-readiness.
4. Most formations are currently staffed at less than 70% of their calculated wartime levels, and thus are dependent on a national mobilisation to reach combat-readiness.
5. No unified or national standard for planning the use of funds exists, despite the fact that the country is expecting an annual GDP growth of between 2% and 3%.
6. The national defence system is seriously disturbed by the coexistence of military and quasi-military elements, as well as the problem of control of armed forces under the jurisdiction of three ministries (Defence Ministry, Interior Ministry, Ministry of Transport, Post and Telecommunications). The situation in Slovakia is far more transparent than in neighbouring Ukraine – but then again the latter country is not a candidate for NATO entry.
7. The Army, in its personnel policies, still operates according to principles inherited from the communist regime.



8. Training problems are regarded as absolutely the gravest issue facing the Slovak Army. The report criticises the fact that since 1993 (with certain exceptions) the Army has not undergone a single joint exercise involving all its different formations, and no joint training exists for ground and air forces (STRÁŇAVA 2000).

## Post-accession relaxation

It was up to Slovakia's leaders to persuade the key stakeholders in NATO. The first stop was the NATO Summit in Prague, the most important NATO Summit in Slovakia's story of integration that took place in 2002. "Today, we have decided to invite Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia to begin accession talks to join our Alliance", read the Prague Summit Declaration issued by the heads of state and government. This concluded an initial task of Slovakia's achievement. Joining any organisation is based on an expression of the country's free will. There is, of course, pressure from the organisations' key stakeholders who wish to achieve unity, stability and security of the Euro-Atlantic region but the decision always comes down to the political leadership on the national level. Slovakia joined the EU and NATO based on the decision of a country and its political representatives. The Prague Summit Declaration confirmed the decision.

The acceptance of Slovakia being a member of NATO arrived quickly. There was a euphoria ease after two years. The new government coming to power in 2006 took a different approach towards NATO than the previous government. The new established government was based on a populist message. The governmental declaration issued for the period 2006–2010 started its defence section by declaring that "from a political and security standpoint an inseparable part of the Euro-Atlantic space" (Vláda SR 2006). This statement was followed by other pro-Atlantic declarations suggesting that there could be continuity from the previous government.

The declaration was also a good example of the perception of NATO and the EU as security and defence actors. The document argued that by accession into NATO, Slovakia became a part of collective defence and by entering the EU gained more assurance of political and economic stability. This practice to label NATO as a military and defence organisation, and the EU as representing a more political and economic integration was later dismissed when the government declared to add to the military capabilities of collective defence of NATO and military capabilities of the EU. Overall, the declaratory document declared its support for a closer cooperation between the EU and NATO, and implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

When the debate on the deployment of the U.S. missile system in Central Europe started, Prime Minister Fico criticised the U.S. for not debating the issue on NATO level (Reuters 2007). This was mostly discussed during the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest. In 2010, NATO introduced the new Strategic Concept at the Lisbon Summit. Slovakia was represented by President Ivan Gašparovič at the Summit. In his article, Gašparovič argued that the Summit was alongside Slovakia's priorities within NATO – territorial defence, cooperation with Russia and a new era of cooperation with the EU (GAŠPAROVIČ 2011). The 2010 Strategic Concept marked an important step in closer cooperation between the EU and NATO.

One of the most crucial and influential examples of a post-accession relaxation was the lack of strategic communication. Slovakia's political representation did not use its full potential and communication capacities to continue to persuade people of the importance of EU and NATO memberships. By successfully joining the EU and NATO, it seemed like the fight was won. However, the public remained almost equally divided. Problems with strategic communication and presenting Slovakia's membership in the EU and NATO is closely connected to the involvement of the civil society, including think tanks and independent analysts with a focus on foreign and security affairs. The civil society was a key player during the pre-accession period and was also important shortly after the accession. However, the change of government in 2006 represented a break from sometimes complicated, but close cooperation between the governmental bodies and the NGO and think tank sector. One example where the strategic communication failed the most was talking about Slovakia and EU/NATO as two separate entities. There was often a debate on Slovakia v. NATO, Slovakia v. EU without articulating enough that Slovakia is a crucial and inseparable part of both organisations and that the decisions made on the EU level have impacts on the Slovak legislative body as well.

The ambivalent support of Slovaks for NATO can be ascribed to Róbert Fico's inconsistency. In 2012, he declared his high hopes for further enlargement of the Alliance in the next years. Slovakia has been active in the process of enlargement by supporting the Open Door Policy and sharing the country's experience with Ukraine, Georgia and the Western Balkans. The Russian invasion of 2014 changed his view. He publicly stated that he could not imagine Ukraine in NATO and blamed international actors for "dragging Slovakia into geopolitical games" (SARVAŠ 2014). Fico later compared the Allied forces to the occupational unit of the Warsaw Pact. This approach illustrates the division between statements and responsibilities. When declaring Slovakia's position towards NATO abroad or at international forums, Fico was more pro-Atlantic in comparison to talking to the domestic press. The ambivalence continued until the end of his term in 2018.

After the Russian invasion in Ukraine, NATO took several active assurance measures. The first Summit taking place following the military intervention was in Wales. The Warsaw Summit in 2016 confirmed the positions of the 28 NATO nations towards Russia, but most importantly towards the protection of NATO's Eastern border. Slovakia agreed with all the measures. Although it did not join the group of countries allowing the establishment of the NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU), the Slovak Government eventually agreed with it. Compared to other countries, for instance Lithuania, the opening of the NFIU was lukewarm from the side of the government as media access was denied due to the security of the location.

In the light of Russia's intervention, the debate about strengthening the readiness and preparedness of the citizens in case of a conflict started among politicians and military experts. The conscription was abolished in 2006, which meant the end of conscription in the armed forces. This step represented the final stage of building a fully professional and combat-ready armed force. In 2015, the National Council passed a law establishing the Volunteer military service in cooperation with the Armed Forces. The government created several incentives, which still did not bring the expected number of volunteers. Each year, the compensation for absolving the program increased. In 2018, the compensation was 1,000 EUR. The government also shortened the length of the training from the initial twelve to eleven weeks. In 2017, 93 volunteers joined the program (MoD 2017a).

Regional cooperation became increasingly important following the 2014 Russian military engagement. One of the examples of a close V4 cooperation was the V4 Battlegroup. However, there are few examples of a successful cooperation beyond the Battlegroup. The most recent Slovak presidency of the V4 was ambitious and far more concrete than the previous two, but it is still difficult to assess its success. On the bilateral level, the Slovak and Czech republics agreed on the “Common Sky” agreement by protecting each other’s airspace. The previous years have shown that contribution rather than collaboration was the way forward for the V4. All countries contributed to NATO’s assurance measures. Based on the results from the 2016 Warsaw Summit, all V4 countries contributed its forces (149 from Slovakia) to a training and exercise mission in Latvia.

Following this commitment, on 21 June 2018 Slovakia joined Albania, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Italy and Canada as a framework nation by contributing to the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group (EFP BG Latvia). Slovakia sent 150 soldiers on a six-month rotation, among them medical team, military police, national support element, mechanised company and maintenance platoon (MoD 2018b).

The Slovak contribution is not only in the form of military forces. After the initial reluctance of the government, it eventually allowed for the establishment of the NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU), officially activated on 1 September 2016. NFIU’s tasks are “to support NATO’s collective defence planning process, assistance in training and joint exercises and, if necessary, to coordinate deployment of the Allied forces in the region” (MNCNE 2018).

Slovakia is currently involved in peacekeeping missions under the leadership of UN, NATO, EU and OSCE. The largest contingent was in Afghanistan during ISAF. As the total number of troops deployed in the continuing Resolute Support Mission decreased, Slovakia also reduced the number of troops. However, the deployment in Afghanistan still ranks among the largest contingents. More information is included in the table below.

Table 1.  
*The number of troops deployed abroad*

<b>Mission</b>	<b>Mandate</b>	<b>Real number</b>
Resolute Support Mission (Afghanistan)	66	36
Althea (Bosnia and Hercegovina)	51	38
UNFICYP (Cyprus)	280	159
UNTSO (Syria, Israel)	5	2
OSCE – Moldova	1	0
OSCE – Georgia	2	0
EUMM – Georgia	1	1

*Source:* MoD 2018c.

As the table shows, Slovakia is fulfilling approximately 50% of its current mandate. Since September 2018, the United Nations gave Slovakia responsibility for Sector 4 of UNFICYP, a peacekeeping force in Cyprus. The sector’s headquarters is located in Famagusta, at Camp General Stefanik, named after the first Czechoslovak Minister of War (UN 2018).

## Issues of today

One of the issues that emerged lately is the relationship between the EU and NATO in their roles for protection and guarantee of territorial integrity and support in capacity building measures of their members. As Ivo Samson pointed out in his analysis of Slovakia's security and defence policy of 2012, the EU is fulfilling the political-security role and NATO is presenting itself in the light of military-political affairs (SAMSON 2013). The importance of vocabulary does not necessarily have to come across as important in this regard, but the defenders of NATO often call the Alliance political-military alliance rather than the opposite, which would suggest that NATO is primarily a military organisation, which is not true, given its political leadership and representation. Nevertheless, the European attempts at strategic autonomy were seen in Slovakia as well.

The 2016 was pivotal for European security. It started with the escalation of the Russian intervention in Ukraine, continued with Brexit and concluded with Donald Trump winning the U.S. presidential election. His policies during the presidential campaign suggested some shifts of the transatlantic partnership in trade as well as security. While this has not been fulfilled, the EU decided to create a more robust foreign and defence policy by issuing the EU Global Strategy (EU GS). The document also restarted a debate on a potential autonomous EU army. Neither topic received a lot of attention in Slovakia. The EU GS is available in the Slovak language and the most recent Slovak Security Strategy mentions its implications and implementation. However, the debate on EU GS was replaced by a debate about EU core and the Permanent Structural Cooperation (PESCO).

The years since 2016 onward can be characterised as an evaluation and realisation of the European potential in security and defence capabilities. In the second half of 2016, during Slovakia's first presidency of the Council of the EU, there was a strong call for support and implementation of the EU's Global Strategy. The Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs was renamed as Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs as a signal of first: European affairs are not foreign, and second: the government took the EU affairs seriously. Prime Minister Fico became the first and most vocal supporter of Slovakia's closer integration into the core EU. This approach did not only reinforce Slovakia's pro-European position, it was also meant for the domestic audience where Prime Minister Fico wanted to be understood as one of the only strong pro-European politicians with the abilities to form a government. It is true that despite some vocal opposition towards NATO, the EU enjoys overwhelming support among the population where more than two thirds agree with the European Union. Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg visited Slovakia to attend the informal meeting on EU's defence ministerial on 27 September 2016 during the historically first Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU. Stoltenberg met Defence Minister Gajdoš and Slovak President Andrej Kiska. On the international level, this was a strong show of commitment to continue the EU–NATO cooperation described in the EU Global Strategy introduced two months before the meeting. Stoltenberg's public press conference was mostly focused on developing NATO capabilities and strengthening European defence. The Slovak presidency was also significant for the Bratislava Declaration, also known as a roadmap. In the Declaration, the EU representatives agreed to strengthen EU cooperation on security and defence and vowed to create an implementation plan in cooperation with NATO (EU Council 2016). In September 2017,

ten initial projects were introduced. Twenty-five EU member states joined PESCO, with Denmark and Malta opting-out and the United Kingdom set to leave the EU.

Slovakia volunteered for PESCO on 13 November 2017 alongside 22 other EU member states at the Council of the EU. Slovakia is participating in a PESCO project called “EuroArtillery” and it is focused on indirect fire support. Considering their active participation, Italy joined Slovakia in the project with Hungary (MoD 2017b). EuroArtillery was a success for Slovakia when it became one of 17 (out of 49) proposals to be implemented in the first period of PESCO. The idea for the project is to develop accurate mobile, artillery platform with long-range munition, command and control systems for coordination in the multinational operational environment.

After the EU Summit in June 2017, Slovakia welcomed the initiative to cooperate closer in security and defence. “We are interested in this. Security and defence are areas that will be the subject of countries getting closer together and creation of closer core” (Fico 2017). In the light of activation of PESCO, in October 2017, Slovakia’s top three political representatives signed a declaration stating that Slovakia’s membership in the EU and NATO is crucial for its existence. This declaration was an important step towards the allies to show that Slovakia supports deeper integration in security and defence, while at the same time urges the EU and NATO to cooperate with each other. By signing the declaration, the Slovak Government acknowledged the EU’s capabilities in defence and security as an outfall of the cooperation between NATO and the EU that emerged in 2016.

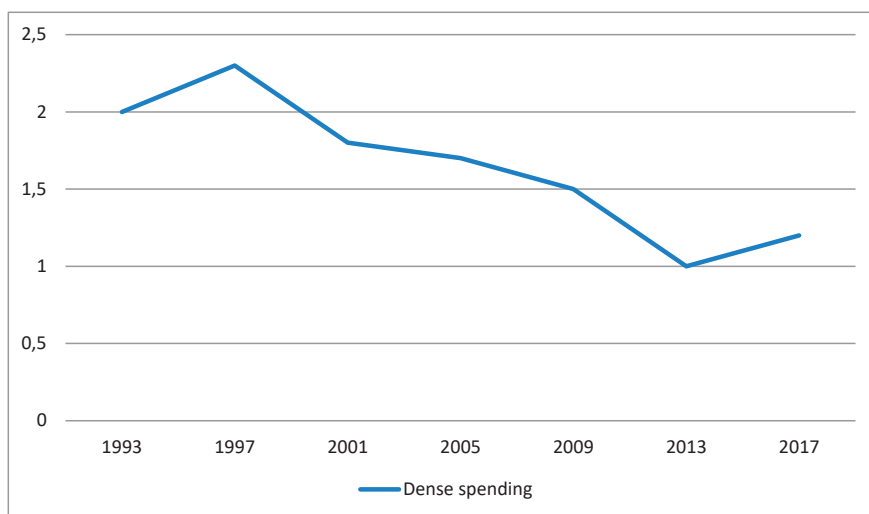


Figure 1.  
*Slovakia's defence expenditure*

Source: SIPRI 2018.

In fall of 2017, the government agreed on the new Security Strategy. The document reflects on the most crucial security challenges and threats for Slovakia, including regional instability, resilience and extremism. The strategy calls the EU the environment of values.

NATO is the defence and security pillar for Slovakia. The document further describes building of solidarity and cohesion between the EU and NATO as one of Slovakia's main security priorities. On the political-military level, Slovakia is acting like a good ally. However, the communication towards its own public can cause troubles with future integration. The country's representatives clearly did not anticipate the use of disinformation specifically tailored to the Slovak audience that could be traced to the outside powers, mostly Russia. The anti-NATO websites are spreading on the internet and drawing large crowds of users. The issue is that it is often the think tanks who replace governmental representatives. They seldom talk positively about NATO and the EU affairs. The reaction to the disinformation campaigns has been slow and reluctant. In 2017, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs created the Department for Strategic Communication (OSKO), directly affiliated with the office of the Minister. Slovakia has also taken part in the communication strategy called #WeAreNATO. At the moment, there is not enough data to conclude success or failure of the campaign.

## Conclusion and vision of the future

Slovakia has maintained a balance between being a responsible ally while at the same time tried to satisfy needs from the domestic audience and voters who were more nationalist and neutrally oriented towards NATO or any defence issues. The roaring nineties included several political upsets. The new country was finding its place both domestically and towards foreign partners and allies. Despite the turmoil, the pro-Atlantic and pro-EU declarations were clearly stated in all governmental declarations and manifestos, including those headed by Vladimír Mečiar. Russia has played a key part in this balance.

The Slovak Government has always wanted to maintain a good relationship with Russia, often at odds with the priorities of the transatlantic community. The biggest discrepancy in the Fico Government was between himself and the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs who held a more realistic view on the threats posed on the EU and NATO by Russia. With his statements, Fico was often addressing his domestic audience, which was more pro-Russian than the general population.

Given the disinformation campaigns and spreading of false news online, combined with the inability of people to correctly distinguish between facts and made up stories created a struggle for pro-NATO and pro-EU elements in Slovakia and abroad. Both the EU and NATO reacted slowly to the emergence of groups calling for leaving and abolishing them. Thanks to the new means of communication, the scarce opinionated groups are able to merge into a larger block with political power. Slovakia was not immune to this trend and the current parliament contains parties that are directly promoting Slovakia's path outside of NATO and the EU. So far, their support has not been measured more often than during one parliamentary election in 2016. The mainstream, pro-NATO and pro-European parties are now to be up to a task to calm down the opposite rhetoric, provide sufficient information, develop and maintain a credible platform to communicate important messages about the benefits of membership in both EU and NATO, without leaving room for criticism.

The mainstream parties, however, sometimes add to the negative position when they criticise the EU for problems not caused by the Union, or when their representatives call



the allied forces “foreign”, playing into the hands of neutralists and opponents of NATO. If this trend persists, there is a potential for Slovakia to leave these institutions once the opposition receives enough support to conduct a referendum. So far, it is not clear whether the anti-NATO and anti-EU protest is here to stay, or if it is a short-term frustration based on domestic and socio-economical failures of the national government. If the former is true, Slovakia will return to the battle of 1993, contemplating once again its future within the Euro-Atlantic structures. However, this fight will be conducted with new players, not yet fully known, which will be aided by the technology development.

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# **The Role of NATO and the EU in Poland's Security and Defence Policy**

*Péter Tálas*

The Poles belong to one of those nations that did not own an independent state during the classical time of national development between the 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, Poland lost its independence at the same time as the conception of modern nationalism began to conquer Europe. According to Przemysław Grudziński, the lack of a nation state, and especially the historical role of the Russian empire in this explain that the struggle for survival became a strong and integral part of the Polish national conscience, including a part of the Polish security perception after the creation of an independent Poland in 1918 (GRUDZIŃSKI 2008, 72).

The major historical developments affecting Poland during the 20<sup>th</sup> century – the strategic balancing between Germany and the Soviet Union in the interwar period, the fourth division of Poland as a result of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, and its drift into the Soviet sphere of influence after the second world war – all strengthened this perception of the non-communist Polish political elite. The role of NATO in Poland's security and defence policy is also decisively defined by this consideration, the perception of the Russian threat. This explains not only Poland's active presence in the Alliance but how since its accession to NATO, Warsaw has supported strengthening the collective defence function of the Alliance and enlargement to the East (ZAJĄC 2014, 191). As it will be seen, Poland's expectations connected to NATO essentially define its relationship to the EU's common security and defence policy.

## **NATO in the Polish security policy concept**

NATO as the key institution of Poland's security appeared rather early in the Polish security policy thinking. We can make this claim despite the fact that the security policy document of the Polish Republic's defence doctrine of February 1990 was based on the strategic concept of assuring its own security. It is important to take into account that at the time of the adoption of the first strategically significant security policy document after the political transition, the Warsaw Pact still existed formally. NATO declared its intention to cooperate with the Eastern and Central European countries only a couple of months later, at the London NATO Summit. Conversely, the document on "The principles of the Polish security policy and security policy and defence strategy of the Polish Republic" adopted in 1992 was unambiguous about the Polish political elite's objective and intention to take Poland into NATO and the Western European Union (Strategia RP 1992, 5). With the acceptance of this document a nearly two year-long debate about the possible models of assuring Polish security came to a conclusion,

which included the theoretical options of neutrality, a Central European defence alliance, a cooperative security model based on OSCE alongside the accession to Western defence institutions. Warsaw's decision on behalf of NATO arose from the recognition that with the fall of the bipolar world order, the United States remained the sole global great power without a competitor, and it was in the interest of the U.S. to maintain and effectively operate the Alliance (WALTZ 2000, 18–39).

The most significant value of the North Atlantic Alliance for Poland is the collective defence clause of Article 5, and the fact that its leading power is the United States, which is seen by the Polish political elite as a world power that can credibly deter Russia from aggressive behaviour. The adherence to hard security guarantees arises from Poland's geopolitical position and negative historical experience. The country is placed in such a region where the interests of great powers often collided, and the Polish nation not once felt betrayed by its European allies. It is enough to point at the beginning of the Second World War when British–Polish and French–Polish mutual defence assistance did not go into effect despite the German and the Russian aggression. The strong impact and continued effect of historical experience was also decisive in other aspects. Although the geopolitical changes occurring in the Western and Southern neighbourhood of Poland after the end of the Cold War were considered positive, Russia in the Eastern neighbourhood was still viewed as a potential threat (ZAJĄC 2014, 194). This provides an explanation why Warsaw as a NATO member urged the strengthening of the primary function of the Alliance, essentially the collective defence all along, and usually openly opposed every change (such as the plan to create European defence autonomy, the duplication of capabilities) which was considered to weaken this objective (KUŹNIAR 2018, 59).

In exchange for the hard security guarantees, the Polish political elite promised and delivered strong Polish security policy, military commitment and solidarity for the Alliance and its members, primarily in relation to the United States. This was not only evident in Poland's serious participation in every major mission of the Alliance since 1996, but by usually siding with the United States in the debates within NATO. Furthermore, sometimes it even went to greater lengths, such as in 2003 when it gave military support for the United States in the war against Iraq (TÁLAS 2004).

When Warsaw formulated its intention to join NATO in 1992, the Polish leadership expected that Poland would join an alliance based on collective defence. However, since the middle of the 1990s, NATO has taken on an increasing number of operations outside the borders of its members – realising the concept of the out-of-area missions of the 1991 Rome Summit – and has increasingly formed into a collective security organisation. Although Poland participated in these missions actively or, according to many, even above its strength, it was always one of those NATO members which thought that the capabilities of the Alliance should be developed in a way that preserves the balance between collective defence and out-of-area engagement (KLICH 2009). Some Polish security policy experts close to the government even expressed such opinions that the operations conducted outside of the Article 5 regions had a negative impact on the prestige of the Alliance (WĄGROWSKA 2004). Although NATO's engagement in the Balkans was considered to be successful, the interventions in Afghanistan (2002–2014), in Iraq (2003–2011) and later in Libya (2011) were viewed as failures, since they did not result in more stable states and political situation (SMALEC 2012; KUŹNIAR 2018, 60). Moreover, Warsaw – together with the Baltic

states – already assessed after the August 2008 Georgian–Russian war that Russia poses an increasing threat to the Central European countries (TÁLAS 2014). This was emphasised by Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski to U.S. officials, noting that while previously Russia was considered to pose a direct threat to Polish security only in a 10–15 years time frame, after the five-day war, this period decreased to 10–15 months (Gazeta.pl 2010). From this point on, Warsaw stressed even more firmly the need to strengthen the collective defence and territorial defence tasks of the Alliance, and in the context of Polish–American relations, the pretence for additional security guarantees provided by the United States came up more often (EK 2008, 6). Since the country cannot formally receive such guarantees, Warsaw sought to take a role in such security policy questions, where Poland positions itself as an indispensable actor in the context of the security of the United States and the North Atlantic Alliance. In the past decade, the European installation of the U.S.–NATO missile defence system gave the best opportunity for Poland to advance this goal (KOZIEJ 2008; NYCZ 2013; ADAMCZYK 2014).

The Polish leadership could claim its first major success in strengthening the collective defence function of the Alliance at the 2010 Lisbon Summit. Although the strategic concept adopted at the summit assigned three main responsibilities to the alliance – collective security, crisis management, cooperative security – the document made it clear that collective defence is the priority (Strategic Concept 2010, 7). At the 2012 Chicago Summit, the most important success for Warsaw was the decision of the NATO member states to deploy a missile defence system in Europe with one of its key components to be based in Poland (PIETRZAK 2012, 61; ZAJĄC 2014, 197).

The 2014 Ukrainian developments (the annexation of Crimea and the support for Eastern Ukrainian separatists) further shifted the Polish leadership's attention towards strengthening the collective defence function of NATO. As a result, one of the most prominent Polish security policy experts, Stanisław Koziej defines our era as a “new Cold War” (KOZIEJ 2018, 1). In 2014, at the UN general assembly, Polish President Bronisław Komorowski stated if not in such a stark fashion, but in a similar mood, that the world is beginning to return to the politics of great power sphere of influence, which led to numerous confrontations and conflicts in the past (KOMOROWSKI 2014). It is not a coincidence that in March–April 2014, the Alliance decided to strengthen the members of the Eastern flank of NATO with rotational military presence as a result of a Polish initiative (ZAJĄC 2014, 197–198), which was followed by numerous steps which sought to strengthen collective defence at the 2014 Newport Summit (CSIKI et al. 2014). From the perspective of Polish security, the basing of 4,500 NATO troops – within NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) programme – in the Baltics and in Poland has a considerable significance (EFP Factsheet 2018). Similarly, the increase of the number of U.S. troops stationed in Poland within a bilateral defence cooperation framework is also important for Warsaw (Atlantic Resolve 2018).

Alongside strengthening collective defence and deepening Polish–American military relations, the leadership in Warsaw also puts a significant emphasis on the development and increase of its own military capabilities. This is reflected in not only the increasing defence expenditures, with reaching 2.2% of GDP spent on defence by 2020 and targeting 2.5% by 2030 (PALOWSKI 2017a), but in setting serious modernisation plans for the Polish armed forces which it seeks to achieve (PALOWSKI 2017b; PALOWSKI 2018). Alongside membership, the debates in the Alliance also give further incentives for Warsaw to pursue this path,

which is viewed by the Polish decision-makers as an increasing internal weakness since 2014 (FRYC 2014; BMA 2017).

## NATO's "open door policy" and Poland

In addition to its support for strengthening the collective defence function of the Alliance, since its membership in 1999 Poland has been one of the most active supporters of NATO enlargement. This was the case with the Baltics – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania – until 2004, Ukraine and Georgia from 2006, and Albania, Croatia, Montenegro and even Macedonia. Poland, together with other Central European countries, the United States and Canada made the greatest efforts in connection to the enlargement at the 2008 Bucharest Summit. As it is known, the Croatian and Albanian accession was secured, in case of Ukraine and Georgia, they could not convince those with opposite views that NATO should lay out a Membership Action Plan (MAP) for the two countries. According to Polish analysts, it was primarily thanks to Warsaw – and personally President Lech Kaczyński – that the Alliance declared: these countries will in the future be part of NATO, and the Alliance would begin a systematic cooperation with them (MADEJ 2008; LEGUCKA 2010).

The Polish support of the membership of the Baltic states, Ukraine and Georgia was closely connected to the so-called ULB (Ukraine, Lithuania, Belorussia) doctrine which was framed by two Western Polish emigrants, Jerzy Giedroyc and Juliusz Mieroszewski during the 1970s on the pages of the French *Kultura* magazine, which was very popular until 2014 in post-Cold War Poland. Giedroyc and Mieroszewski depart from the notion that the strongest guarantee of Poland's security is the creation of the independent statehood and independence of these countries, and the recognition of their current borders by Poland, with the normalisation of relations between Warsaw and Moscow (UNGER 2009, 151–156; URBAŃCZYK 2015, 309–322). While the first element of the doctrine was well received since it was a continuation of Józef Piłsudski's concept, the latter stirred up a huge debate among the post-war Polish emigrants, since it suggested that the Polish society should accept the loss of historical Polish territories detached in 1939 (NAJDER 2010). The post-1989 popularity of the concept that reflected the post-Yalta international realities was further confirmed by the fact that Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski mentioned the ULB doctrine in his 2014 national assembly statement (SIKORSKI 2014). However, many dispute the notion that the normalisation of relations between Warsaw and Moscow was part of the concept outlined by Giedroyc and Mieroszewski. Many among the Polish politician and security policy experts only view independent Ukraine, Lithuania and Belorussia as a buffer zone that keeps Russia away from Poland (Gazeta.pl 2010).

The Polish position on NATO enlargement was not altered by the Ukrainian conflict (the annexation of Crimea, the Eastern Ukrainian separatism and its Russian support). Former President Bronisław Komorowski, as well as current President Andrzej Duda has repeatedly come out in strong support of the Alliance's open door policy (Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe 2014; Gazeta Prawna 2017; Jagiellonia 2018). This is important even if the decision-makers in Warsaw are also aware of the fact that in the forthcoming years, the NATO accession of Ukraine and Georgia does not have much political and security policy reality.

## Poland's participation in NATO's crisis management activities

As it has been already mentioned, there is a twofold feature in Poland's relations with post-1991 NATO. Warsaw prefers hard security guarantees with urging the strengthening of the collective defence as the basic task of the Alliance, and openly or less so openly criticised every aspiration (such as NATO's shift of attention towards out-of-area operations in the 1990s) which was considered to be a threat to collective defence. The position of the Polish leadership was well reflected in the 2007 Security Strategy of the Polish Republic, which includes the following:

"Poland [...] supports NATO's selective engagement in stabilization missions outside Europe, provided, however, that the Alliance maintains a credible potential and is fully capable of collectively defending its member states, and also accounts for the impact of NATO's non-European operations on the course, pace and costs of modernization and transformation of Allied armed forces, including Poland's" (National Security Strategy 2007, 10).

On the other hand, it is a fact that from a very early stage in the middle of the 1990s, Poland began to participate with rather significant contributions in NATO's crisis management operations, including out-of-area operations, as a way to demonstrate its commitment to the Alliance.

The Polish armed forces began to take part in NATO's operations in the Balkans even before its accession and in the majority of European and non-European NATO missions. In 1995, with 660 troops in the IFOR in Bosnia, with 300–500 troops between 1996–2004 in SFOR, with 140 troops in the Albanian AFOR and with 800 troops in KFOR in Kosovo in 1999, where 250 Polish troops are still present. Between 2001–2003, Poland sent 25 soldiers to the Amber Fox and Allied Harmony operations in Macedonia; in 2004, it supported securing the Olympics in Athens with a 52-strong chemical unit (Distinguished Games). During 2005–2011, Polish naval forces contributed to the Active Endeavour maritime operations (26–215 personnel), since 2006, the Polish Air Force was engaged in the Baltic Air Policing mission aiming to defend and control Baltic airspace six times (70–110 personnel). Poland took on its share in NATO's operations outside of Europe. Between 2002–2014, it participated in the operations of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, first mainly with reconstruction tasks, from 2008 taking on the responsibility of the military stabilisation of the Ghazni Province (Polish Task Force White Eagle). From the initial 300 personnel, the number in the Polish contingent increased to 1,200 between 2004–2006, and to 2,600 between 2008–2010. With this level of contribution, the Afghan mission was the largest Polish engagement in stabilisation operations, with also undertaking advisory and training roles between 2009 and 2014 (NTM-A). In 2005–2006, Warsaw sent 140 troops to NATO's Swift Relief mission in Pakistan which provided humanitarian assistance to tackle the consequences of a major earthquake, and between 2005 and 2011, 15–20 personnel was sent to support NATO's training mission in Iraq (NTM-I). Poland also continues to take part in NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan with 120 troops (ZAJĄC 2014, 202–205; OŻAROWSKI 2014, 277–293; LASOŃ 2015, 121–129; BŁAZEUSZ 2016).

Alongside the NATO missions, Poland also joined the U.S.-led Afghan, Kuwaiti and Iraqi stabilisation operations. Between 2002–2009, Poland participated with 120–180 troops in the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, and between 2003–2008 with

a 180–2,500-strong contingent in the Iraqi Freedom military stabilisation operations. The gradual increase in Polish participation in NATO's operations in Afghanistan was enabled by the decrease of Polish military presence in Iraq from 2005 (from 2,500 in 2003 to 1,700 in 2005, 1,400 in 2006, 900 in 2007 and 20 in 2008) (BŁAZEUSZ 2016). Poland's policy shift towards Afghanistan received criticism. Some experts considered NATO's excessive commitments in Afghanistan to be a misguided strategic decision and criticised Polish leaders for over-committing the Polish Armed Forces to a dead-end mission (KOZIEJ 2012, 37–38). From the middle of the 2000s, the Polish society increasingly opposed the participation of Polish troops in the Afghan mission even though the initial support for the mission stood at 45–57%, in contrast to the participation in the Iraqi mission, which was opposed (CBOS 2007). The change in the public perceptions was due to more factors: it became clear that instead of peacekeeping roles, Polish troops are engaged in stabilisation operations with significant combat action taking place, and with 44 fatal casualties by 2014 in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the majority of the Polish society – alongside the experts – did not believe in the success of the mission (CBOS 2007; CBOS 2009; CBOS 2010; LORENC 2008).

From 2013, the sentiment that Poland needs to significantly reduce its expeditionary commitments grew stronger even among the Polish leadership. One of the most important proponents of this position was President Bronisław Komorowski. In February 2014, the National Security Office operating alongside the presidency published a document named Komorowski Doctrine, which summarised the new direction of Polish security strategy in four points:

1. The Polish Republic needs to shift its strategic priorities from expeditionary participation to tasks directly connected to its own security, including the defence of the state.
2. The capability for self-defence is the key pillar and guarantee of the country's security.
3. Alongside territorial defence, the capability for countering unexpected events should be a Polish speciality within NATO and the European Union, especially in those circumstances, when it is difficult to form a consensus in the Alliance.
4. Poland needs to strengthen its strategic relevance in the international sphere, represent its strategic interests in international organisations, and seek to form them according to Polish strategic expectations (FRYC 2014).

The new strategic direction of the Polish security policy – which became a part of the National Security Strategy of 2014 (Strategia RP 2014) – maintained the unique role of NATO and the United States in Poland's security. It also puts emphasis on strengthening the national capabilities, foremost due to the appearance of such threats, in which Warsaw is uncertain about the solidarity of the allies based on the emergence of a consensus in the Alliance (FRYC 2014, 52–56). As a result of these developments at present, the security of the Polish Republic is based on four pillars: the development of national capabilities, collective defence of NATO, the special relationship with the United States and membership in the European Union.



## **The common security and defence policy of the European Union in the Polish security and defence policy concept**

The Polish elite that came to power after the political transition and the dissolution of the bipolar world order saw the European Union foremost as an international organisation, which enables its economic modernisation (SZYNOL 2014, 211). As we already mentioned, Warsaw viewed NATO as the organisation that had relevance for its security and opposed every European ambition what it found to be weakening the North Atlantic Alliance. As a result, it accepted the Petersberg Declaration of 1992 of the Western European Union (WEU) with caution, and adopted – cautiously, but firmly – the critical stance of Washington about the Western European ideas of WEU during the 1990s (ZIĘBA 2002; KUŹNIAR 2018, 57–59). The Polish leaders maintained this distrustful position after the European Council decided in Köln in 1999 to establish the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) (SZYNOL 2014, 210). For a long time after this summit, Polish diplomats consistently used the term European security and defence identity during their negotiations instead of European security and defence policy, reflecting that while Warsaw supports the security cooperation of the members of the European Union within the boundaries of NATO, it does not support an independent and autonomous European security institution (ZAJĄC 2014, 192). The Polish leadership was foremost sceptical about an effective EU security and defence policy due to the significantly diverging strategic interests of the EU members and believed that the EU lacks that integrative force the U.S. provides in NATO.

Between 1999–2011, the initially distrustful Warsaw gradually arrived to supporting CSDP. The Polish behaviour began to change paradoxically after the debates in the EU about the Iraqi war and the U.S. intervention in Iraq. As it is well known, Poland belonged to those countries that supported the military intervention of the United States in Iraq and took part with military force in the operations (TÁLAS 2004, 45–57). This might have been one reason why the Polish leadership quickly recognised that Washington made a wrong and costly decision by launching the war against Iraq. Furthermore, Warsaw could also experience that despite its critique in 1999, the institutional formation of the CSDP began and in 2003 the first two EU crisis management operations took place (EUFOR Concordia, EUFOR Artemis); this signalled that the EU members are capable of harmonising their security policy objectives after all (KUŹNIAR 2018, 60–61). These developments forced the Polish leadership to review their previous position, not to mention another aspect. As a new member of the EU, Poland that has always prioritised security and defence, could hardly afford from a political perspective to be left out of such an EU initiative.

The first Polish step took place in May 2003, when Warsaw offered 1,500 troops for the execution of the EU Petersberg tasks. Subsequently, from the spring of 2004, Poland participated in the development of the EU Battlegroup concept and decided to create a multinational battlegroup together with Germany, Slovakia, Lithuania and Latvia, within the Weimer Triangle with Germany and France (Weimar Battlegroup) and within the Visegrád cooperation framework with the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary (Visegrád Battlegroup) (ZIĘBA 2012, 160–162). The change in the behaviour of Poland was well reflected in the fact that Poland took up the role of a framework nation in all three EU Battlegroups. The Polish leadership also contributed to the European Defence Agency since its formation in July 2004, with the hope of finding international cooperative opportunities and new



markets for the Polish defence industry and influencing the direction of the European military capability development. To a limited extent, it also contributed to the development of the EU's civil crisis management capacity (ZIEBA 2012, 162–163).

The growing Polish trust in the European security and defence policy was also demonstrated by the increasing contribution of Warsaw to the EU crisis management operations. While Poland participated with only 17 Polish troops in the EU's Operation Concordia in March 2003, it sent 130 troops to the EUFOR RD Congo mission supporting the Congolese elections in June–November 2006, 275 Polish troops participated in EUFOR Althea which took over the role of SFOR in March 2004, and 350 took part in EUFOR Tchad in 2008–2009. In the latter two missions, Warsaw provided the third and fourth largest contingents, and Polish troops made up 10% of all the EU forces. The participation in the EU's civilian crisis management missions was only symbolic (2–3 personnel) until December 2008, but subsequently, Warsaw sent a 120-strong contingent to the EULEX Kosovo.

The trust towards the European security and defence policy was further strengthened by the 2009 Lisbon Treaty. Partly its solidarity clause, which declared that the Union and its members would assist with all available means in the event of terror attacks, natural or man-made disasters, Warsaw perceived this clause in a way that collective defence was created in the two respective areas; and partly the 42 (7) Article of the Treaty, which explicitly contains a collective defence provision (Lisbon Treaty 2009, 41, 146). The change in the Polish opinion was well recorded by a new approach of the Polish leaders that emphasised three pillars of Poland's security: NATO, the EU and the United States. The three pillars were officially elevated to doctrinal level in 2009 by Foreign Minister Władysław Sikorski (KUŹNIAR 2012, 339–340).

However, the growing trust towards the European Union as a security policy actor stalled in the end of the 2000s and began to weaken again. The different crises (the great economic crisis of 2008–2009, the Euro crisis, demographic crisis, identity crisis, secularisation which is considered by the Poles as a sign of crisis, the 2015 migration crisis) affecting Europe and the West had a decisive effect in this, together with some of the crisis management decisions of the European Union considered to be slow and false by the Polish leadership. Another significant factor that contributed to this was that the EU usually responded poorly to the crises in its neighbourhood (the 2008 Georgian–Russian war, the Arab Spring beginning in 2011 and the events of the Ukrainian crisis in 2014). Serious concerns were also raised in Warsaw about the unanimously decreasing defence expenditures in Europe as a result of the 2008 economic crisis, and about Europe unable to improve its military capabilities, which led Europeans to continuously commit their defence to NATO and the United States. It also viewed with criticism and concern the decision of the U.K. and France to launch an intervention against Libya in 2011 without a political strategy and without taking into consideration the lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan and considered the EU weak in responding to Russia's Ukrainian policies in 2014 (KUŹNIAR 2018, 62–64; CSIKI 2014). The internal EU debates about the future of the EU and the handling of the migration crisis also had a destructive effect on Polish trust, not to mention the fact that in 2015 a Eurosceptic political force came to power in Poland, which articulates a sharp critique against the Union's internal and external policies, and at times presents the EU as a threatening factor to the Polish sovereignty in its political communication (KUŹNIAR 2018, 66).

As a result of all these developments, Poland now finds itself in a unique situation. On the one hand, it formally recognises that since 2016, numerous steps have been taken in the EU (such as the global strategy, the European defence action plan, new NATO–EU cooperation agreement, the activation of permanent structured cooperation (PESCO), which also provides Poland an opportunity to deepen European security and defence policy cooperation (Analiza 2018; GOTKOWSKA 2018; TERLIKOWSKI 2018). On the other hand, the decision-makers in Warsaw view these initiatives connected to the prospect of deepening cooperation as questioning and weakening Polish sovereignty and continue to remain distrustful about the effectiveness of the European common security and defence policy. They intend to build Poland's security policy – while keeping the pillar of the European Union – again on NATO, the bilateral relations of the United States and on its defence capabilities (PEŁCZYŃSKA-NAŁĘCZ 2017). As a result, although Poland participates in all European defence initiatives mentioned – and it could not do otherwise if it views itself as a middle power – it is not as proactive as it could be expected of a European middle power.

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# Romania's Defence Policy and Role in NATO and the Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU

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## Introduction

The Romanian defence policy is currently developing in a complex environment characterised by constantly emerging threats and unpredictable events. As a result of its membership within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union, Romania enjoys a strong umbrella of protection, which engenders, however, severe obligations on both sides.

The Romanian approach to national defence policy is two-folded: redefining military power and adapting its means of reaction to threats and risks. This approach is both a result, as well as an effort of the country's membership within NATO and the EU. Membership-related activities date back to the early 1990s, when Romanian authorities initiated proactive measures to clearly express their firm intention of joining the two organisations. However, the efforts have been rather disbalanced, given the intensity of action of the two targeted entities, and their very nature. While the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a collective defence entity, bound together by the Washington Treaty of 1949 and its strong Article 5, the European Union remained, until recently, a political and economic entity. Its creation of a military branch, although long envisioned, became a reality only recently, through Article 42 (7) of the Treaty on the European Union. As a result, the degree of Romanian military participation in the European defence effort is only recent and likely to be developed through the participation in PESCO. On the other hand, as far as NATO is concerned, Romania pledged its allegiance and support even before membership and engaged actively in military exercises, prior to 2004, seeking thus to show its strength and capability to become a trustworthy and dependable member.

A thorough investigation of the position held by Romania within NATO and the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy needs to take into consideration firstly the chronological evolution. Secondly, it needs to be focused on the manner in which Romania grew from a member state in need of assistance to a provider of security and stability in the region, as well as inside the two organisations. In order to be able to do that, Romanian military forces have undergone an acute process of change, which is primarily visible through the allotment of 2% of the GDP for defence, starting in 2017. Finally, the best expression of having fully embraced its position within NATO and the EU CSDP and the responsibilities deriving from it, is the participation in various EU and NATO missions and operations, providing experience and expertise, training and resources.





## General perceptions of NATO and CSDP in the national security and defence policy

Both NATO and the EU represent organisations that have a strong security and defence-related dimension. Thus, all policies constructed by member states in this regard are a direct consequence of the major directions established by the defence-related bodies of the two organisations. This can be easily seen in the main defence policy documents issued by Romania in the past years:

- The National Defense Strategy for 2015–2019. A Strong Romania within Europe and the World
- The White Paper on Defense, 2015
- The Military Strategy of Romania – Modern Armed Forces for a Powerful Romania within Europe and around the World, 2016
- Government Program 2018–2020
- Annual activity reports issued by the Ministry of National Defence since 2004 onwards

Significant changes in the Romanian defence policy have occurred especially in the aftermath of the Warsaw Summit of July 2016, a decisive moment in the Alliance's policy-making altogether, as it emphasised, once more, and to all member states, the need to comply with the 2% of the GDP for defence purposes requirement as well as the necessity of enhanced cooperation not only between members, but with other organisations, in a fast-track process of accommodating a changing environment. Furthermore, the decision-makers present in Warsaw agreed on the need to have the countries situated on the borders of the Alliance, and thus the first to be confronted with the threats act as first responders (MATTELAER 2016). Romania fully embraced such a task, as can be seen from the Romanian Military Strategy and the reform performed within.

Romania has been experiencing major difficulties, in dealing with higher threats to the Alliance and its borders implicitly, such as weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, CBRN threats, hybrid and cybersecurity ones, as well as migration from the MENA countries, on account of its lack of equipment and additional funding for defence (SELDEN 2016).

At the time when NATO member states convened in Warsaw in 2016, the pressing danger came from the eastern flank. As Mihnea Motoc, Romania's former National Defence Minister put it, the major outcome of the Summit consisted in the establishment of a realist and correct evaluation of the threats emerging from the eastern flank (Romanian Government 2016), allowing thus all NATO members to have a unitary perspective on the deterrence measures to be taken.

Additionally, former Minister Motoc underlined the need to further efforts within the Alliance framework, engaging actively in negotiations and dialogue with individual allies that could render operational any future-devised response (Romanian Government 2016). This is highly important, given the considerable NATO presence in Romania that requires building adequate infrastructure and developing the appropriate policies to render it operational.

The *National Defense Strategy for 2015–2019. A Strong Romania within Europe and the World* provides a more general framework on how national defence should be devised in the near future. The need to act within the framework established by the NATO and EU membership is clearly stated in the Preamble: "The Strategic Partnership with the United

States, and membership in NATO and the EU are the fundamentals of Romanian foreign policy. The building of a strong Romania depends on these" (National Defence Strategy 2015).

The *Romanian Military Strategy* has an "active-defensive character" (MoD 2016a), aiming to ensure the appropriate response to constantly evolving threats. "The concept of expanded national security requires the training of military personnel in understanding the role of national power structures and of international organisations in order to ensure the synergy of action of all actors involved in the area of military action" (MoD 2016a).

The *National Defense Strategy 2015–2019* is followed to a great extent by the Government Program for 2018–2020, which has the power of law after receiving the vote of confidence from the Parliament. According to it, threats to national security are bound to create a wave of instability on the eastern and southern flanks of both NATO and the EU (Romanian Government 2016), and Romania is predisposed to them on account of its geographical position.

Accordingly, the *Government Program for 2018–2020* identified several directions of action to ensure a proper response:

- Strategic continuity within NATO and the EU
- Increasing the operational capacity of the armed forces
- The implementation of an optimal management of defence resources
- Changes in professional training and life quality of military personnel
- Revitalising national defence industry
- Population and territory training and inter-institutional management of military or security-related crises (Romanian Government 2016)

Unlike the *National Defense Strategy 2015–2019*, which is dogmatic in approach and applicability, the *Government Program* has the power of law and is able to effect tangible changes within the national defence policy, that would render the country able to implement the Alliance Action Plan and synchronise Romanian participation in the NATO Smart Defence and EU Pooling and Sharing initiatives with domestic priorities.

Romania's stance within NATO and the EU on a military level is constructed based on efforts to deal with threats such as: Russian aggression in the Crimea, hybrid threats, regional tensions, the wave of migrations from unstable areas such as the MENA states, destabilisation in the Black Sea Extended Region, instability in the Western Balkans, increase in the number of short-notice or no-notice military exercises, terrorism, proliferation of WMD, intelligence operations, proliferation of high-precision weapons' system, cyberattacks, international organised crime, etc. Additionally, the existence of Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities in the Black Sea region presents one with the possibilities of a military aggression against Romania, which is considered by the Romanian Military Strategy to be the main threat against Romanian and regional security (MoD 2016b).

As a NATO and EU member state, Romania has the obligation to participate in providing national security and the security of allies (MoD 2016b, 7). According to the Romanian Military Strategy, participation in NATO and EU defence-related activities shall be achieved through two main directions: "Providing the capabilities committed to NATO, the EU and strategic partnerships, and participating in initiatives, programs, and projects of development in a multinational framework, including cyber and ballistic missile defence, and participating in maintaining and re-establishing security in NATO and the EU territory both within collective defence" (MoD 2016b, 10).

As far as the *White Paper on Defense of 2016* is concerned, the document is a comprehensive account of all efforts performed/intended to be performed in order to ensure that Romania complies with the demands of both NATO and the EU/CSDP. A major objective inscribed in the document is the need for the Romanian Army to be capable to participate in an Article 5 NATO operation or a high intensity EU operation based on the mutual assistance clause (MoD 2016b, 7). Additionally, the document introduced the concept of “extended national security” which deals with national defence in an integrative and multidimensional perspective, in an interdependence relationship with other dimensions of security – “public order, intelligence and counterintelligence, diplomacy, crisis management, education, healthcare and demography” (White Paper 2015). Such a compilation of elements highlights the complexity of devising a proper defence policy in a constantly changing environment, at the same time emphasising the existent interdependence between all fields of activity on a national level.

Due to its participation in NATO, Romania benefits from the strongest security guarantees ever. In this regard, and in light of its EU and NATO membership: “Romania [...] must continue and intensify its national efforts in the defence and security dimension, in agreement with the other allies and partners, [...] and maintain thus its status of security supplier” (MoD 2016b, 12). Furthermore, Romania needs to “capitalize on its geostrategic position with the aim of increasing its geostrategic role within NATO and the EU” (MoD 2016b, 16).

## **Institutional relations since 1989, with NATO and the EU**

Institutional relations with both organisations began as early as the 1990s, almost immediately after the fall of communism. Romanian authorities considered that approaching both NATO and the then European Communities would be highly beneficial to the young democracy emerging in Romania and would stimulate a market economy and respect for the rule of law and human rights. Being already a member of the United Nations and the Council of Europe, the next step would be joining the two organisations that provided security and economic strength to the continent. However, as it entertained the membership idea, Romania had to comply with membership requirements, which generated profound changes within the Romanian society and the institutional system.

### *Negotiations with NATO*

In October 1990, the Romanian ambassador in Belgium was authorised to enter diplomatic relations with NATO. A year later, in October 1991, President Ion Iliescu would send the NATO Secretary General a message stating the country’s availability to engage in a strengthened cooperation with NATO, as it was the only organisation able to provide stability and security for the newly emerging southeastern European democracies. It would be on 17 February 1993, during a meeting between President Ion Iliescu and NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner that the former officially expressed the country’s intention to join NATO.

A first step in joining NATO was performed on 26 January 1994 when Teodor Meleşcanu, Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs signed the Framework Agreement for the Partnership for Peace, Romania becoming thus the first state of Central and Eastern Europe to join in. Furthermore, Romania strengthened its commitment to participate in NATO activities by sending a military unit in the first NATO/PfP “Cooperative Bridge 94” exercise, in Biedruska, Poland, which took place between 12–16 September 1994. The following year, on 10–15 September 1995, Romania would host the first land force NATO/PfP exercise – “Cooperative Determination 95” (MFA 2018a).

The following years are extremely important as far as the country's commitment to NATO is concerned: on 29 November 1999, the Romanian Parliament validated the country's involvement in the NATO military efforts in Kosovo (KFOR), while on 19 September 2001, because of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the same Parliament convened that Romania would participate in the war on terror as a *de facto* ally of NATO, with all available means, including military ones. At the same time, the quota of participation in KFOR was augmented.

As a sample of the country's commitment to the Global War on Terror, on 21 December 2001, the Romanian Parliament agreed to the participation of military police forces and General Staff officers within ISAF (Afghanistan), followed by another participation in the Enduring Freedom Operation in Afghanistan, starting with 30 April 2002.

The official invitation for Romania to begin accession steps was launched during the Prague Summit of November 2002, followed by two rounds of discussion on the country's accession, held in Brussels on 13 December 2002 and 9 January 2003. It was during these rounds of negotiation that Romania would commit to all the prerequisites of becoming a member: supporting Allied consensus, promoting peace and stability, contributing with forces to all NATO operations. It also committed itself to contributing to the NATO civilian and military budget, including that of NATO Security Investment Program.

On 26 February 2004, Law No. 22/2004 on Romania's accession to NATO was enacted by the Parliament, followed by its signing into force by President Iliescu on 2 March 2004 (MFA 2018a).

Efforts made towards joining NATO have been enhanced in the background by the country's Strategic Partnership with the United States, which was established back on 11 July 1997. Ever since its signing, the Partnership has become an instrumental agreement helping shape the country's major foreign policy directions as well as its inner reforms in the political, economic, military and administrative sectors (MFA 2018c).

On 6 December 2005, the two countries signed the Access Agreement regulating the activities of U.S. forces stationed on Romanian soil. Another significant moment was the signing of 13 September 2011 of the Agreement between the U.S. and Romania on the deployment of the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense System in Romania (U.S. Mission 2016). On the same date, a Joint Agreement was signed between the two countries on the Strategic Partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MFA 2011), which led to the creation of a Task Force divided into several working groups. These working groups have been reuniting annually ever since focusing on both domestic and foreign affairs of interest to both nations. More recently, the measure of U.S.–Romanian cooperation can be derived from the fact that during the visit performed by the Romanian Minister of National Defence in Washington in September 2017, a request was made that the American military presence in Romania become a permanent one, instead of a rotational one (MFA 2018c).

### *Negotiations with the European Union*

Negotiations with the European Union began as early as 1993, with the signing of the Association Agreement to the EU on 1 February. Two years later, on 1 February 1995, the Agreement took effect (MFA 2018b). Official accession negotiations were opened in December 1999, during the European Council of Helsinki, with the process being effectively launched in February 2000, during the Romania–EU Intergovernmental Conference.

The official calendar of the country's accession to the EU was established during the European Council of Brussels in December 2003, as follows: 2004 – ending the negotiations, 2005 – signing of the accession treaty and January 2007 – effective accession. The conclusions of the European Council clearly featured the accession of Romania and Bulgaria as a common goal of the EU25. During the European Council of Brussels of 16–17 December 2004, the negotiations with both countries were officially closed. Romania's Accession Treaty was ratified by the European Parliament on 13 April 2005. Finally, on 1 January 2007, Romania became an EU member state.

### *Accession-generated changes*

The country's accession to both NATO and the EU produced significant domestic changes, especially as far as legislation is concerned. One of the basic accession requirements consisted of the need to harmonise Romanian legislation with EU legislation. There were several fields within the constitution that required aligning with the community *acquis*: international treaties on human rights, the possibility of foreigners to achieve private property rights over land, equality of rights between European citizens and community ones, the rights of EU citizens to candidate and occupy public positions, expulsion and extradition. Moreover, the principle of EU law supremacy was consecrated within the Romanian Constitution.

To accommodate the changes brought forward by the country's accession to the European Union and NATO, a referendum was held to validate the changes brought forward to the Romanian Constitution on 18–19 October 2003 and confirmed by Decision No. 3/22 October 2003 of the Constitutional Court. All the changes brought to the Constitution have been integrated in Title VI, "Euro-Atlantic Integration", Article 148, referring to the EU accession and Article 149, concerning NATO accession (Constitution of Romania 2003).

As far as the country's accession to NATO is concerned, the changes brought along by the Alliance were more consistent in the field of equipment and endowment as Romania had to overcome the setbacks and gaps in its military personnel, finances and equipment, to be able to provide the necessary troops upon request, gradually become a supplier of regional security and participate in all NATO missions and programs. The evolution of institutional relations with the two organisations is visible through the country's participation in the decision-making process for the fulfilment of political and military goals within NATO and the EU.

As a NATO member, Romania adapted rapidly to the prerequisites issued during the major Summits and capitalised its assets to participate in several key sectors of the Alliance, such as the establishment of the strategic transport unit, the anti-missile defence system, the land surveillance system, the cyber-defence system (MAPN 2010, 3), etc., back in 2009. In 2011, the signing of the Statement on the support of the Allied Joint Command

Forces in Naples for the integration of the Romanian Army in Allied structures marked the ending of the gradual reform process of the Romanian Army (MAPN 2010, 2). Once Romania proved to be a capable and supporting partner, other types of cooperation followed, such as the establishment of the Anti-Ballistic Missile System in 2012, a part of the Aegis Ashore NATO Ballistic Missile Defence System (MAPN 2013, 2), participating in the land dimension of the tailored Forward Presence (tFP), featuring the “Rovine” Infantry Brigade 2 from Craiova which was later affiliated to the Headquarters Multinational Division South-East (MAPN 2017, 3), in 2016, and the deployment in Poland, a year later, of a Battle Task Force under US command, participating thus in the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) (MAPN 2017, 4). More recently, in 2017, Romania participated in the development of both the eFP, through the enhanced Air Police and the tFP, through the development of the Black Sea strategic profile (MAPN 2018, 3). The Multinational Brigade achieved Initial Capacity in April 2017 and was able to participate in 2 multinational exercises – Noble Jump 2017 and Saber Guardian 2017 (MAPN 2018, 3). Finally, as a result of the NATO–EU Joint Statement of 2017, Romania participated in the development of transborder military mobility (MAPN 2018, 5).

As far as Romanian participation in CSDP mechanisms is concerned, one can easily observe a rather scarce involvement of the country. The definition of the legal framework of the Romanian participation in the European Defence Agency and European Union Satellite Centre budget, as well as in the Athena Mechanism handling common costs’ financing related to EU military operations under the EU’s CSDP (MAPN 2007, 4) took place almost immediately after 2007. In order to be better equipped, Romania subscribed to the Intergovernmental Regime to Encourage Competition in the European Defence Equipment Market and the Code of Conduct on Defence Procurement of the EU member states (MAPN 2007, 5).

Probably the most significant aspect of the Romanian involvement in CSDP structures and policies is its participation in PESCO, the European Defence Fund (EDF), the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and in the EU Defence Industrial Development Program (MAPN 2017, 3). With regard to PESCO, Romania’s participation was agreed to during the 17 October 2017 reunion of the Supreme Council of National Defence and would be signed a month later, in November 2017, in Brussels, during the Foreign Affairs Council reunion, by the Romanian Minister of National Defence Mihai Fifor and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Teodor Meleşcanu (ANDREESCU 2017). The Romanian involvement in the European cooperation on a structured basis is an acknowledgement of the country’s sufficient and effective capabilities to be engaged in future missions and operations. As president Klaus Iohannis put it: “Romania will express its preliminary intention to participate in the initial set of 10 projects, the ones advanced to date by the Member States, subject to their acceptance in the framework of PESCO and whose subsequent development corresponds to the national priorities for the development of military capabilities” (BĂNILĂ 2017).

## **The role of the CSDP and NATO in domestic and military transition and reform**

According to General Nicolae Ionel Ciucă, General Chief of Staff, in the 14 years since NATO accession, the transformation process of the Romanian Armed Forces “has evolved in full compliance with the commitments undertaken within the Alliance” (CIUCĂ 2017, 2). There are



three main stages, two of which have already been completed: the main downsizing stage (2005–2007), NATO and EU operational integration (2008–2015) and full integration into NATO and EU (2016–2025) (CIUCĂ 2017, 2). Furthermore, “the desired end state is to achieve the joint action capacity of the Romanian Armed Forces and of the force structure required to achieve the level of ambition [...] and participate in accordance with assumed obligations in a NATO collective defence major joint operation, or in an EU-led high-intensity operation under the mutual assistance clause” (MoD 2016b, 11).

There was a pressing need for the Romanian army to engage in a process of restructuring and modernisation that led to severe changes within the inner hierarchy as well as in army capabilities. The main goal of the transformation and reform process was to establish a small, flexible, mobile and professional army, endowed with high precision equipment, able to guarantee “state sovereignty, independence and unity, territorial integrity and constitutional democracy”. Additionally, a major goal was achieving interoperability status with the NATO military forces. Furthermore, national interests, the changing security environment, the rise of new challenges to security and defence and the need to modernise military institutions proved good enough reasons to enhance the transition and reform process.

The reform process began in the early 1990s and was a top-down endeavour, producing a complete makeover of the military institutions, including the Ministry of National Defence and the Supreme Council of National Defence. Foreseeing the country’s accession to NATO, its decision-makers coupled it to the Alliance through the Initial Partnership Goals (IPGs), aiming thus to expedite the reform process. For instance, upon NATO suggestions, in February 2000, the Romanian army took on 84 IPGs, of a total of 88. All efforts consisting of re-dimensioning the army, professionalising army personnel, establishing a credible defence capability and achieving interoperability with NATO members’ armies were guided through the *Partnership Goals’ Implementation Plan for 2001–2007*. The Plan consisted of two phases: re-structuring army personnel and then achieving operational capabilities and endowment on a planned basis, to reach NATO requirements.

A main asset in the transition and reform process was the engagement within the Partnership for Peace framework, which was essential in using the Alliance’s good practices and counselling in order to capitalise on Romanian expertise and training and reach thus Alliance targets in a very brief period of time.

Currently, the re-structuring of the army personnel was completed and the Ministry of National Defence is rather focusing on procurement programs that would endow the Romanian Army to Alliance standards. The Romanian Armed Forces’ Procurement Program for 2017–2026 comprises 8 key aspects to be further acquired, integrated and developed within the Romanian Army:

- Acquisition of 4 multi-purpose corvettes and the adjoining equipment
- Mobile anti-ship missile launchers
- Modernisation of the MLI-84 infantry fighting vehicles
- 8 x 8 and 4 x 4 armoured personnel carriers
- C41 system with ISTAR integration capabilities
- Advanced surface-to-air missile (ASAM) systems
- SHORAD–VSHORAD integrated weapon systems
- Long-range Multiple launcher rocket systems (MoD 2017)



## Policy field-specific relations

### *Contributions to NATO missions and operations*

Both because of the NATO Warsaw Summit of 2016, and due to Romania's security and defence in the close neighbourhood of the Western Balkans and the Wider Black Sea Area, one of the country's key objectives is "to enhance the Alliance's role as security and stability provider, by holding up the implementation of defence reforms and fostering regional cooperation" (MoD 2016a).

However, apart from the regional involvement, Romania is also active within the Middle East. Thus, Romania participates lately in the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan and in the U.S. Global Coalition to counter ISIL, contributing with training efforts of the Iraqi Security Forces, to mention the most recent.

The country's commitment to joining the Alliance and advancing rapidly to a full-fledged partner is visible in the evolution of its contribution to NATO operations. Thus, in 2005, one year after joining the Alliance, Romania was contributing 1 frigate in the "Active Endeavour" operation and 2,300 troops in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq (MAPN 2006, 3–4). The evolution of troops deployed abroad was according to the needs of the moment – increasing when necessary and decreasing in recent years. Apart from troops, Romania contributed to the NATO Reaction Force in 2008 (MAPN 2009, 3), Counselling and Liaison Operational Teams as well as instructors in the ANA TRAINING Program in 2010 (MAPN 2010, 3), intelligence structures and General Staff personnel in NATO KFOR in Kosovo and EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2011 (MAPN 2011, 3), and instructors for the Training Advise and Assist Command South/TAAC-S mission and TAAC-North in the latest NATO Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan (MAPN 2016, 3).

At present, the Romanian presence in NATO missions remained consistent with the previous years.

Table 1.  
*International participation of the Romanian armed forces in NATO*

No.	Type of Mission	Number of troops
1.	Kosovo–KFOR	59
2.	Afghanistan	625
3.	Anti-Aircraft Detachment Poland	120
4.	Active Endeavour	16
5.	General Staff and Liaison Personnel	9
Total		829

Source: Defence Staff 2018.

### *Contribution to EU CSDP missions*

European crises pose the need for an enhancement of the CSDP framework. Romania is an active contributor to EU missions in the Western Balkans, South Africa and Eastern

and Southern Europe, as well as to the European Defence Agency's initiatives to develop strategic capabilities.

A year prior to the very accession, in 2006, Romania demonstrated its commitment to enhanced European security within the EU and along its borders by active participation in 2 EU Battlegroups (EUBGs), and providing transport subunits, military police, HUMINT, General Staff personnel, totalling 81 troops in Operation Althea (MAPN 2016, 2). Romania's stance in the CSDP framework is visible nowadays all throughout missions and operations in the Western Balkans, the Caucasus and Africa.

Table 2.  
*Participation of the Romanian armed forces in EU missions*

No.	Type of Mission	Number of troops
	Observation and Monitoring Missions	
1.	EUFOR Althea – Bosnia and Herzegovina	39
2.	EUMM Georgia	1
Total		40
	Training and Counselling Missions	
1.	EUTM–CAR	8
2.	EUTM–Somalia	1
3.	EUTM–Mali	1
Total		10
	EUNAVFOR NFM SOPHIA – managing migration	2
Total		52

Source: Defence Staff 2018.

Compared to the participation in NATO missions, the Romanian involvement in EU ones is more restricted at present. Given the fact that the EU is an economic and political structure, compared to a collective defence alliance, such a limited presence is fully justified.

### *Contribution to NATO defence and deterrence*

To be able to comply with Alliance requirements, the Ministry of National Defence launched the *Program for the transformation, development and endowment of the Romanian Army until 2027 and beyond*. A major prerequisite listed by the Warsaw Summit was the achievement of the 2% allotted from the national GDP for defence. As a result, Romania chose a double-folded path, focusing its reaction to the Summit on expenditure and participation. Thus, in 2017, Romania fulfilled the demand of 2% of the GDP allotted to military spending. As far as participation is concerned, this manifested in the form of the NATO Force Structure of which Romania hosts the following: The Multinational Division Southeast Headquarters; the NATO Force Integration Unit; the Deployable Communications Module Element; and the Deveselu Missile Defence Base (MoD 2016b), followed by the deployment of troops in Afghanistan and the Western Balkans, along with a training mission in Iraq.

In Warsaw, Romania committed itself to creating a multinational brigade, and an intensified instruction Program – SGT (Romanian Government 2016) that would combine

air, ground and naval training, their existence resulting from a series of scenarios likely to occur in the near future in the Black Sea area and on the much-dreaded eastern flank of the Alliance. Another commitment made in Warsaw, the Headquarters Multinational Brigade South-East, located in Craiova, became operational during the Saber Guardian multinational exercise that took place in Cincu in July 2017, in the presence of the Romanian President Klaus Iohannis and the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, Petr Pavel. In the initiation stage, 8 NATO member states pledged to contribute to the Brigade with troops (Poland, Bulgaria and the United States, to name a few) and General Staff officers (Germany and the Netherlands) (LUPITU 2017). In the larger framework of the Alliance, this added to the Romanian contribution to the NATO battalion in Poland and the British, Canadian and Polish air force patrol of the eastern border (LUPITU 2016).

Romania's stance as a security provider was increased by the activation of the Aegis Ashore site in Deveselu and the allotment of 2% of the GDP for defence. In the first case, the Ballistic Missile Defence System is a core-NATO capability, intended to offer protection against threats that might emerge from outside of the Euro-Atlantic border and increase the security of troops stationed in Romania. In the second case, allotting 2% of the GDP for defence purposes meant a compliance with NATO requirements but also a great challenge for the country, as it will have to struggle to maintain this quota for at least a decade (BASSARABESCU 2016), to be able to provide for effective military endowment and training. Although enthusiastic, the 2% quota is highly controversial, especially in the current economic landscape of European crises and increased economic obligations.

As a result of the allotment of the 2% quota, Romanian authorities made immediate efforts to correlate the need of modern military equipment endowment and the current threats of the security environment. Consequently, Defence Planning Directive 15/2017 and Supreme Council of National Defence Decision No. 174/2016 (Romanian Government 2017) allocated 100 million euros in the form of acquisitions. These add to the already existing "Army 2026" Program (BASSARABESCU 2016) intended to achieve the following: modernisation of two frigates, advancement on the "Multi-Purpose Plane" Program (consisting of pilot and support personnel training for F-16s), acquisition of multi-purpose corvettes and framework agreements on the purchase of other military vehicles.

### *Capabilities development*

It is a fact that Romania needs to have a pragmatic approach in the new context of security, even though at present, the country is not confronted with a direct, imminent and explicit threat, be it terrorist or of any other kind. In this regard, Romania needs to enhance the political and military cooperation, continue to modernise the armed forces and enhance defence capabilities that would offer the possibility to provide an adequate response to challenges.

One of the main objectives of Romania's defence policy for the period 2015–2019 is to "increase its strategic credibility within NATO and the EU" (White Paper 2015, 15). A key element is to respect and obey the commitments made within the two organisations.

As far as NATO is concerned, Romania needs to continue its participation in the capability development initiatives in a multinational framework, including the

“Smart Defence”. The Romanian involvement in “Smart Defence” began in 2013, by its participation in 3 multinational-related Programs: NATO Airborne Early Warning (NAEW), NATO Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) and NATO Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC) (MAPN 2014, 2). In the following years, troop participation was doubled by expertise: participation with a soft decontamination unit to the CBRN Multinational Battalion project in 2014 (MAPN 2015, 3), filling in 3 positions of General Staff Officer within the Joint Multinational Commandment in Ulm, Germany (MAPN 2016, 5) in 2015, and involvement in 4 new projects in 2017, such as Training and Evaluation Camp in the field of Smart Energy, International Joint Center of Excellence for Logistics, Center of Excellence for Unmanned Systems, Center of Excellence for Urban Operations (MAPN 2017).

Although Romanian forces are committed to the NATO Defence Planning Process through the Capability Targets, in order to better enhance the country’s participation within the Alliance, there are several steps that need to be pursued:

- A coherent implementation of the Readiness Action Plan measures, in order to increase the operational capacity
- Intensifying efforts for the rendering operational and optimal functioning of command and control of Allied structures
- Increase the Black Sea Area’s strategic profile
- Continue to participate in the capability development initiatives within a multinational framework, such as “Smart Defence” and “Framework Nation Concept”
- Optimise national contributions to major Alliance capabilities, such as the Allied Ground Surveillance, Strategic Airlift Capability and NATO Airborne Early Warning (White Paper 2015, 18–19)

Since 2013, Romania has been active in the “Pooling and Sharing” EU Program, providing training and expertise when appropriate. In the beginning, Romania manifested interest in participating in 8 fields of operational capability development: medical support for operations, counteract improvised explosive devices, CBRN capabilities, strategic air transport, logistical support for operations, pilot training, shooting range and establishing a joint multinational commandment (MAPN 2014, 2). At present, Romania participates in the following projects: EU SatCom Market, European Air Transport Fleet (EATF), Diplomatic Clearances (DIC), Multinational Medical Modular Units (M3U), Sharing of Spare parts (SoSP), Joint Deployable Exploitation and Analysis Laboratory (JDEAL), C2J Spartan Cooperation (MAPN 2018, 7), and after the launching of PESCO it has manifested its intentions to participate in 5 PESCO-integrated projects: European Medical Command; Military Mobility; EU Training Mission Competence Centre (EU TMCC); Maritime (semi-) Autonomous Systems for Mine Countermeasures (MAS MCM); Cyber Rapid Response Teams and Mutual Assistance in Cyber Security (MAPN 2017, 7).

Romania was bound to take over the semesterly presidency of the European Union Council in the second half of 2019 and the country still needs to step up its efforts within the CSDP framework and increase its participation in the multinational cooperation formats of the European Defence Agency, including the EU Capability Development Plan. Activities in this regard include the following:

- Consolidating Romania’s position within the decision-making mechanisms of CSDP
- Providing military and civilian forces and capabilities to EU operations and missions

- Identifying and promoting national priorities in the CSDP field
- Optimising its participation in the European Defence Agency's initiatives in the field of capabilities, including the strengthening of its participation in the Pooling and Sharing Initiative
- Continue and adapt its participation to the European Union's Reaction Force through the EU Battlegroups format (White Paper 2015, 20–21)

Another significant aspect to be considered is that of financing defence and Romania has been struggling to upgrade its contribution to national defence to the target of 2% as mentioned above. A significant document is Law No. 203/2015 concerning the planning of defence, the legal framework in which the Romanian Army continued its alignment with the defence planning system of NATO and the EU.

Defence planning is performed “through a coherent integration of specific objectives and actions for the following fields: force planning; armament planning; command, control, communications; logistics; civilian emergencies; resources; aerial defence; air traffic management; medical information; research-development and standardization” (White Paper 2015, 41). In this regard, a great role is played by the Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Evaluation System, a robust body that focuses on both the elaboration and implementation of defence policy, as well as effective auditing of its means of implementation (White Paper 2015, 41–42).

Table 3.  
*Romanian GDP allotment for defence purposes*

2008	1.5%
2009	1.3%
2010	1.30%
2011	1.25%
2012	1.25%
2013	1.38%
2014	1.4%
2015	1.42%
2016	1.49%
2017	2%

*Source:* Compiled by the author.

Because of the strong investments made in the Romanian military concerning troops and endowment, Romania has to and must continue to consolidate its profile within NATO and the EU through both conceptual and operational contributions (White Paper 2015, 8).

## Conclusions and outlook

Taking everything into consideration, Romania's pledge to reach interoperability and an interdependence status within both NATO and the EU has materialised in the most tangible

manner: through the many operations, missions and exercises the Romanian forces took part in, as well as the increase in the GDP allotment for defence. It is a fact that Romanian efforts to cope with the challenges posed by the international community, as well as by the emerging threats and the demands of the two organisations, have not yet come to an end, the 2% of the GDP for defence being merely the completed starting point. It will be a challenge for the country to maintain itself at this rate and even increase it in the years to come.

The complexity of the Romanian role in the NATO and CSDP policies is visible through the steps taken by the country both prior and after the accession, in both cases. While efforts made in the participation to the European Defence Agency and to CSDP altogether were rather timid, they were compensated by the boldness manifested in the active participation in NATO activities. The commitment to participate in the achievement of political and military goals, as well as within the decision-making process has prompted Romania into the role of security provider, a position it has aspired to ever since the accession.

Both within NATO and CSDP, Romania has manifested as a strong country, eager to step over the label of “new member state” and become an active participant in the programs developed by the two organisations. This is most visible in the country’s participation in NATO, as Romania is currently able to host several NATO structures, and contribute to NATO missions with troops, expertise and training.

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# Security Perception and Security Policy in Slovenia: The Role of NATO and EU Membership

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## Introduction

The Slovenian view on NATO and EU as security providers was initially formed during the process of gaining independence (1990–1991). Slovenia as a part of former Yugoslavia strongly supported pro-European politics and Yugoslavia's possible steps towards participation in the EEC (European Economic Community). As the centralist Yugoslavian authorities turned away from the Europeanisation processes, the Slovenian public was disappointed and saw its EU aspirations as a dividing point in relation to the rest of Yugoslavia. When the Yugoslav military units rolled through Slovenia (in June 1991), it was the EEC that urged Yugoslavia's government towards a political and peaceful solution. After the Brioni Declaration (sponsored by the EEC) was signed (July 1991), the EEC formed its first ever peace observation mission, deployed in Slovenia, and later on in Croatia. In all of the struggle (political, diplomatic and military) for national sovereignty and independence, there was no action from the NATO's side.

The invisibility of NATO resulted in public opinion, which initially believed that Slovenia should stick to self-defence and relied on the EU for protection instead of NATO. When the PfP Programme was established, the Slovenian political elite expressed a desire to join it. After 1994, the rapprochement processes to the EU and NATO paralleled each other, but there was a significant difference in the political and public acceptance of Slovenia's membership in them. In the public debate before joining the two organisations, there were nearly no negative or critical positions regarding joining the EU, and a plethora of scepticism, which will be explained later on in this chapter, regarding membership in NATO. The latter went so far that a referendum was called, in order to gauge the people's feelings on joining NATO. It was organised on the same day as the EU membership referendum. Political elites all along presented the necessity to enter both organisations and somehow made the public believe that a possible negative outcome of the referendum for either organisation would affect the approaching process for the other. Over 89% of the voters selected for Slovenia to join the EU, while about 66.03% voted for its membership in NATO.

As regards the public support of the EU's security and defence endeavour, the public opinion survey data shows that over the years more than 70% of the Slovenians know nothing or very little about common security and defence policy as well as the EU's CSDP missions. It seems that Slovenians show higher support for the EU because they perceive it as less "military". As we speak, Slovenia is starting with the military investments as part

of the PESCO program and it will be interesting to observe whether those investments will receive less criticism compared to the NATO capability projects.

The division in public acceptance of the two organisations presents a significant challenge to building up equilibrium in political strategies for any political/governmental authority that would take power in the future wishing to continue these partnerships.

## **Slovenian aspirations to join NATO and the EU**

After reaching independence in 1991 and international recognition in 1992, the Republic of Slovenia started to seek an option for assuring national security and as Vuga and Zupančič (2018) said the country had four options: 1. Self-sufficiency and reliance on the system of collective security would require Slovenia to form strong armed forces capable of defending Slovenia within the framework of UN collective security system. 2. Military neutrality would require recognition and respect by other subjects of the international community. 3. Defence agreements on the bilateral level would again require Slovenia to give something in exchange for the protection offered by another, militarily stronger, country. 4. Entering collective defence agreements, meaning Slovenia would join more multilateral institutions (GRIZOLD 1999). Of all aforementioned options, Slovenian political elites have decided to rely on the collective defence within NATO and collective security within the EU. This decision was known as one of the very few moments when political elites (right and left-wing parties) have agreed upon a specific security question. The first step of this political orientation was included into the Resolution on the Guidelines of the National Security (accepted by the National Assembly in 1994). On that basis, in March 1994, Slovenia became one of the first countries to be included in the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and in the same year, it became an associate partner in the North Atlantic Assembly. Two years later (in 1996), Slovenia started its Individual Partnership Programme (IPP) and joined the Planning and Review Process (PARP). The political decision to join NATO was reaffirmed in April 1997 by the Declaration on Slovenian Membership in NATO, which was agreed upon by all political parties in the National Assembly. The conviction to the NATO goals was to additionally strengthen in the same year by the governmental decision to send the military troops to SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The NATO July 1997 Summit decided not to invite Slovenia to the NATO membership, which was a very sobering experience for Slovenian politicians and the public. The debate on enlargement in the U.S. Senate (Meeting the Challenges of a Post-Cold War World: NATO Enlargement and U.S.–Russia Relations) revealed the political and very much financial aspect of enlargement.

NATO membership was one of Slovenia's foreign policy priorities; however, Defence Minister Kacin said that no Slovenian political party is willing to increase defence expenditures beyond 2% of GDP (Committee on Foreign Relations 1997, 20). Nevertheless, it was never a question if Slovenia is willing or able to cover its share of costs. Slovenia's GDP per capita, at the time, exceeded the GDP of two EU member states. However, what Slovenia did not have, was a large population of Americans who trace their roots to Slovenia and could mount well-financed advocacy campaigns for Senate ratification on our behalf (Committee on Foreign Relations 1997, 19). Another issue was the unwillingness to open

the national economy to foreign participation. "Slovenes seem unsure about the price they are willing to pay to enter Western institutions" (Committee on Foreign Relations 1997, 21).

Slovenia was described as the only country that managed to win a war, having merely a territorial "home guard" to fight against the Yugoslav People's Army. Regarding the military, according to this report, it met the criteria to join NATO. It was also emphasised that it would be a huge mistake to hold back a country that deserves to be invited to NATO merely to artificially strengthen the pool for a second round of enlargement (Committee on Foreign Relations 1997, 19). Nevertheless, this was exactly what happened. And we must link that message with the attitude Slovenians have expressed towards NATO later on.

After the Washington Summit in 1999, Slovenia joined the Membership Action Plan (MAP) process and later on implemented five Annual National Programmes (ANP). At the Prague Summit in 2002, the formal invitation for Slovenia was issued, which moved the process towards NATO membership quite forward, followed by status talks in 2003. In the same year, Slovenia completed the last ANP. The successive steps in the international arena have shown that the Slovenian decision to join NATO would soon become a reality. That fact awakened the reservations in a part of the Slovenian society and also in some radical left political circles who were critical regarding NATO's out-of-area operations. Their scepticism was based merely on information about American efforts to form a coalition of willing to invade Iraq. The American and NATO policies were regarded as being the same. They forced Slovenian political decision-makers to decide about NATO membership on a national referendum. This request has put the politicians into a very complicated situation: having (years long desired) NATO invitation on one side and sceptical public opinion with anti-NATO influential opinion makers on the other side. They decided to organise the referendum on NATO membership and on EU membership on the same day, 23 March 2003.

All the activities before the referendum were coordinated and focusing on presenting the positive aspects of joining both organisations. As experts of defence policy from the Slovenian Ministry of Defence (Interview 2018a) pointed out, it was a very wise strategy to present NATO and the EU as a package. Despite the fact that we have two different regional organisations, Slovenian politics along with experts somehow managed to publicly present the accession process as interconnected and that both organisations must be joined simultaneously.

Despite the diversity of opinions and constant changes in the attitude towards international organisations, a positive turn has been observed over the years. Before the Slovenian independence in 1991, one-tenth of Slovenians considered NATO as a good choice for assuring defence, while 72% disagreed. At that time, quite an important share of the population believed in the neutrality status (45%) and that bilateral arrangements with neighbours (59%) would assure security. After the war for independence (June–July 1991), the public attitude towards collective security has started to change.

Slovenians expressed their opinion on the referendum in 2003 when 89.6% of the voters supported the idea of joining the EU and 66.03% supported joining NATO (State Election Committee 2003a; State Election Committee 2003b). It seems that the strong political consensus regarding the necessity to join both organisations convinced the Slovenian voters that joining NATO and the EU brings more positive aspects than any other option. The

accession of Slovenia to NATO took place on 29 March 2004. In the same year, on 1 May 2004, Slovenia joined the EU as a full member.

## **General perceptions on NATO and the EU in the Slovenian public**

Ever since the independence (1991), the attitude of the Slovenian public towards the regional organisations has been measured by the Defence Research Centre at the Faculty of Social Sciences along with the Public Opinion and Mass Communications Research Centre. For evaluating the Slovenian attitude towards NATO and the EU, we will interpret a few questions that are directly asking Slovenians about their attitudes towards both organisations. The relevant questions for the purpose of this article have been set in public opinion polls of 1994, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009 and 2012. For the sampling framework, the Central Population Register was employed. The sample is a two-stage stratified random sample, where every population unit has an equal probability of selection. The minimum response was 995 persons.

The survey shows that the trust in the EU (on a 4-point scale) has been relatively high over the years. 40% of the public has trusted (relatively or completely) the EU in 1991, while 13% claimed not to know the institution and 34% expressed low or no level of trust. In 2012, when this question was posed for the last time, 38% of the population trusted the EU, 4% claimed not to know it and 53% expressed very little or no trust in the EU. We have measured the strongest level of trust in the EU between 2003 and 2009 (between 55 and 60%). The majority of the population believe that the EU is beneficial for Slovenia. However, there is an evident lack of stability in public opinion, since the share goes from 75% to 63% and back to 73% over the years. In 2012, the share of those who see benefits in being an EU member fell again to 62%. Almost one-fifth of the population claim not to be aware of potential benefits brought by joining the EU.

It seems that the Slovenian attitude towards the EU is relatively opportunist. Even if there is a lack of trust in the EU, the Slovenian public obviously believe that there are certain benefits that should be explored. Regarding trust, Slovenians somehow developed a certain level of trust between 2003 and 2009, but over the past years this trust was lost and the feeling of distrust strengthened. Unfortunately, there were no public opinion surveys conducted after the migration and economic crisis of 2012. It is to be believed that today, trust in the EU is even lower due to certain decisions made (or not made) by the EU during the crisis.

The trust in NATO was constantly high between 1999 and 2009 (approximately 45%), decreasing in 2012 with merely 32% of the Slovenians perceiving NATO as a trustworthy organisation. In 2012, 54% of the population expressed very little or no trust in NATO. When asked about the general perception of NATO being beneficial for Slovenia, the public was very indecisive. In 2003 and 2009, 60% of the public believed that Slovenia gets certain benefits from being a NATO member, while in the years between and also in the last measurement in 2012, only 47% believed in NATO being beneficial for Slovenia. When asking about NATO, the public response reveals that a fifth of the population is not aware of any benefits that Slovenia should have from joining NATO.

In the period before the referendum, positive aspects of being a NATO member have been emphasised on several occasions by the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs,



the Minister of Defence, the Chief of the General Staff and several other security and defence experts and politicians. The public debate went on about the positive impact of NATO for our national security, about the opportunity for regional cooperation (Western Balkans in particular) etc., but also about the commitment to accept burden sharing (Interview 2018a). An example of the positive financial impact of membership is air defence, since Italy and Hungary are willing to provide protection of the Slovenian airspace. The Slovenian Ministry of Defence (Interview 2018a) emphasised the NATO assistance in renovating the Cerklje ob Krki military airport. Furthermore, by joining NATO, Slovenia holds a much better position in providing peace at the Western Balkans and in strengthening its position in that particular area of national interest.

However, over the years, the debate about the role of NATO in providing national security and defence has almost diminished. Due to the economic crisis and financial cuts, along with the constant public debate about NATO requiring a higher share of GDP for defence, the perception of benefits of being a member of the Alliance is today probably even lower than in 2012. It needs to be emphasised that over the past decade, Slovenian political elites speak of our national commitments towards NATO quite awkwardly, not explaining clearly enough the burden sharing policy. Especially problematic is the lack of public debate about the process of force bidding in NATO. It seems that the public perceives NATO as an organisation forcing the country to provide certain capabilities instead of an organisation based on the consensus of all members.

Without doubt, the public debate and political attitude towards both organisations as well as political consensus regarding the Slovenian role in them have an important influence on public opinion. Especially before Slovenia joined both organisations, there was a strong political consensus regarding this question along with the publicly presented support of some experts from the civilian society, hence the support was relatively strong. The public consensus, reached through intensive public debate, is something that we are lacking today. The political elites had very few initiatives to debate the meaning of both organisations for the Slovenian security in the past fifteen years. The current President Borut Pahor is one of those rare politicians who advocates a stronger European Union. There is also a political party that entered the Parliament at previous elections (2014) and raised the anti-NATO emotions as its pre-election campaign (May 2018). The party "Levica" (The Left) has promised to call for a new referendum regarding NATO – to ask people if it is worth leaving NATO in the future. While forming the new government (September 2018), the Left party decided to support the Prime Minister but stayed in parliamentary opposition. It is still to be seen whether this party will continue with its critical attitudes towards NATO or not.

## **The development of national normative documents in the light of NATO and EU membership**

Slovenia has adopted specific strategic acts that define national interest in the field of national security and defence. The position of NATO as an elementary provider of national security, stability and defence are evident in the Resolution on the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia (2010), the basic development and guidance document. Furthermore, NATO takes a similar role in the Declaration on the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia

adopted in 2015 by the Slovenian Parliament. The latter document emphasises NATO as a framework for Slovenian and European defence. Being a member of the Alliance was also reflected in the National Defence Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia (adopted in 2012). The NATO membership has been important for the implementation of the specific planning processes in the field of defence. The Defence Act has set the obligation to adopt long-term and mid-term defence planning documents. The long-term plans must be prepared by the Government and adopted by the Parliament. On its basis, the Government is obliged to form the mid-term defence plans. The last accepted Resolution on the General Long-term Programme of the Development and Equipment of the Slovenian Armed Forces up to 2025 was discussed and adopted in 2010, within the circumstances of the deepest economic crisis of Slovenia after independence. The prevailing obstacle for the development of the defence sector at that time was adequate financial support for modernisation and purchasing of new equipment.

The members of parliament and critical civil society institutions advocated the lowering of the defence expenditures, reaching 1.61% of GDP in 2010, although they have been already far under the (NATO) expected 2% of the GDP. Defence expenditures gradually decreased through the upcoming years to 0.94% of GDP in 2016. The Government has obliged itself to stop the decreasing of expenditures and push forward the idea of increasing the defence expenditures to 1.03% of GDP in 2020. The set goal is still far from NATO's expectations to reach 2% of GDP in all member states until 2024. The political debate about the question of defence expenditures clearly follow the NATO defence planning instructions because the government officials would argue the need to increase defence expenditures as "a promise to NATO", and not as a national defence objective.

## **The parliamentary and civilian oversight**

The civilian oversight over armed forces is manifested through the democratically elected political bodies (e.g. Parliamentary Committee for Defence, Commission to Control the Intelligence Services) but also the institutions of the civil society and the media. The Defence Committee is structured in a way to give coalition parties the majority of votes. The parliamentary tradition developed a good practice over the years to leave the presidential function in the Committee to the largest opposition party (MALEŠIČ et al. 2015, 62). The parliamentary control over the defence sector and over the armed forces was set up by the Slovenian Constitution in 1991 according to the standards of the democratic societies. The NATO and EU memberships that were realised in 2004 did not have a particular impact on the structure of the parliamentary control. The only significant consequence of the NATO membership, overseen in the parliamentary debates, was the increased number of the questions and initiatives posed by the members of parliament on the decisions to deploy troops in NATO-led operations, on control of national airspace (air policing currently executed by the Italian and Hungarian aircraft) and on procurement of defence technology primarily from the NATO countries.

In addition to the parliamentary control, the civilian oversight over the defence sector in Slovenia is executed by the organisations of the citizens interested in defence, by defence experts and researchers, and by the media. However, each civilian oversight should be

supported by knowledge about the object of control and instructions of how to exercise the control over the armed forces. The latter unfortunately is not always the case. More than a decade ago, Jelušič and Malešič (2001, 148) have identified the lack of experience with the reality of the SAF and the defence sector as a whole, among the political elite and the civil society. The authors have suggested defence socialisation (education), familiarisation with a new national security environment and the position of the military in it, for all those performing civilian control. Unfortunately today, after more than two decades, we can still observe the same lack of knowledge and understanding, which is perhaps slowing down the development of the SAF.

### **The impact of the Alliance on standardisation and transformation of the armed forces**

The impact of the Alliance with its standardisation has been emphasised by the representatives of the MoD (Interview 2018a) as very positive with regards to the transformation of the SAF. Experts from the Slovenian Ministry of Defence, Department for Defence Policy have emphasised some of the specific subfields that were especially influential in the light of the development and transformation of the SAF and defence system as a whole. Novak summarises the subfields in her report. Firstly, the knowledge gained from PARP and MAP was crucial for the defence transformation since they offered a tool for dialogue with NATO and stimulated a reconsideration of the capabilities Slovenia should develop to achieve both goals: 1. following national priorities; 2. contributing to NATO. Today the planning has undergone another development phase, due to the changing security environment and complexity of the threats, followed by adequate planning tools. Secondly, Slovenia is still slowly moving towards understanding that national is inevitably part of the international security, therefore the national security system needs to contribute to the collective defence and security within NATO and the EU. In addition, public and political awareness and support are also elementary for success in any reform, especially security and defence. Thirdly, security and defence is not merely an issue of the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior, but they need to integrate all subsystems, ministries and the civil society. Fourthly, the national planning was improved in order to offer a solid ground for defence and capability planning. The last important influence of NATO and the EU is related to the contribution to peace operations. Slovenia with all its actors (i.e. military, police and civilian specialists) has gained several experiences in cooperation within the multinational environment, including the cultural differences, language barriers, leadership specifics, local support, etc.

Slovenia is striving to develop certain niche capabilities within the NATO framework (e.g. cyber defence) along with improvements of the legislation in the specific field. In 2015, the MoD and the SAF have established the NATO Mountain Warfare Centre of Excellence in the Slovenian village Poljče. It forms a part of the wider framework supporting NATO command arrangements (NATO MWCoE s. a.). Foreign languages school is another case of intensive cooperation of the SAF in the international networks. It is one of the partners' centres (PTEC) coordinated by the NATO school in Oberammergau. In addition, the Centre

for language training of Partnership for Peace is part of the foreign language school and its main purpose is to offer international training for the teachers and trainers.

Slovenia has always been open for bilateral or multilateral cooperation, however, the latter was never perceived as an alternative to NATO or the EU. Slovenia very much supports the balanced policy within the NATO members as well as between NATO and non-NATO countries. Slovenia immediately supported the NATO members who felt threatened from the East after the Ukrainian crisis, but at the same time encouraged active diplomacy with Russia (Interview 2018a).

NATO has provided the Slovenian Armed Forces a strong framework for its development and without doubt, membership along with cooperation in peace operations has significantly influenced the transformation of the SAF over the years. Before joining the Alliance, the SAF was a territorially organised compulsory military organisation, while in 2002 it transformed into an all-volunteer force. The planning, following the asymmetric threats, transformed from threat based to capability based. The SAF evolved from in-place to partially deployable force. After the first international deployments in 1997, Slovenia has strengthened its role as a so-called peace provider, mostly by deploying the SAF and also a smaller number of civilian specialists and the police to peace operations, focusing on the Western Balkans.

The NATO procedures and rules have been implemented in the SAF, inherently influencing the transformation of the SAF. Regarding the latter, Prezelj et al. (2015) have conducted the research among 55 military transformation experts from 23 NATO and PfP countries. The analysis proved that NATO (average value of 4.6 on a 6-point scale) and also the EU (3.6 on a 6-point scale) present the “transformation inputs” which have influenced the defence reforms, doctrines, and structures in member states, except the United States (PREZELJ et al. 2015). The latter seems to be more of a “trendsetter” in/for NATO than a “trend follower” (PREZELJ et al. 2015). On the other hand, the EU was perceived as a bit less influential with an average value of 3.6 (on 6-point scale). Security and defence were recognised as less important within the EU in the period before the Slovenian accession, however, in the past years, this trend has been changing.

Slovenia has always been supporting the cooperation and development of capabilities that fulfil the needs of both organisations, NATO and the EU. In 2017, Slovenia joined PESCO and is, at the moment, actively participating in two projects, while taking the role of observer in additional five projects (Interview 2018a). Furthermore, Slovenia participates in several projects under the European Defence Agency umbrella. The projects, as defined by Defence Counsellor at the Slovenian Permanent Representative Office at the EU (Interview 2018b), are: 1. Single European Sky aiming to discuss national positions and find solutions regarding the use of European airspace. 2. Joint Investment Programme Remotely Piloted Air Systems focusing on the development of remotely piloted air systems. 3. Helicopter Exercise Programme aiming to enhance the interoperability of helicopter capabilities for performing the joint operations. 4. Multinational Medical Modular Unit is a project assuring the capability of international field hospitals by integrating national capabilities. 5. Sharing of Spare Parts is a project enhancing the logistic cooperation between member states. 6. Multimodal Transport Hub is tightly connected with the PESCO project of military mobility. 7. Innovative Auxiliary Power Unit for Military Purposes is a project including the civilian scientific sphere, aiming to develop fuel cells.

Slovenia is also participating in several NATO projects and programmes such as joint science and technology projects, including experts in various fields (e.g. the Human Factor and Medicine project, the Impact of Military Life on Children from Military Families). Furthermore, the Ministry of Defence actively participates in the projects related to the capacity development under the programme of Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) and NATO Security Investment programme (NSIP) (e.g. building the air force capacity in Cerklje) (Interview 2018b). Slovenia has joined the pooling and sharing the defence capabilities initiative, namely the multinational Strategic Airlift Capability. Slovenia has supported and is participating in the NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre. The country is participating in building and strengthening the NATO Special Operations Headquarters and is developing certain capabilities in this area.

### **Policy field-specific objectives – cooperation in international operations and missions**

Despite the lower share of military contribution to EU-led operations, the SAF is strongly committed to contributing contingents to the Althea mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. SAF is also contributing units to the EU Battlegroup led by Italy. The initiative for this battlegroup has roots in the Multinational Land Force (MLF), a Trilateral Brigade formed by Italy, Slovenia and Hungary in 2001.

Slovenia has been actively contributing its armed and other forces (i.e. police and civilian specialists) since 1997 after the legal framework has been established with the adoption of the Defence Act (1994). Slovenia has participated in altogether 26 international operations under UN, OSCE, NATO or EU. Later on, in 2009 the Strategy for Participation in International Operations and Missions was adopted (Ur.l. No. 19/10) defining the Slovenian national endeavour in an international environment, aiming to provide peace and stability. The common terminology for all national activities (i.e. military, civilian, police, help and rescue) in the international environment has been adopted; international operations and missions (IOM). The conceptual analysis reveals that the UN Security Council mandate is crucial when a decision regarding a certain operation is accepted on the political level. However, there are two exceptions, where Slovenia contributed its troops, although the operation was not clearly mandated by the UNSC, as the operation Mare Nostrum in the Mediterranean Sea, to which Slovenia contributed its naval capabilities and Operation Iraqi Freedom (from 2016 on). In that context, Humar (2017, 86–87) calls for a reconsideration of the Slovenian concept of IOM, questioning whether the NATO concepts of deterrence and defence are sufficiently integrated. Furthermore, he emphasises the difference between NATO operations, ready to use hard military power (and not always demanding the UNSC mandate), opposed to EU mechanisms for strengthening stability, focusing on prevention and post-conflict reconstruction.

Regarding the political focus, we should emphasise that from the geographical aspect Slovenia is canalising its efforts to the Balkans. The historical, cultural and ethnic ties, as well as its proximity to the Balkans, have made security in the region a top priority (VUGA 2014). The close ties and political importance of the Balkans have been manifested in the Slovenian endeavour to acquire the highest position in the NATO-led operation in

Macedonia. In 2012, Slovenian Brigade General David Humar took over the command of the mission, which was at the time the highest position Slovenia occupied within the NATO commanding structure. Another example of the Slovenian prioritisation of the Balkans is manifested in the strength of the Slovenian participation in the Kosovo Force. For the first time in the history of independent Slovenia, the whole battalion of the Slovenian Armed Forces was deployed to a certain IOM in 2007, when the Slovenian battalion-size task force took over its own area of responsibility and was in command of troops of another NATO country (Kosovo, SAF web page). Politically wise, Slovenia supports its partners in NATO as well as in the EU, however, Zupančič (2014) claims that the analysis revealed a stronger prioritisation among Slovenian government officials towards NATO arrangements as opposed to European CSDP. Therefore, Slovenian politics, after the Ukrainian crisis, decided to support the decision to concentrate operational capabilities in Eastern Europe and having the SAF already participating in the framework of Multinational Corps Northeast (Szczecin) made the realisation easier (VUGA–ZUPANČIČ 2018). However, Slovenia tried to balance the cooperation with both East and West, and at the time supported the policy of Germany and Italy who called for the reactivation of the NATO–Russia Council (VUGA–ZUPANČIČ 2018).

The majority of deployed troops are engaged to NATO-led operations or missions (over the years the highest share was deployed to KFOR and ISAF), similarly the civilian specialists have been so far deployed to NATO-led operations alone, while the police deploys their units mostly to EU-led operations (MALEŠIČ et al. 2015). Šteiner (2017, 50) analysed the flow of Slovenian contribution to international operations over the years. As he established, after 1999 Slovenia regularly and in a high share contributed to the NATO-led operations. He explains the lower level of contribution to EU operations with two facts: firstly there is a relatively small share of EU-led military operations in general; the second reason is Slovenia's very humble contribution to civilian missions that are led by the EU (only a few members of the police) (Šteiner 2017, 51). Table 1 confirms the statement that Slovenia's strategic priority is the neighbouring Balkan region. It seems that Slovenia prefers regional organisations (NATO and the EU in particular), probably because Slovenia's political and public priority lies in its neighbourhood region (Southeast Europe).

Table 1.

*The percentage of Slovenian yearly military contribution to NATO, EU, UN and OSCE-led operations*

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
NATO	8.8	13.9	70.3	67	66.7	95.7	97.7	99	37.3	65.9	87.4
EU	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.6	0	61.9	29.5	10
UN	54.4	86.1	29.7	33	33	4.3	1.7	1	0.8	4.6	2.6
OSCE	36.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016		
NATO	86.2	92.4	91.4	90	91.4	92.9	91.5	89	87.6		
EU	10.1	4.9	5.3	6.3	4.7	3.6	4.1	3.3	5.3		
UN	3.7	2.7	3.2	3.7	3.9	3.5	4.4	4.7	5.3		
OSCE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		

Source: ŠTEINER 2017.



Nevertheless, the 2009 Strategy for Participation in International Operations and Missions also emphasises the importance of the Middle East, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Mediterranean, Asia and Africa. Furthermore, it is also important for the Slovenian economic rationale. Due to the size of the country and its armed forces, the SAF usually deploys its troops along with other armed forces. In the case of distant international operations and missions, the SAF does not have capabilities to fully support larger units logistically and therefore usually needs a partner (e.g. often the Italian Armed Forces). It seems likely that the presence of troops in a certain area stimulates additional deployments or participation in a new peace operation in that area, due to already established logistical networks.

Šteiner explains that so far 61% of the troops within NATO-led operations were deployed to KFOR and only 12% in ISAF. Furthermore, Table 1 confirms that since 1999, Slovenia has mainly contributed to NATO-led operations. The participation in peace operations influenced the redefinition of functions in armed forces (e.g. the organisational structure changed considerably and the proportion of Special Operations Forces increased more than 5 times) (CEBEK 2014). Furthermore, Cebek (2014) statistically proved that among other reasons, by turning focus to peace operations, the SAF is investing less in traditional national defence.

## Final remarks

Slovenia believes in the benefits of being a member of NATO and the EU as organisations that are providing peace, security and stability in the Balkans. The Slovenian public or civil society might be at times questioning either of the two organisations, however, the longitudinal support remains relatively firm. The support would be more persuasive, if Slovenian politicians and decision-makers would take a clear position on the national interest and benefits the membership is bringing to the country. Instead, the response to claims that Slovenia is being subordinated to or even losing its sovereignty due to the membership in either organisation, is often loose and unconvincing. Furthermore, as regards NATO, Slovenes still have a strong memory and perception of the unfair rejection during the approaching process in 1997. Hence, a part of the public and the civil society keeps their doubts.

Slovenian decision-makers are emphasising the cooperation and dual use of capacities in both organisations. Furthermore, Slovenia is supportive towards the enlargement of both organisations to the Western Balkans. Enlargement of both organisations is in a way perceived as an assurance for more security in the region and consequently for Slovenia.

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# **The Changing Role of NATO and EU CSDP in Central European Security – The Case of Croatia**

*Sandro Knezović*

## **Introduction**

The EU and NATO accession process had a paramount importance for the transition process in Croatia. It was not only important for the reforms the country had to undertake, but also for the processes of identity-building and strategic alignment to the transatlantic community. The urge to align to “the West”, as a sign of final detachment from the socialist past and Balkan environment, somehow overshadowed the cleavages between “Atlanticists” and “Europeanists” in the Croatian security discourse.

The most important aspect of the entire discourse was a wider recognition of the fact that Croatia as a small country with relatively limited resources, especially taking into account the post-conflict character of the country, actually had no alternatives to the concept of co-operative security. Therefore, conceptualising its own national security, especially taking into account regional and wider international challenges, was feasible only in a wider transatlantic framework.

The current environment raises many questions with regards to the future concept of European security due to the decreasing U.S. commitment to it and increasingly complicated challenges in the East and South that dramatically shook the solidarity in the transatlantic community. The strategic reconfiguration in the wider European security space affects Croatia as well, especially due to its geostrategic position and the neighbouring Western Balkans region that has not finished the transition processes yet and is therefore open for strategic arm-wrestling of big global powers.

This paper will analyse the way Croatia tackles current geostrategic challenges, the way it positions itself within the contemporary transatlantic community, how does it perceive the role of NATO and the EU’s CSDP as an emerging tool at the disposal of the EU to face current security challenges and threats. Hence, besides looking at national security and defence policies and importance of the EU’s CSDP and NATO for their contextualisation, this paper will analyse also the domestic discourse about the aforementioned issues.

## **General perceptions on NATO and CSDP**

The political transformation in post-communist Croatia was driven by the aspiration to become a constituent of “the Western club”, besides the idea of regaining its sovereignty and statehood. The EU was perceived as an attractive model of political stability and economic

well-being, where membership is not easy to achieve but worth struggling for. On the other hand, NATO was regarded as an optimal framework for the functional conceptualisation of the national security in the long run. Basically, it was quite clear that the country with rather limited capacities would be incapable to individually guarantee its national security in a highly volatile and complex international environment. These two fundamental foreign policy orientations became “two sides of the same coin” in Croatia’s endeavour to become a full-fledged member of the transatlantic community and institutions.

Hence, from the very beginning, the traditional divide between “the Atlanticists” and “the Europeanists” was not relevant in the security discourse of the country. On top of that, the immediate security threat in the early 1990s only added to the urge to start conceptualising the national security in a cooperative way, leaving limited or no space whatsoever for the aforementioned divide. In such an environment, “the concept of neutrality” was never seriously regarded as an option, not to speak about other possible solutions, if any.

Therefore, fundamentally, Croatia opted for membership in the EU and NATO and started developing its security system in the post-communist and post-conflict period in accordance with basic principles of the transatlantic community. Given the complexity of the political and economic environment at the time when the country started its endeavour to join the EU and NATO, not to forget a difficult regional framework, the conditionality mechanism of both clubs and their extensive assistance in the initial phase of the process were rather important. Presumably, it is not necessary to explain in detail the importance of the guidance and assistance of the EU and NATO, as well as their particular member states, for the consolidation of the security sector of the newly established state in such an environment (BOŽINOVIĆ 2007).

Hence, the process of development of a new strategic culture that goes way beyond just drafting the main strategic documents and the action plans designed to ensure the appropriate implementation of actions along the lines of established priorities was conducted under the transatlantic umbrella which actually determined the framework of the security discourse in the period to come. All main strategic documents in the field of security and defence are actually highlighting the fact that Croatia is fundamentally conceptualising its security policy as a full-fledged member of the transatlantic community (both the EU and NATO), using all benefits that the concept of cooperative security offers to a country of size and capacities like Croatia, but also sharing responsibilities and duties that membership in the transatlantic institutions carries along.

Exemplary, the first paragraph of the foreword of the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Croatia already recognises the importance of membership in the EU and NATO for the strategic policy development of the country: “After being internationally recognized as a country, we have reached our strategic goals of membership in the UN, NATO and the EU. Thanks to all these successes, the Republic of Croatia freely creates its strategic policies today, develops potentials using all available resources, and creates international policies together with its partners and allies” (National Security Strategy of the Republic of Croatia 2017, 4).

Moreover, the first paragraph of its first chapter entitled *Introduction, vision and security concept* highlights the following: “Becoming a member of European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (hereinafter: NATO) member, we reached important foreign policy and security objectives, and, furthermore, set such conditions that provide the

Republic of Croatia with new economic, political and security development opportunities” (National Security Strategy of the Republic of Croatia 2017, 5). It also recognises present and future obligations of the country stemming from the membership in both clubs: “It will continually take care of the members of Croatian people in other countries, develop its reputation and influence in the international environment, and participate in the making of international peace and stability as a member of the United Nations, European Union, NATO and other international and regional organisations” (National Security Strategy of the Republic of Croatia 2017, 5).

Additionally, the document also recognises the shared threats and challenges in its chapter dedicated to security threats, risks and challenges: “The Republic of Croatia, as a member of the European Union, belongs to a group of states of developed democracy, with which it shares common European values. In addition to the benefits derived from the membership, the Republic of Croatia and its partner states share security challenges as well. [...] The Republic of Croatia, due to its geopolitical location and being a member of the European Union and NATO, has been affected by geopolitical confrontations. Thus, it has been exposed to political and intelligence activities of state and non-state actors, which perceive the European Union and NATO as a security threat or a challenge” (National Security Strategy of the Republic of Croatia 2017, 9).

The second relevant document in this sphere, the – *Strategic Defence Review* – emphasises the importance of Croatia’s membership in both the EU and NATO and its dedication to taking full responsibility within both frameworks in contributing to security on different levels: “For Croatia the membership in NATO is not perceived as new security dimension, it presents much more, because it brought Croatia a political recognition in terms of adoption of the high democratic standards and readiness to defend them; it is the act of acknowledgement of Croatia’s contribution to building international security, as well as of the efforts invested in the ongoing defence reforms. Membership in the EU further strengthened the position of the Republic of Croatia through the powerful process of integration into the common European structures, including security. Through participation in the international peacekeeping operations and missions under the leadership of NATO, UN, and the EU, by contributing forces or other forms of co-operation and development of the Armed Forces and regional military cooperation, the Republic of Croatia established itself as a responsible and credible member of the international community, as an ally fulfilling its obligations and contributing to security at the regional and the global level” (Strategic Defence Review 2013, 2).

Obviously, the clearest display of the role of NATO and the EU for any given country can be found in its fundamental strategic documents, as well as the country’s main strategic objectives in both pre-accession and post-accession period. This becomes even more relevant if we take into account that these umbrella documents are actually pre-defining all documents that follow, due to the fact that they have to be aligned accordingly. In Croatia’s case, it clearly confirms the argument that the EU and NATO, while maintaining a functional difference among themselves in the security realm, are not an “either or solution” for the conceptualisation of the national security in the contemporary international arena (DROZDIK 2010).

In addition to that, due to the reasons derived from the way the country gained its sovereignty and the fact that the transatlantic community represented an opposite scenario

to the communist past in a dysfunctional federal state, the opinion polls about the EU and NATO remain relatively stable, if not high, regardless of the recorded criticism towards the failures of the two to tackle contemporary challenges and threats. Hence, regardless of the recent turbulences in the transatlantic community, that framework still has no viable alternatives in Croatia's security discourse.

## **Institutional relations since 1989**

Unlike the CEEC, Croatia had a more difficult path in the elementary stage of the transition process. Instead of "just" changing the nature of the political system over the course of the first free multi-party elections, it had to fight at both domestic and international level for its internationally recognised sovereignty. At home, it was fighting the several times stronger military rival that had occupied almost a third of its territory, while at the international arena, it was fighting for the recognition of its newly established statehood.

Unfortunately, relations with the EU and NATO were also reflecting the security dysfunctions on the ground and the country was more of "an object" in international affairs at that time, so the process of accession to both institutions was stalled. Only after the liberation of the occupied territories in its central part and peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia, as well as the changes that followed the 2000 parliamentary and presidential elections was Croatia able to start undertaking important transitional reforms which slowly but steadily brought the country back to the path of transitional reforms.

The process of accession to NATO actually started as early as 2000 with Croatia's accession to the Partnership for Peace (PfP) Programme. One of the country's most demanding endeavours in the first phase of the accession process was the security sector reform (SSR) in the post-conflict period. Namely, after the conflict, the security services needed a substantial downsizing and reformation in order to be economically sustainable and capable to undertake new challenges in the wider transatlantic framework of co-operation. Due to significant democratic deficits of the incumbent political elites, the government in the early 2000s had to invest a lot into the reformation of the entire political system (from semi-presidential to the parliamentary) and into the democratic oversight of the security sector in particular. In that regard, the strengthened role of the parliament and civil society was of utmost importance for the functional oversight mechanisms and accountable security sector. The extensive scrutiny and assistance provided by NATO and its member states within the framework of the Membership Action Plan (MAP) and Planning and Review Process (PARP) proved to be crucial in helping the country to advance to the final stage of the accession process which was successfully concluded in 2009 when Croatia became a full-fledged member. For example, the Hungarian Embassy in Zagreb played a very important role of NATO contact point for Croatia.

In the early 2000s, Croatia was seriously trailing behind the CEEC countries who have already signed their European Agreements with the EU and have undertaken serious reform efforts in their processes of accession to the EU and NATO. Nevertheless, the 2000s marked a turning point in the EU's policy towards countries in the region who have not yet had any contractual relations with Brussels. The so-called Stabilisation and Association Policy (SAP) was introduced at the Zagreb Summit in November 2000, offering a membership

possibility to all countries in the region once they meet the demanding accession criteria. The SAP policy package also brought to the table a very substantial financial and expert assistance to countries in the region that should foster the reforms process ahead of them. As a consequence, at least in case of Croatia, the reforms and accession processes have gained a new momentum and the country has signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement in 2001, became a candidate for EU membership in 2004 and officially opened the negotiation process with the EU in 2005. The negotiation process itself was occasionally stalled either by Croatia's lack of capacity and will to deliver the results of the reforms or by the EU's growing internal challenges and enlargement fatigue. However, regardless of all obstacles, the country managed to finalise the process successfully and became a full-fledged member of the European club in 2013.

The membership in the EU and NATO has not only changed the international position of the country, enabling it to switch from being a security consumer in the 1990s into a noticeable security provider, a fully fledged member of the transatlantic community that frequently shows capacity to "punch above its weight" in its contribution to international peacekeeping efforts. What is even more important, the new international position of the country offers a possibility to use its comparative advantages for playing a crucial role in bridging the gap between the EU and NATO and (potential) candidate states in the region. Namely, the absence of language barrier, geographic proximity, common history and similar, if not the same, transitional problems make Croatia an excellent showcase and supporter for the Euro-Atlantic ambitions of countries in its southeast neighbourhood.

This is an optimal way to show capacity for an active membership in both organisations and a concrete contribution to the efforts of the EU and NATO to ensure a long-term consolidation of this part of Europe. This goes well along with the track record of the high level of alignment of the Croatian foreign policy with both the CSDP and NATO's policies in the most challenging fields of contemporary international relations. Namely, unlike a significant number of countries in its closer and wider surrounding, Croatia showed capacity to "think outside of the national box" in a number of fields of common concern like relations to Russia, migration policy, fight against terrorism etc. However, like the majority of European NATO member states, it is still underperforming in the area of defence spending. According to SIPRI's Military Expenditure Database, Croatia's defence expenditure in 2016 and 2017 was at the level of 1.4% of GDP (SIPRI 2018). There is a dynamic ongoing public debate about the intention of the government to meet the required threshold of 2% of GDP in the period of five years. All these efforts have helped the country to build a different image within the transatlantic community as opposed to the one that it portrayed some two decades ago. On the other hand, the aforementioned political statements in its fundamental strategic documents, together with the concrete actions that have been undertaken by the country in the recent period, lead us to the conclusion that Croatia is firmly bound to the transatlantic concept of cooperative security that makes any alternative scenario highly unlikely in the foreseeable future.



## **The role of the CSDP and NATO in domestic political and military transition and reform**

The process of accession to the EU and NATO in particular had an immense impact on the process of political and military transition and reform in post-socialist and post-conflict Croatia. The environment in the country itself was characterised with visible shortfalls of the democratic system, where political elites were showing limited or non-existent intentions to undertake necessary reforms in the field of the security sector and beyond. The dramatic consequences of the Homeland War, which were felt in every segment of life, obviously did not contribute to the overall functionality of the state system and its adaptability to the new environment and challenges. In other words, while Croatia managed to regain the territorial integrity only in 1998, which meant minimum ten years of delay for the start of a serious democratic reform process, this was obviously not the only reason for such a significant transformational setback. The democratic deficit of the government in power and the entire setup of the political system in the late 1990s was representing a serious burden for the country's Euro-Atlantic accession ambitions.

The entire political system of the country at that time was built around the strong position of the president, as an unquestioned leader of the governing party and a commander in chief of the military. "The French type" of semi-presidential political framework, burdened with the lack of adequate political culture of a newly established state, has actually made the level of democratic consolidation of the state almost entirely dependent on the political will of the governing party.

A cumbersome post-conflict period and a lengthy process of retrieval of territorial integrity, coupled with the aforementioned democratic deficits, obviously did not make the 1990s optimal for transitional reforms required for the accession to the Euro-Atlantic structures. If we add to that a non-existent policy framework for the countries of the region by either of the two institutions from "the Western hemisphere", it seems obvious that the last decade of the previous century was lost for a country like Croatia. Therefore, "the real transition" started in 2000 with political changes in the country and introduction of policy frameworks, especially those of the EU, that foresee a possibility for full-fledged membership after meeting the required criteria (KNEZović et al. 2011).

In that context, the new momentum of Euro-Atlantic accession processes brought with the changes in the domestic and international political arena have highlighted a crucial role of the EU and NATO policies and conditionality for the democratic transition in the country.

One of the crucial preconditions for a new start was a structural change in the political system, i.e. reductions of the unnecessarily strong position of the president and improvement of the position of parliament in it. It was also important to depoliticise the bodies of state that have represented the bastions of nationalist party support for the past decade, in order to create reliable institutions and be able to bring under parliamentary scrutiny especially the army, police and security services. The constitutional changes that have taken place in the 2000s contributed to the creation of a more efficient future state apparatus, compatible with the difficult tasks of reform process and EU and NATO accession before it (KNEZović et al. 2011).

At the very beginning of the 2000s, Croatia became part of a new EU policy package towards the region, entitled *Stabilisation and Association Policy*, encompassing extensive



financial, material and expert assistance to different aspects of transitional reforms within the process of EU integration. While at that time the newly established ESDP had limited or no impact on the transformation process in Croatia itself, the civilian and military missions to be deployed within the framework of ESDP in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Kosovo in the following years have represented a cornerstone for the post-conflict stabilisation and a functional departure point for the viable transformation process. Almost regularly, the double-hattedness of EU representatives in those states mirrored an intention to combine the stabilisation and association, i.e. the smooth transition from the first to the second cycle and hence secure the irreversibility of the transition process (LUCARELLI–MANNERS 2006).

Croatia profited immensely from participation in the Stabilisation and Association Process as it provided various tools that have facilitated the process of democratic transition. On top of that, the SAP itself has contributed to the creation of an entirely different political environment, marked by EU integration enthusiasm and driven by the Europeanisation process. This has helped the country to steadily change its international profile and embark on participating in the EU's CSDP missions already as a candidate state. This was a clear sign that the country has managed to switch from being a security consumer in the 1990s to being a security provider in the 2000s which was another display of a successful transition process and dedication to joint peacekeeping efforts of the EU in the region and beyond.

As it was highlighted before, since the CSDP missions have not been deployed to Croatia, like in other countries in the region, it is difficult to argue about the direct impact of the CSDP on the process of consolidation in the country. However, the participation in CSDP missions has significantly improved the interoperability of its security sector and Croatia's image at the international arena. In that regard, practical experiences of its security forces from the recent military conflict and the know-how related to that (de-mining, police and military training, post-conflict policies) have contributed to the overall leverage of Croatia's contribution to the EU's peacekeeping activities. Croatia has participated in more than twenty different civilian and military missions around the globe over the course of the last twenty years and is currently deploying around 550 personnel in ongoing missions (MVEP 2018).

The NATO accession process has had a more palpable impact on the transformation of the security sector. The PfP framework that Croatia joined in the early 2000s has opened numerous mechanisms that were useful for the reform process in the security sector. Once again, it is very important to highlight the fact that Croatia, unlike other Central European states, was not only post-socialist at that time. It was also post-conflict, with an oversized security sector and budget allocated for it that had a symbolic importance in the Croatian society. The SSR of the post-conflict Croatia was more a security sector reduction due to economic reasons than the security sector reform, a concept known to the developed Western democracies. The reason for that was a significant democratic deficit of the government in the 1990s that was using the security sector extensively for its own political purposes.

Therefore, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of NATO policies and political/symbolic significance of the accession process to the alliance for the introduction of a real SSR in the country at the turn of the millennium. Not only have the PfP and its mechanisms provided concrete assistance to Croatia's SSR efforts, but also increased bilateral cooperation with individual NATO member states, who helped a lot with their experience and know-how (HENDRICKSON–RYAN 2006).

The country profited immensely from participation in the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP) and the Membership Action Plan (MAP). The first one “aims to promote the development of forces and capabilities by partners that are best able to cooperate alongside NATO Allies in crisis response operations and other activities to promote security and stability. It provides a structured approach for enhancing interoperability and capabilities of partner forces that could be made available to the Alliance for multinational training, exercises and operations. The PARP also serves as a planning tool to guide and measure progress in defence and military transformation and modernisation efforts” (NATO 2014). The second one, on the other hand “is a NATO programme of advice, assistance and practical support tailored to the individual needs of countries wishing to join the Alliance. Countries participating in the MAP submit individual annual national programmes on their preparations for possible future membership. These cover political, economic, defence, resource, security and legal aspects. The MAP process provides a focused and candid feedback mechanism on aspirant countries’ progress on their programmes. This includes both political and technical advice, as well as annual meetings between all NATO members and individual aspirants at the level of the North Atlantic Council to assess progress, on the basis of an annual progress report. A key element is the defence planning approach for aspirants, which includes elaboration and review of agreed planning targets” (NATO 2018). The details about pre-accession mechanisms clearly show why they are so valuable for the post-socialist and especially post-conflict states. The guidance, material assistance and know-how in the field of SSR and beyond were of fundamental importance for the feasibility of the entire accession endeavour.

The entire NATO accession setup was of fundamental importance for the post-conflict reform of the defence system in particular. Primarily, the country has managed to downsize its military from more than 180,000 personnel in the second half of the 1990s to the number of 16,000 professional in the late 2000s. It also abolished the conscript system and territorial concept of defence, as well as succeeded in making the troops internationally interoperable that was clearly visible in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. When it comes to the legislative reform, other than adopting paramount strategic documents quoted before, the country has adopted all relevant laws and by-laws in the NATO accession period. Croatia entered the first cycle of the Membership Action Plan with a surplus of military personnel, large reserve forces, territorial structure of defence, dispersed command structure, obsolete weapons and equipment, with no development or procurement plans and lacking strategic vision (BOŽINOVIĆ 2007). The current situation in the Croatian military, while being far from perfect, clearly shows a significant progress that has been achieved in all areas listed above.

The bilateral co-operation with some member states, especially with the most influential ones, has been very important due to numerous reasons. First of all, their political relevance in the wider transatlantic space was not something to be underestimated. Second, the gradual transfer of know-how (education and planning) and technology was fundamental for the development even of basic capabilities on the Croatian side in order to be able to undertake necessary reforms and new challenging tasks. In that regard, since the country was undertaking an entire shift of security strategy and doctrine, the models of strategic documents, important legislature and implementation plans were more than useful for Croatia.

This all have resulted in relatively fast track approach to meeting almost all of the technical requirements for accession and a very significant participation in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, where Croatia's contribution was highly valued. With that, it significantly punched above its weight and increased its international relevance, as well as supported its image-building process to the maximum possible extent.

## **Policy field-specific relations**

Croatia's strategic orientation towards EU and NATO membership implies a dedication to the concept of cooperative security. While it was evident that a country of limited capacities, especially one that was post-socialist and post-conflict, can profit significantly from membership in the aforementioned two institutions, it was clear that it also has to contribute to the concept it adheres to. One of aspects of that obligation is the participation in the EU and NATO-led peacekeeping missions.

As for the CSDP missions, the capacity of the EU to contribute to peacekeeping missions in its closest vicinity (the Western Balkans) and beyond will be determinant of its image at the international political arena. The successful regional economic integration obviously has to do more in the field of defence and security if it desires to be treated as a relevant international player in an increasingly volatile environment (MISSIROLI 2017). In that sense, its newest member state has to maximise its efforts to contribute to achieving that goal. In practical terms, Croatia started participating in the CSDP missions as early as in 2009, prior to its EU accession in 2013. Its first deployment was with the mission Atalanta, where one officer boarded a French frigate. The decision of the Croatian Parliament had authorised the deployment of up to 25 military personnel to the mission in 2017. They have also spent time on navy ships of Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Germany, but also in the mission headquarters in Westwood (U.K.). With this, the country not only strengthened the EU's crisis management capacities, but also the wider regional maritime security and combat against piracy. Croatia also took part in the EU Training Mission (EUTM) in Mali, donating weapons to Mali armed forces and providing training and strategic guidance for the security sector reform. Croatia also contributed to the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan), delivering support to the evolution of a manageable and functional civil police at the national level. Its staff were involved in different activities related to police reform, training and institution-building process. Croatia also took part in the EU Monitoring Missions (EUMM) in Georgia, with the aim to promote stabilisation and confidence-building in the post-conflict period. Its primary responsibility was the monitoring and prevention of the re-emergence of military conflict along the administrative demarcation line. Croatia's participation started in 2014 with the deployment of a few police officers, who are still actively serving in the mission. Since 2014, the country is also taking part in the EUPOL COPPS, a civilian mission of the EU in the area of the Palestinian administration, with the task to support the processes of institution-building, police reform and buildup of the rule of law, where it has deployed a smaller number of police officers.

Perhaps the most relevant contribution of the country to the CSDP missions is the one undertaken in the region of Southeast Europe. Namely, in mid-2008, Croatia made a decision to deploy police officers to the EU mission in Kosovo (EULEX), with the goal to support

Kosovo in its attempts to develop a sustainable and functional institutional setup in the field of the rule of law, with a special focus on the judiciary, customs and police. Basically, Croatian officers were providing education, consultancy and supervision in the process of the development of the police sector. This contribution not only represented an attempt to strengthen the capacity of the CSDP in general, but also a substantial investment in the regional stability of Southeast Europe.

Attempting to show unreserved support and contribution to the development of CSDP capacities in different fields, Croatia took part in the Nordic EU Battlegroup 2011 and the EU Battlegroup 2012 led by Germany. Encouraging practical experience has driven the country into the decision to participate in this project every four years. Being a smaller member state, it opted for the so-called Framework Nations Concept in which states of comparable size and capacity to the one of Croatia gather around the leading nations. The latter in principle are states with larger capacity, which are deploying their forces on a permanent basis, hence taking the role of the leading nation in the designated battlegroup.

The most recent contribution of the Croatian forces to the CDSP endeavours is related to the decision of the Croatian Parliament of June 2017 to authorise the deployment of military personnel to the Operation EUNAVFOR MED SOPHIA. The mission is being conducted in the Central and Southern Mediterranean, with the aim to foster the development of crisis management potentials in combating illegal immigration to Southern Europe (MVEP 2017).

When it comes to the NATO-led missions, Croatia was punching above its weight from the very beginning, trying to cement its close relations with the U.S. and remove last doubts about its NATO accession perspective. Namely, similarly as in the case of the EU, NATO membership brought lots of profit within the framework of cooperative security, but also requirements from members of the Alliance and especially those in the process of accession. Croatia started contributing to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan as early as in 2003, with the deployment of its first contingent ever to an international military mission outside the UN framework. From that time on, when it first deployed fifty military police officers, the country contributed to ISAF with twenty contingents altogether and more than five thousand officers in fifteen years, which significantly contributed to the image of a reliable and interoperable security provider, offering a wider range of services – from training Afghan military forces to helping develop the educational infrastructure in the society. The ISAF mission was replaced in 2015 with the mission Resolute Support and Croatia's contribution continued until the present. It is important to mention that the Croatian contingent also consists of representatives of the U.S.–Adriatic Charter members (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia).

From the initial phase of the crisis in Ukraine, Croatia completely aligned its position with the major policies of the transatlantic community, including the sanctions against the Russian Federation and participation in NATO's mission "Enhanced Forward Presence" in Poland and the Baltic states. It is important to mention that, given the capacities of its security sector, the contribution to the aforementioned NATO's mission is everything but symbolic. Namely, in the battlegroup led by Germany that is operating with Lithuanian forces (in Rukla, Lithuania), Croatia participates with 187 troops (one mechanised infantry company with fifteen PARTIA armoured vehicles and one M-ATV mine-resistant vehicle). Furthermore, in the battlegroup led by the United States that is operating with Polish forces (in Orzysz, Poland) it participates with 72 troops (one self-propelled rocket launcher battery).

Croatia's engagement with the NATO conflict management activities in Southeast Europe has been conducted within the framework of the KFOR mission in Kosovo. The first deployment was made in 2009, with twenty officers and two transport helicopters. Based on the decision of the Croatian Parliament of 2015, the staff number could grow up to thirty-five, with the possibility of rotation. Its main tasks are transport of the KFOR forces, cargo and VIP persons and the contingent is under direct command of the operation's commander.

Having in mind the aforementioned contribution, especially taking into account the limited capacities of the country, one can conclude that Croatia has been actively supporting endeavours of both the EU and NATO in the field of peacekeeping and conflict management. While, at least when it comes to political statements of high-ranking officials, they are equally relevant for the efforts of the transatlantic community to consolidate turbulent regions, the comparative figures (number of staff and material resources invested) show that Croatia has estimated that one NATO-led mission in Afghanistan have had more leverage than all EU-led missions we mentioned before. This is obviously due to two facts – the perception of the CSDP as a project in development and the relevance of the U.S.-led NATO as the most important military-political alliance, regardless of the serious challenges before it. Of course, the dynamism of contemporary international relations keeps them very unpredictable, so only time will tell what type of balance we would have in the period to come and how would a country of the size and capacity of Croatia try to position itself *vis-à-vis* the new developments. Either way, while it is difficult to foresee the position of Croatia in that regard, it is quite clear that the transatlantic concept of cooperative security will hardly have any alternatives for the country in the period to come.

## Conclusions

Croatia's state-building process has been cumbersome and lengthy. Fighting in parallel for international recognition at the international arena and many times a stronger enemy in strive for regaining territorial integrity has been challenging for the newly established administration in the post-Cold War period. Significant democratic deficits of the political elites in the 1990s have obviously not helped in that regard at all. The post-conflict environment has left the country with a huge and inefficient security sector, incapable of tackling new challenges in the transatlantic framework.

Only after the political changes of the early 2000s, both in the country and in the policy framework of the transatlantic community, has Croatia started its real transitional reforms and the accession process to the EU and NATO. Given the political, administrative and economic capacities of the country in that period to individually undertake demanding reforms, the role of Euro-Atlantic institutions and their individual member states cannot be overestimated. On top of that, as in the case of any other state in its accession phase, a large share of Croatia's transitional reforms would have never taken place without the conditionality mechanism of the EU and NATO. Additionally, the idea of belonging to the western political club was one of main drivers of Croatia's state-building process and one of the most important "tools" for detachment from "everything that was related to the former eastern bloc". Hence, the strong identity correlation with the transatlantic community has obviously determined also

the persistent political will of the country to adjust to the maximum extent with policies of the transatlantic community, especially in the field of security and defence.

Therefore, in case of Croatia, the division between “the Atlanticists” and “the Europeanists” barely ever existed in the national security and defence policy discourse. However, the comparative analysis of Croatia’s participation in civilian and military missions abroad (more Croatian staff in the ISAF than in all CSDP missions together) suggests that NATO under the U.S. leadership is being perceived as the leading global political-military alliance, while the CSDP still represents a project in development with many obstacles yet to overcome. However, with the changing trends in the transatlantic relations, it became obvious that the European leaders will be forced to develop certain preconditions for the security autonomy of their own in the period to come. The fine-tuning balance in the attitude of Croatia towards the security and defence policies in the western realm will depend predominantly on the positioning of the state between Washington and Brussels in the developing transatlantic security landscape. Whatever the outcome will be, it is quite certain that Croatia will firmly align to common policies *vis-à-vis* the other subjects of contemporary international affairs.

Therefore, it is reasonable to expect additional efforts on Croatia’s side to strengthen common EU and NATO policies, especially in the region of Southeast Europe, and further integration into the EU. The speed-up of the process to meet final technical criteria for Schengen membership, as well as serious achievements in the field of convergence criteria for the Eurozone, clearly confirm the arguments above. The country’s capacities and size, as well as its economic potentials and security environment, are leaving limited alternatives to the concept of deeper European integration and cooperative security.

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# Austria's Defence Policy and Role in NATO and the EU

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## **Introduction: History as a necessary precondition for understanding Austria's ambivalent security policy**

In order to understand Austria's security policy and its strategic culture, it is above all required to understand the history of the country, creating peculiarities that cannot be found in many other countries of the European Union (EU). After World War II, the country had to regain its full sovereignty, especially with regards to security and defence policy. However, the Allied Powers imposed certain restrictions in this field. In the course of negotiations towards its independence, one of the preconditions, set especially by the Soviet Union, was the declaration of neutrality on 26 October 1955. This declaration has to be seen in the wider context of the *State Treaty* of 15 May 1955, restoring the independent and democratic state of Austria. The Federal Constitutional Law on Neutrality stipulates in its Article 1 that neutrality should be of a permanent nature, and in its second paragraph, that Austria will not join any military alliance nor allow the deployment of foreign troops on its territory. In the following decades during the Cold War, Austria's neutrality was very important at the national and international political level but was targeted by western and eastern strategic military concepts. The reason was the important geostrategic location of Austria in the middle of the European continent (MAGENHEIMER 2002, 19).

As Hauser rightly points out, Austrian permanent neutrality was a product and a result of a Soviet peaceful coexistence policy that created a neutral Alpine wedge, together with Switzerland, cutting the NATO northern flank from the southern flank (HAUSER 2007, 46). In the beginning, Austria's neutrality was intended to be comparable with the concept of Swiss neutrality, but quite soon, Austria's neutrality changed and developed in its own way, but continued the myth of living neutrality based on the Swiss model. Henceforth, the concept of Austrian neutrality was the subject of heavy debates in Austria, due to the fact that the country joined the UN in December 1955 and the European Council in April 1956. According to Karl Zemanek, there were already at that time contradictions between the Austrian concept of neutrality and the obligations deriving from UN membership (HAUSER 2007, 46). Compared to the international dimension of Austrian foreign policy, the European dimension was underdeveloped. In 1959, Austria was a founding member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), because at that time an EC membership was rather illusory as a consequence of the restrictions set by the neutrality.

However, in 1956, the Austrian armed forces were called on to deal with the first of two border crises. In the same year, the Hungarian uprising was crushed by the Soviet Union, and 170,000 Hungarians fled into Austria. The second crisis took place in 1968, when Warsaw Pact



troops invaded neighbouring Czechoslovakia. Austria's experiences during the Hungarian and Czechoslovak crises helped clarify the nature of the potential threat to the nation's neutrality and led to a reorientation of its defence policy and consequently to a revised definition of the military's mission. At the beginning of the 1960s, Austria actively engaged in UN peacekeeping operations, such as the operations in Congo (1960–1963) and Cyprus 1964 (KRAMER 2006, 813). During the Cold War period, the Austrian neutrality became important within the framework of a very active and peaceful neutrality policy as stated by Chancellor Kreisky during his governments from 1970 to 1983. Characteristic for the so-called "Kreisky era" was the engagement of Austria in the third world especially in the Near East. The Austrian foreign policy at that time had a globally oriented policy of neutrality (KRAMER 1997, 723). At that time, all major parts of the Austrian foreign policy were considered a part of Austria's neutrality policy (SKUHRA 2006, 843). Austria was then actively involved in the drafting and adoption of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 in the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and was still an active member of the international organisations. As a consequence, Austria's neutrality policy and attitudes changed towards active neutrality.

During and after the epochal geopolitical change in 1989, new security challenges arose and Austria reoriented its focus in the security policy especially to the field of foreign policy. A new development was the significant institutional "pro-Western" integration through the membership in the European Community (EC) in 1989. The war in former Yugoslavia as well as the Austrian integration process into the EU dominated the discourse on the country's security policy. The Austrian Parliament passed a declaration in November 1992 stating that "Austria should prepare itself to participate fully in an eventual collective security system within the future European Union" (LAHODYNSKY 1992). This led again to debates about the validity of Austrian neutrality, but the new developments in the European and international security, and especially the integration of Austria into the EU, changed this perception. The Austrian accession to the EU in 1995 and cooperation with NATO provided new impulses for the security policy of Austria.

## **General perceptions on NATO and CSDP**

As it has been shown, Austria's security and defence policy has been strongly shaped by its geographic position between the two blocks as well as by its status as a neutral country which has helped in taking over a function as a mediator and venue for international organisations. However, besides its neutral status, an active participation in the EU's CSDP has been an ultimate goal of Austria's accession to the EU. On 12 June 1994, a majority of 67% of the Austrian people voted for EU membership in a referendum. At the same time and later on, too, strong majorities continued to favour neutrality. It is nonetheless interesting to analyse the perceptions of Austrians regarding neutrality, the EU and its CSDP as well as NATO especially in the context of Austria joining the Union in 1995.

For Austrians, the concept of neutrality can be considered a basis of identity in the country. In 1991, 52% of the Austrian population considered neutrality very important and another 26% important (KHOL 1991, 685). In 1998, in a poll commissioned by the Austrian Society for European Politics, 91% of the respondents considered neutrality to have been a historically correct decision (REINPRECHT–LATCHEVA 2003, 5). However, with the accession

to the European Union, neutrality became less attractive. According to investigations carried out by the “Gallup Institut”, the percentage of approvers of preserved neutrality dropped from 81% to 63% over the 1993–1996 period (REINPRECHT–LATCHEVA 2003, 7). Today, however, Austrian neutrality is reduced to its core meaning, i.e. no membership in any military alliance (i.e. NATO) and no stationing of foreign troops on Austrian territory (GEBHARD 2013, 292).

After the Austrian accession to the EU, the general perception became critical. According to Eurobarometer 59, in 2003 only 34% of Austrians had a positive image of the EU, which was further decreasing to 32% in fall 2017. Looking at CSDP, back in 1997 (Eurobarometer 47), 45% favoured the developments in the area of CSDP. In 1999, 25% favoured the idea of joining a European military alliance and 78% of the respondents agreed that the Union should not simply be limited to economic and financial policies but rather should also attempt to guarantee Europe's security (HAERPFER 1999). In 2003 (Eurobarometer 59), 41% of Austrians favoured decisions on a European Defence Policy to be taken by the EU, 35% were in favour of national decisions and 11% favoured NATO. According to EB 84, in fall 2015, 61% of Austrians called for a common European Security and Defence Policy, whereas 53% were against the creation of a European Army. In fall 2017, still 56% of Austrians were in favour of a common security and defence policy according to Eurobarometer 88.

Despite all geopolitical developments, NATO remained quite unpopular in Austria. According to an investigation published by the daily *Der Standard* on 11 November 1993, 15% were in favour of NATO membership, 34% considered accession conceivable, and 45% were absolutely opposed. In 1998, a poll carried out by the Austrian Society for European Politics already identified 24% who were unconditionally in favour of NATO membership, 25% approved of joining under certain conditions (preservation of “residual neutrality”), with 40% opposing membership altogether (REINPRECHT–LATCHEVA 2003, 5). Thus, in general, it can be said that public support for becoming a NATO member is limited. According to opinion polls held during the past decade more than 75% of Austrians would not approve of formally giving up neutrality, which is what NATO accession would entail (GEBHARD 2013, 292).

## Institutional relations since 1989

With the fall of the Iron Curtain and the Austrian membership to the EC/EU in 1995, the security policy changed significantly and was from then on directly linked with the developments on a European level. When Austria joined the EU together with Finland and Sweden, no exception was made for the new “neutral” members. On the contrary, they had to sign a joint declaration, which was added to the Final Act of the Accession Treaty, stating that they would be ready to and able to participate fully and actively in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the EU and that their legal framework would be compatible with the rules and traditions of CFSP (HEY 2003, 102). The creation of CFSP became one of the main objectives of all EU member states with the Maastricht Treaty, including the *de jure* neutral countries of Austria, Finland, Ireland and Sweden. As a consequence of the Austrian membership to the EU, the understanding of neutrality has changed completely and the importance of the concept has diminished considerably. Ex-Article 23f (now after the Lisbon Treaty amended as the new Article 23j) of the Austrian Federal Constitution (Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz, B-VG), which was introduced in the course of the Austrian accession to the EU, allows the Austrian participation

within CFSP in the whole spectrum of the Petersberg tasks, including crisis management and peacekeeping operations. Therefore, in the opinion of the country's leading constitutional law experts, the concept of neutrality has been materially derogated (ÖHLINGER 1999, 96; WALTER-MAYER 2000, 168).

In 1995, Austria also became a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program and its Planning and Review Process (PARP) without any major domestic controversy. On a political level, the Coalition Agreement of 1996 between the Social Democratic Party and the People's Party called for a so-called "option paper" in order to analyse all relevant security political options for Austria including the question of a full membership to the WEU. The report should have been presented at the beginning of 1998, however, the coalition failed to deliver the report due to party differences about the future relationship with NATO and the WEU as well as the compatibility with Austrian neutrality. The centre-right coalition in 2001, in its security and defence doctrine considered Austria to be non-allied; this shift was, however, changed again with the new security strategy in 2011 leading to a revival of the Austrian neutrality and stopping all debates about a closer cooperation with NATO.

Both the new obligations resulting from the EU treaties as well as membership to PfP have changed drastically Austria's traditional approaches to security and defence policy. Therefore, it is now necessary to take a look at the issues dominating the Austrian approach to security and defence policy.

Since its membership to the EU in 1995, the traditional Austrian focus has shifted towards carrying out its security and defence policy in the framework of the UN and towards taking on an active role as a member of the EU regardless of its neutral status. The discourse at the international and European level in fact moved away from Austria's special status altogether. Instead, political leaders, and most of all representatives of the OVP, seemed keen to underline their new focus on the principle of solidarity (GEBHARD 2013, 288). Therefore, it is not surprising that the primary aim of the Austrian security policy has been to promote Austria's role as an active and solitary player within CSDP in order to preserve national and European security interests, as well as to maintain Austria's position in the group of European financial core contributors and policy shapers (REITER-FRANK 2004, 1). Consequently, during its first EU Presidency in 1998, Austria has organised the first informal meeting of EU defence ministers even before the historic kick-off of the CSDP at the St. Malo Summit in December 1998.

Furthermore, Austria has actively participated in the EU Battlegroup in the first half of 2011 as well as in 2012, 2016 and 2018. The Security Strategy also reiterates the implications of the Lisbon Treaty for EU Member States regarding capability development and underlines the need to further develop the CSDP and to provide the necessary capabilities (Security Strategy 2011, 11). Additionally, it states that Austria will fulfil all its commitments implicit in the Treaties. Interestingly, the draft strategy also calls for a closer cooperation between the EU and NATO. Nonetheless, it is not explicitly mentioned what the future cooperation between the two organisations should be like. Despite its neutral status, Austria has also from the very beginning participated in the so-called Permanent Structured Cooperation and currently participates in four projects. In addition, another project has been proposed for the second set starting in autumn 2018. The joint project – developed by Austria, Slovenia, Hungary and Croatia – will aim at using unmanned aerial and terrestrial vehicles to autonomously detect and survey risks caused by nuclear, biological and chemical hazardous substances.

With respect to NATO and Austria's participation in the PfP, the draft Security Strategy emphasises Austria's participation in the further development of the Alliance and underlines the willingness to take part in non-Article 5 missions being of Austrian national security interest. Comparing the Security Strategy with the old Security Doctrine of 2001, it is clear that NATO plays a rather limited role. Whereas a possible membership to NATO was subject of ongoing evaluations as stated in 2001, NATO membership as such is not considered by the current security strategy. Nonetheless, the (currently theoretical) option of becoming a NATO member has not been excluded. Austrian forces joined NATO Allies in the late 1990s/early 2000s in the Western Balkans and have participated in missions both in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in Kosovo. In recent years, the cooperation between Austria and NATO, however, has been hampered by the deterioration of the relationship between Austria and Turkey. Consequently, Turkey is blocking NATO cooperation with Austria as a retaliation measure of Austrian moves to block it from joining the EU and being most critical about the Turkish leadership.

## **The role of the CSDP and NATO in domestic political and military transition and reform**

### *Basic constitutional and institutional framework*

Considering developments from a legal perspective, in the course of a revision of the B-VG in 1975, Article 9a B-VG was introduced declaring the concept of comprehensive national defence (CND, in German: umfassende Landesverteidigung) as a national state objective. Its aim should be to guarantee the independence of the republic and to defend the neutrality of Austria. Generally speaking, the concept of a comprehensive national defence comprises elements of military, psychological, civil and economic national defence. This concept was then extended to comprehensive security precaution (CSP, in German: umfassende Sicherheitsvorsorge). Article 9a B-VG lays down the basis of the Austrian conscript system in its third paragraph. Article 79, paragraph 1 B-VG stipulates that the Austrian armed forces have to be developed as a militia system (WALTER et al. 2007, 361).

In the field of the Austrian security and defence policy, the key players can be found in the Austrian Government, mainly the Federal Chancellor, the Minister for European and International Affairs and the Minister of Defence. Nonetheless, also the Austrian Parliament plays a key role with regard to the foreign deployment of the AAF. According to Article 80 B-VG, the President of the Republic is commander-in-chief of the armed forces, but the supreme command is held by the Minister of Defence, above all through the officers and military commanders. According to Article 79, paragraph 2 B-VG, the armed forces, i.e. the Austrian Bundesheer, have to protect the constitutionally established institutions and the population's democratic freedoms; to maintain order and security inside the country; to render assistance in case of natural catastrophes and disasters of exceptional magnitude (WAGNER 2006, 36).

Therefore, one could argue that national defence is the key task of the AAF but, due to its foreign engagements and the duties deriving from membership in the UN and EU, supporting international crisis management missions and operations is also of major importance. Thus, it became necessary to regulate the practice for the deployment of Austrian troops abroad.

Therefore, the National Assembly adopted a constitutional law act, the so-called KSE-BVG, in 1997. In its paragraph 1, this law permits the deployment of Austrian troops for peacekeeping missions within the framework of international organisations, the OSCE or the CFSP as well as for providing humanitarian aid and support in international crisis management exercises. This norm also determines that in case of any deployment, the Austrian responsibilities with regard to International Public Law and the basic principles of the CFSP need to be respected. Paragraph 2 (1) KSE-BVG states that such a deployment requires a consensus between the Government and the Main Committee (Hauptausschuss) of the Austrian Parliament. All other deployments, like for instance training activities, lie in the sole responsibility of the Minister of Defence. Paragraph 4 KSE-BVG stipulates the principle of voluntariness as the core principle for foreign deployment of Austrian troops. In case of an urgent decision, the Federal Chancellor, the Minister for European and International Affairs as well as other affected Ministers, such as e.g. the Minister of Defence or in case of a humanitarian deployment, the Minister of the Interior can decide upon consensus. Nonetheless, they need to report to the Government and the Main Committee of the Austrian Parliament (paragraph 2 (1) KSE-BVG). The Main Committee can issue a veto within two weeks. This committee comprises 32 parliamentarians (out of a total of 183) and has also a strong role with respect to Austrian actions in the framework of the EU. The coding is particularly difficult, since on the one hand, prior parliamentary approval is required before a deployment can be made, but on the other hand, this approval is given by a committee and not by the plenary (WAGNER 2006, 36).

Moreover, Wagner points out the following: “[A]lthough the members of the main committee reflect the composition of the entire parliament, the delegation of competencies from the plenary to the main committee is likely to compromise the influence of the parliament. As a committee, the Hauptausschuss is likely to receive less publicity than the plenary” (WAGNER 2006, 36). Due to the fact that the committee also reflects the strengths in parliament, the committee is very likely to follow the government’s proposals. Apart from the Main Committee, the Standing Committee on European Affairs also has the possibility to voice opinions to the respective Federal Minister. These are legally and politically binding and can be issued regarding all areas falling under the competences of EU law. In this context, the executive can only deviate from such binding opinion in case of “compelling reasons for foreign and integration policy”.

The actions of the AAF and the intelligence agencies are scrutinised by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces and the Standing Subcommittee of the Committee on National Defence. Therefore, the Austrian Parliament plays a rather active role in controlling the actions and deployments of the AAF.

### *Defence Planning and Security Sector Reform*

In the context of its EU and NATO-PfP membership, in 2002, the Austrian Government also started a major reform of the Armed Forces in line with the capability development processes Austria absolved in the context of NATO’s PARP and the EU’s Capability Action Plan (ECAP). The new Security and Defence Doctrine represents a significant step towards the further development of Austria’s security policy. The doctrine includes plans to transfer the comprehensive national defence into a concept of comprehensive security precaution, which



foresees the Europeanisation of the Austrian Armed Forces with regard to the international spectrum of military tasks. However, owing to early elections in 2002 on the one hand, and the appointment of the Austrian Armed Forces Reform Commission on the other hand, the original timetable for developing these new strategies in the areas of foreign policy, defence policy, internal security, economic policy, agriculture, transport, infrastructure, finance, education and information by the end of 2002 could not be met. Regarding the staff strength of the armed forces, a reduction from 110,000 to 55,000 was foreseen. In the future structure of the armed forces, a contingent of 10,000 soldiers for domestic operations was planned. In emergency cases, this contingent can be strengthened by the mobilisation of an additional 5,000 militia troops by the Minister of Defence (FRANK 2006, 135). While the comprehensive national defence was organised on a purely national level and mainly oriented towards a passive threat-reaction concept, the concept of the comprehensive security precaution is based on the principles of prevention and European solidarity.

In 2002 during the restructuring of the armed forces, a Special Operations Forces Command, which was a higher command directly reporting to the Ministry of Defence, was established and was responsible for tasks such as mission preparation and the command and control of special operations forces. Austria's involvement in these developments was at no point compromised by reservations concerning the continued status of formal neutrality (GEBHARD 2013, 290). Meanwhile, the reform was as much a strategic decision in view of new global circumstances as a political and financial necessity: the only constraints for Austria's Armed Forces in this regard seem to have been the obvious budgetary limitations (with a general defence budget of roughly 0.6% of the GDP), and the relative pressure to be interoperable within the EU and NATO-PfP frameworks.

As it has been stated before, the Austrian military system is based on conscription. According to the conscription system defined in Article 9a, paragraph 3, B-VG, the obligation for male citizens starts at the age of seventeen and continues up to the age of fifty. Female citizens are in general not drafted for the Austrian Armed Forces, but since January 1998, they have been allowed to join the military. Male citizens may be drafted for basic training up to the age of thirty-five; thereafter they cannot be called up. Officers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and, under certain circumstances, other ranks may serve up to the age of sixty-five. In general, around thirty thousand men are drafted into the armed forces each year. People can be exempted from Austrian military service under certain legal circumstances, for example, when compelling economic or family circumstances occur. Since 1975, there has also been the possibility of performing an alternative civilian service, the so-called *Zivildienst*, for persons refusing to do compulsory military service based on conscientious objection. In 2013, after a domestic political debate about whether or not to retain the compulsory military service, Austrians voted overwhelmingly in favour of keeping compulsory military service.

## Policy field-specific relations

Austria's geographical responsibility lies clearly in its neighbourhood. The political guidelines foreseen in the draft Security Strategy prioritise missions and operations in Central and Southeast Europe and the Middle East. If required by the international situation, the Austrian engagement might be extended towards the Danube and Black Sea Region, to the Caucasus and

via the Near and Middle East also to Africa (Security Strategy 2011, 13). Due to its membership in the UN and the EU, the AAF engage mainly in missions within the UN and EU framework. However, without being a member of NATO, Austria expands its activities in NATO-led operations as well as within the PfP framework. Since 1960, more than 100,000 Austrian troops and civilian personnel have been participating in more than 50 international peace support and humanitarian missions. The geographical focus of Austrian foreign engagement lies on the Western Balkans, i.e. Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Kosovo, but traditionally the Near and Middle East also play an important role. Austria's participation in operations in Africa and Asia is still rather limited. Nevertheless, Austria strongly engaged in EUFOR Tchad/RCA in 2008–2009 and currently Austria contributes 14 staff officers to EUTM Mali. Presently, approximately 1,200 personnel are engaged in various international operations, the majority of which is currently participating in the NATO-led KFOR operation in Kosovo, EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina and UNIFIL in Lebanon. Since 2002, Austria has actively participated in the ISAF missions. Furthermore, in May 2012, Austria has agreed to financially support the training and capacity building for the Afghan police forces with € 18 million for the time period 2014–2016 and is currently also deploying troops for the mission Resolute Support in Afghanistan.

Taking a closer look at the different types of missions abroad, there is a big acceptance among Austrian officers to take part in humanitarian engagements as well as in peacekeeping and monitoring missions, especially in Europe, but also in Asia. Peace enforcement in general as well as peacekeeping and monitoring missions outside Europe, mainly in Central and East Africa, are less accepted. This can clearly be seen in a survey carried out among officers by the Austrian Ministry of Defence in 2007. Generally, there is a broad consensus as regards participation in foreign engagements, as only one fourth of the questioned officers deny participation in missions abroad (LANGER 2007, 329).

The level of ambition with regards to international engagements has been defined as two battalions plus support forces for unlimited deployment on stabilisation and reconstruction missions of low to medium intensity. In addition, a framework brigade at 30-day readiness, sustainable for one year, was planned for high-end missions such as separation of forces, and the government aimed to develop the ability to maintain a classical peacekeeping deployment similar to its earlier mission in the Golan Heights (GIEGERICH–NICHOLL 2008, 66).

Focusing more on Austria's participation in the EU crisis management, the Austrian efforts are rather biased. From the beginning of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), Austria has been strongly committed to crisis management exercises and participation in civilian, as well as military, crisis management operations. Again, also in the EU framework, the same geographic regions can be identified as fields of action, namely the Western Balkans and Africa, being both of strategic importance for the EU as well as for its member states. Considering the importance of the Western Balkans for Austria's security, it seems rather obvious that there has always been a need to engage in the neighbourhood. Thus, the traditional engagements in this region are still in line with the priorities set out in the various strategic documents.

Furthermore, Africa is of particular interest for the European Union. The large number of crises and vital interests that the EU takes in Africa renders this region crucially important for its CFSP. Consequently, Austria will not be able to shirk the common responsibility of the EU, which means that missions in Africa will become more and more

likely (SEGUR-CABANAC 2006, 17). Austria already has lengthy experience with peacekeeping missions in Africa within the framework of the UN, which date back to the year 1960 when Austria participated with a medical contingent in ONUC in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Moreover, Austria participated in UNEF II in Egypt from 1973 to 1974 and sent military observers to Cambodia, Somalia and Rwanda.

Looking at the continuing and finished military CSDP operations from an Austrian point of view, the picture is rather ambivalent. While Austria's engagement, primarily by deploying staff officers, in the CSDP operations Concordia, Artemis and the Congo was of a rather symbolic nature, Austria played an important role in EUFOR Althea and EUFOR Tchad/RCA. International assignments are carried out under the norms of the Federal Constitution and especially the KSE-BVG. The security strategy for the first time has set up various conditions under which deployments could take place (Security Strategy 2011, 13; KAMMEL 2011):

- The security political implications of an event on Austria
- European solidarity and the importance of an action for the security of the EU and Europe
- International Solidarity and the implications of a concerted action on global security
- The implications of an Austrian participation with regard to its status within an international organisation
- Geographical situation of a mission
- The availability of suitable Austrian civilian and military forces to be deployed
- Possible financial implications of a deployment

The conditions are not stated in a formal order due to the fact that it would have been difficult to reach an agreement on the ranking of the different conditions among the political parties; nonetheless it can be assumed that the presented list ranks the criteria for foreign deployments on an informal basis.

Following its role as a mediator, Austria historically enjoys good relations with Russia despite its historic memories of the Russian occupation of vast parts of Austrian territory before regaining its independence. Thus, the Austrian Security Strategy calls for targeted cooperation with both the U.S. and Russia taking European values into account and asserting the rights and fundamental freedoms with self-confidence, also with regard to the efforts made to find sustainable solutions to problems in international regions of crisis (Security Strategy 2011, 19).

For Austria, also the Central European region is of vital security interest and thus it is not surprising that Austria has actively engaged in various multinational structures. In 1996, Austria and Sweden were founding members of the UN Multinational Standby High Readiness Brigade of the United Nations Operations (SHIRBRIG) with its headquarters in Copenhagen. This brigade also included the NATO members Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Poland. Austria took the SHIRBRIG presidency in 2004, coordinating UN operations. Austria's contingent to SHIRBRIG consisted of a transportation company (HAUSER 2007, 47).

Furthermore, Austria plays an active role in the context of the Central European Nations' Co-operation in Peace Support (CENCOOP), as there are common interests between Austria and its neighbours in the field of security policy. The political dimension of CENCOOP is an example of regional cooperation having the potential to be used in the future to not only share a common analysis, but also a part of the burden related to European security (WOSOLSOBE 2006, 9).

In 2010, cooperation among Central European neighbours was again revitalised and as a consequence, meetings on security political directors' level take place on a regular basis. This new Central European Defence Cooperation (CEDC) encompasses the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia and Austria. CEDC fosters "regional military cooperation in selected areas through shared military projects." The shared field of interest focuses to the sustained stabilisation of the Western Balkans. Although many defence officials in the region are not necessarily enthusiastic about this development, the Central European political environment and also practical defence considerations pushed the defence ministries of CEDC countries towards a deeper cooperation on border control, as well as better coordination with ministries of interior affairs on the national and the regional levels. In general, CEDC, however, has been more significant as a framework for regional cooperation than in facilitating EU level initiatives (MÜLLER 2016, 31).

A similar central European setting can also be found with the Salzburg Group dealing with matters related to Justice and Home Affairs. The Salzburg Forum developed out of an Austrian initiative to improve security in Central and Eastern Europe through regional cooperation with the five then EU candidate countries Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland in 2000. Romania and Bulgaria joined in 2006 and Croatia, after it had participated as an observer since 2006, became a full member in 2012. The first conference among the interior ministers of the Salzburg Forum, who meet twice a year, took place in August 2000. It is mainly an informal gathering, also at the margins of the EU JHA Council (MÜLLER 2016, 27). Austria has successfully worked through the Salzburg framework to influence EU policies on issues such as the EU's 2010 Internal Security Strategy, the establishment of a response mechanism for exceptional circumstances met by the Schengen area in 2012, and the EU's 2015 Strategic Guidelines for JHA (MÜLLER 2016, 31).

## **Conclusion and way ahead: Austria's ambivalent security policy**

Due to historical developments, there is a strategic culture in Austria composed of two diverging poles: solidarity within the European Union and non-alignment outside the EU. In the context of bipolar confrontation, Austrian leaders, and foremost the Social Democrat Bruno Kreisky, actively sought to establish a global reputation for their country as a benevolent mediator, and purportedly, a "natural born" peacemaker. Much of this normative image built on Austria's neutrality allowed the country to promote an alternative "third way" in its foreign policy (GEBHARD 2013, 292). As this chapter has shown, the classical concept of neutrality has never been fully exercised from the start and its importance has been further diminished due to the Austrian membership in the UN and EU. Austria's accession to the EU and its contribution to the CSDP have normalised the country's international orientation. Even if Austria has so far abstained from abandoning its neutral status altogether by e.g. entering NATO as a full member, the country is externally perceived as part of the EU and thus as part of an alliance that is based on mutual solidarity. However, neutrality often remains a good exit strategy tool for politicians and policy-makers to shy away from making concrete commitments.

On the other side, the advantages of neutrality, especially Austria's being perceived as an honest neutral broker in international peace talks or as a host country for international organisations, are still considered. Austria has so far been active in the development of

a genuine European security and defence policy and will continue to do so. Any specific commitment or even involvement of Austria in a further developing CSDP will most properly be decided on a case-by-case basis. With regard to NATO, there is currently not even a debate about whether or not a closer relationship would be beneficial for Austria; the blocking by Turkey does not help in overcoming the current deadlock neither.

A further deepening of regional cooperation formats, such as the CEDC and the Salzburg Forum will remain high on the Austrian agenda as well as its active involvement in crisis management missions and operations in its neighbourhood, mainly with regard to the Western Balkans. Thereby, the question of whether to deploy troops under UN, EU, NATO or OSZE flags is secondary; the stability of the neighbourhood having direct effect on Austria's security prevails.

Also the 2018 EU Council Presidency of Austria shows that Austria is willing and committed to tackle security and defence policy on a European Union level. The general topic of a "Europe that protects" further underlines this approach. Austria has continued to focus on the Western Balkan region, as well as on the importance of strengthening civil-military relations and also applying a more comprehensive view to security and defence.

Looking at the Austrian security and defence policy over time, it becomes obvious that by taking a future perspective the country will not drastically change its course of action. So far, the Austrian third way has best provided for the countries interest. Nonetheless, what has become clear and undisputed is the fact that Austria cannot decouple its foreign, security and defence policy from the developments within the process of European integration. That also means that any further deepening will sooner or later lead to renewed debates about the Austrian way and whether the concept of solidarity within the EU and neutrality outside the EU can be further sustained.

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# **Comparative Study on the NATO and EU Relations of Central and Eastern European Nations**

*Gergely Varga*

## **Introduction**

The main objective of the volume was to examine and assess the role of NATO and the EU's CSDP in the security and defence policy of eight different countries in the Central and Eastern European region. The countries of the Visegrád Four – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia –, Romania, Slovenia, Croatia and Austria all have common traits rooted in their relatively smaller size compared to major European powers and in their geographic location. This simple fact is partly strengthened in relation to the role of NATO and EU in these countries' recent history. All countries examined had to adjust to the major geopolitical trends of the past nearly thirty years, defined to a large extent by NATO's and the EU's leading powers, the integration process in Western Europe, Russia as a major challenge for the security of the whole Central and Eastern region, and the forces of nationalism in the post-Cold war period. However, a more comprehensive and in-depth knowledge on the role of NATO and the EU in the integration of the examined countries into Western political and security structures is essential to understand the recent history and contemporary politics of the regions.

With this objective, the volume examined different dimensions of security and defence policy in the respective countries in relation to NATO and the EU: perceptions towards these organisations, their role in security and defence reforms and military transformation, and specific policy-oriented questions, focusing on the participation in crisis management operations, recent defence and deterrence measures against Russia, and the policies with regards to the EU's new defence initiatives. The following paper will provide an assessment on the most important findings of the country-specific examinations of the volume.

## **Perceptions towards NATO and CSDP**

For the countries in the region that suffered under Soviet rule or communism for forty years – all the countries except for Austria – the Soviet occupation and the communist regime imposed on the country during the Cold War had a long-lasting impact on their security perceptions. NATO was perceived to be the guarantee of security, while the EU was seen as the key to economic development, welfare and democracy. Therefore, joining the premier political-economic-security organisation of the West became a region-wide strategic objective



for these countries. In case of the Visegrád countries, the new political elites that came to power in 1990–1991 were usually deeply sceptical towards Russia and stood for pro-Western sentiments (GAZDAG 2014, 2–3). However, at the beginning of the political transformation, these countries were still part of the Warsaw Pact with Soviet troops stationing there and the post-Cold War European security architecture was still uncertain. Within the new European security environment, neutrality seemed to be a favourable option.

The value of the newly regained sovereignty had a great appeal and the successful example of the Austrian neutrality made this option even more favourable for many. However, in order to even have the option of free choice with regards to the basic foreign and security policy orientation, the Warsaw Pact had to be dissolved and the Soviet Union convinced to withdraw its troops from the region. This objective was finally reached at the Budapest Summit of the Warsaw Pact in February 1991 (VALKI 1999). With the Western Balkans soon descending into war and uncertainties remained concerning the future course of Russia, the Visegrád countries soon articulated their objective to gain accession to NATO. For these countries, institutionalised relationship with the United States in NATO meant the necessary security guarantee they were long longing for, while the EU was perceived to be the key for economic development. Among the V4, Slovakia was the outlier, which during especially the Mečiar years had a much more ambiguous approach towards NATO. The broad public support for NATO membership in the three Visegrád countries that joined NATO in 1999 remained strong, while in Slovakia the public was more divided on the issue. However, after the Mečiar era, a strongly pro-Western Slovakian government pushed hard for NATO membership, and during the time Slovakia received an invitation to join the Alliance, the public's attitude turned more in favour of joining NATO.

Among the four Visegrád countries, public support for NATO generally remains the highest in Poland, but public support remained stable in the other countries as well. However, support for the EU was even higher mainly due to the economic benefits EU membership has brought to this region. As for security and defence, NATO remained to be seen as the prime guarantee of security for the four V4 countries. In recent years, the deteriorating relations with Russia and the Ukrainian conflict further strengthened support for NATO especially in Poland and the Czech Republic. Slovakian views on NATO have always been more ambiguous, especially during the 1990s. Support is still much more modest for NATO in Slovakia, since Russia is less perceived as a threat in the country. At the same time, Slovakia and Hungary have one of the most pro-EU populations in the EU.

Although no Soviet troops were based in Romania, having been liberated from the communist Eastern bloc, the Romanian political elite and society also sought to reorient the country towards Western institutions after the fall of the communist regime. The perception was that only NATO would be able to provide stability and security for the newly emerging southeastern European democracies. NATO has continued to play a decisive role in Romanian security and defence policy, and with contingencies in the Black Sea in recent years due to Russia's policies, threats emanating from the East have driven Romania to re-evaluate its defence and defence posture (National Defence Strategy 2015).

As part of the former Yugoslavia, Slovenia and Croatia had a different set of challenges with the fall of communism. It was not only the democratic wave of the late 1980s that shook the legitimacy of the Yugoslav communist regime, but also growing nationalism and separatism in the Yugoslav republics. As the great political transition accelerated during

1989–1990, Slovenia and Croatia soon found themselves in a war of independence against the Serbian dominated Yugoslavia (BOŽINović 2007). In this context, the European Economic Community proved to be far more active than NATO in providing diplomatic support for Slovenia in its struggle for independence. This led to much greater public support for the EU in the years to come during the 1990s and for applying for membership there. However, due to the economic crisis and financial cuts, along with a constant public debate about NATO demanding a higher share of GDP for defence, the perception of benefits of being a member of the Alliance has decreased in the Slovenian population. In recent years, some political parties even raised the issue of organising a referendum on NATO membership.

In case of Croatia, the two Euro-Atlantic organisations were perceived to be “two sides of the same coin” in Croatia’s endeavour to become a member of the transatlantic community, hence, public support was equally high for both organisations. The concept of neutrality has never been seriously considered as an option, institutionalised defence relations with the West has always been considered a national interest in light of the security environment in the Western Balkans ever since the breakup of Yugoslavia.

Austria’s security and defence policy, as well as the perceptions of its public have been strongly shaped by its status as a neutral country that has helped in taking over a function as a mediator and venue for international organisations. Even though public support for EU accession was strong after the political changes during 1989–1990 and Austrian accession in 1995, the majority of the public continued to have strong pro-neutrality sentiments. This perception is still present, which is represented by the fact that public support for the EU and CSDP remains strong in Austria, while NATO is unpopular, and most Austrians still oppose joining NATO.

## **The development of institutional relations with NATO and the EU**

Among the examined countries, Austria was the first to join one of the two Euro-Atlantic institutions, the European Union in 1995. With Austrian EU membership and the emergence of CFSP and then later CSDP, the concept of neutrality completely changed in Austria. Despite its formal neutrality, Austria became an active participant of CSDP activities from crisis management operations to taking part in Battlegroups. However, in the same year, Austria has also began to develop closer cooperation with NATO in the form of the Partnership for Peace program. Although Austria has built ties to NATO in the past two decades, membership is still not seriously considered, and Turkish–Austrian political disputes have recently hampered relations.

Considering the Central and Southeastern European countries in our study, the accession to NATO and EU took place in several waves. These different waves well demonstrate the level of economic development, the health of democratic institutions in the respective countries and outstanding security and defence issues. NATO opened its doors in 1999 for the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, in 2004 for Slovenia, Slovakia and Romania, and in 2009 for Croatia. The EU took a “big bang” approach in its first major enlargement to the former Eastern bloc countries, granting membership for the V4 as well as for Slovenia among others in 2004. Romania joined in 2007, while Croatia managed to become a full member in 2009.

## **Political system and civilian oversight**

Austria has the most significant democratic traditions and experience among the countries examined concerning the security and defence sector. The Federal Chancellor, the Minister for European and International Affairs and the Minister of Defence are the critical government stakeholders in defining the Austrian security and defence policy; however, Parliament has also considerable powers with regards to foreign missions or legislative oversight. Due to Austria's neutrality, it was essential to regulate the conditions in a constitutional law act under which deployment of Austrian troops is possible for peacekeeping missions within the framework of international organisations. As for the post-communist countries in the region, it took a relatively short time to establish the fundamental constitutional and institutional guarantees of democratic oversight of the armed forces (VARGA 2011, 32). The requirements of NATO and EU accession were key drivers in all the countries concerned in establishing the institutions and regulations for proper democratic oversight and civilian control of the military. The newly adopted constitutions guaranteed the civilian leadership and oversight of elected officials over the armed forces. However, the depoliticisation of the armed forces took longer, at least several years, while changing the institutional culture was the most difficult task. In case of the countries with parliamentary systems – Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia – the head of the armed forces is formally the President of the Republic, but the powers of authority connected to command and control of the military is delegated to the government, while Parliament also gained powers for exercising democratic oversight (RAŠEK 2004).

During the first years after gaining independence and fighting the war, Croatia was characterised with visible shortfalls of the democratic system, where political elites were showing limited intentions to undertake the necessary reforms in the field of the security sector and beyond. The democratic deficit of the government in power and the entire setup of the political system in the late 1990s was representing a severe burden for the country's Euro-Atlantic accession ambitions. The entire political system of the country at that time was built around the strong position of the president, who was also commander in chief of the military. "The real transition" started in 2000 with political changes in the country and introduction of policy frameworks, especially those of the EU, that foresee a possibility for full-fledged membership after meeting the required criteria (STANIČIĆ 2007).

In some case, as with the Czech Republic, a national security council was also established in order to create and carry out a comprehensive security and defence policy. The appointment of civilian ministers for defence and the abolishment of political structures in the armed forces gradually took place in the examined former Eastern bloc countries.

## **Defence reforms and military modernisation in the Visegrád Four**

The strategic documents also reflected the transformation of the security and defence policy in the region and the increasing role of NATO, and later during the 2000s also the EU. NATO and with the increasing number of CSDP crisis management operations the EU international efforts had a substantial impact on the defence reforms and transformation of the defence sector of the countries in the region. The fundamental objectives of the

military reforms were similar in each country examined and were in line with the changes within the transformation of NATO armed forces: the transition from a territorial defence posture towards an expeditionary, international peace support posture, with, downsizing, professionalisation and modernisation. After NATO accession, defence planning in all of the NATO members was driven primarily by NATO's NDPP (SZENES 2009, 34).

The armed forces of most countries except for Croatia experienced significant cuts in their size throughout the 1990s. Another common challenge was the reliance on Soviet or Russian military hardware. The dependency on Russian military equipment obviously created challenges for countries who joined NATO. However, alongside modernisation downsizing was also driven by the lack of resources in many cases, especially during the 1990s. Although the general trends in defence expenditures were similar, there were notable differences. Among the V4 countries, Poland's defence expenditure surpassed all the other V4 countries expenditures since 2008, while Hungary lagged behind from the early 2000s, and there was a general decrease in defence spending after 2008 except for Poland. Only in recent years with the change in the security environment can we observe a region-wide trend of increasing defence expenditures (NATO 2018).

In case of Hungary, the first strategic document after the transition, the Security Policy Principles was adopted in 1993. The principles already declared the intentions of Hungary to build and expand the relations with NATO in such a way that will gradually lead to full membership. The security and defence policy principles adopted in late December 1998 after NATO accession became the first strategic document that was based upon the requirements of NATO membership (Parliament Resolution 1998). The document declared that Hungary's security is best served through the collective defence principles of NATO, and also referred to the EU's foreign and security policy. The first National Security Strategy was drafted in 2002, which strengthened Hungary's Euro-Atlantic security orientation, and paid greater attention to global security threats along the lines of NATO's developing strategy after 2001 (SZENES 2009, 71). Subsequent strategic documents also declared the priority of NATO in Hungary's security and defence policy in relation to the EU's emerging CSDP. The latest National Security Strategy was adopted in 2012 according to which NATO and EU membership serves as the primary foundations of Hungary's security (Government Decree 2012). It declares Article 5 of NATO the cornerstone of Hungary's security, and supports the development of the EU's security and defence policy in accordance with the responsibilities connected to the Washington Treaty. The impact of NATO's and the EU's role in international peacekeeping operations was also reflected in the changing tasks and legal conditions of the deployment of the Hungarian Defence Forces, making it easier for the government to provide troops for NATO and CSDP missions.

However, defence reforms often had poor results, mainly due to the constant cuts in the defence budget. The first major defence review took place as late as in 1998–2000 with mixed results. The professionalisation of the Armed Forces took place gradually, with the introduction of a fully professional army in 2004 (VARGA 2011, 35). From the late 1990s until recently, the force structure was mainly determined by the commitments related to NATO's out-of-area operations. This also meant that capabilities designed primarily for territorial defence were either cut back or completely abandoned. Until recently, Hungary had only two major military equipment procurement projects involving Western military equipment, a light infantry missile defence system and fighter jets, while most of the hardware was still Soviet

or Russian made. Even compared to countries in the region, Hungary's defence expenditure levels were very low from 2006, with the numbers only ticking up since 2014. Since then, defence expenditures have gradually increased and will likely continue to do so reaching the 2% target in 2024. This enables the Hungarian Defence Forces to acquire significant new capabilities in the next several years.

After the peaceful separation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, integration into Western security structures became an unquestioned priority for the Czech Republic. In this context, adopting the best Western practices of reforms and transformation of the military became a priority. However, the frequent changes in government and inexperience of the new security defence establishment posed significant challenges with regards to modernisation. Decreasing resources also had a negative impact on the military potential and capabilities development of the country. After the pressure of NATO accession disappeared, defence expenditures further decreased from 2002, stagnated for the next several years, and began to shrink again significantly as the financial crisis hit in 2008. The military transformation happened gradually. Just like in Hungary, the armed forces became an all-professional force in 2004. The transformation of force structure and capabilities was driven to a large extent by out-of-area operations led by NATO. This has also led to significant cuts in territorial defence capabilities. The trend was reversed after 2014, and the Czech defence policy supported and followed the key decisions of the Wales and Warsaw Summits on reassurance, enhanced forward presence and increased defence expenditures. With increasing defence budgets, the number of the armed forces was increased as well as new major acquisitions took place. However, there is a lack of shared vision concerning the future force posture of the country, and also shortages in the higher officer corps, which has a negative impact on strategic planning and preparation.

For Slovakia, the first challenge was to create a national army and the necessary political and security structures. During much of the 1990s, under the Mečiar Government, Slovakia only stayed on the course towards NATO and EU membership on a declaratory level, but the actual foreign, security and defence policy decisions drove the country into a different direction. This changed only in 1998 with the formation of a more pro-European government. Since Slovakia was left out of the first round of NATO enlargement, the new government took defence reforms and changes in the country's overall security policy very seriously. However, the challenges were significant especially with regards to the force structure and readiness of the forces, the decaying equipment, the poor planning and internal operational culture. However, conscription was abolished in 2006, and a gradual modernisation of the forces took place.

Poland has always been the most active supporter of NATO among the V4 and other countries examined in the paper. The adherence to hard security guarantees arise from Poland's geopolitical position, negative historical experience and continued fear of Russia. The strategic document of *The Principles of the Polish Security Policy and Security Policy and Defence Strategy of the Republic of Poland* adopted in 1992 was unambiguous about the Polish political elite's objective and intention to take Poland into NATO and the Western European Union (Strategia RP 1992, 5). The most significant value of NATO for Poland lies in the collective defence clause of Article 5 and the involvement of the United States. In exchange for the hard security guarantees provided by NATO, the Polish political elite

demonstrated strong Polish security policy and military commitment towards the Alliance and the United States in particular.

These security perceptions influenced in no small extent Poland's military transformation and force posture. Poland has always been one of those NATO members, which thought that the capabilities of the Alliance should be developed in a way that preserves the balance between collective defence and out-of-area engagement (KLICH 2009). However, Poland began to participate with rather significant contributions in NATO's crisis management operations, including out-of-area operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, as a way to demonstrate its commitment to the Alliance, but also supporting the U.S. in Iraq. These military engagements compelled Poland to develop considerable expeditionary capabilities after NATO accession. However, as the Afghanistan war became increasingly unpopular and Russian foreign policy became increasingly assertive, more emphasis was given on territorial defence. Poland was one of the few NATO members that avoided significant defence cuts during the financial crisis and begun to undertake a major defence modernisation program. This is reflected in not only the increasing defence expenditures, with 2.2% of GDP expected to be spent on defence by 2020 (PALOWSKI 2017a), but in setting serious modernisation plans for the Polish armed forces which it seeks to achieve (PALOWSKI 2017b). While the National Security Strategy of 2014 (Strategia RP 2014) – maintained the unique role of NATO and the United States in Poland's security, it also emphasises strengthening the national capabilities.

## **Defence reforms and military modernisation in Romania, Slovenia, Croatia and Austria**

Romania's gradual integration and modernisation into the NATO structures and fulfilling NATO requirements developed through three main stages, two of which have already been completed: the main downsizing stage (2005–2007), NATO and EU operational integration (2008–2015) and full integration into NATO and the EU (2016–2025). In light of the challenges facing the Romanian armed forces, there was a pressing need for the Romanian army to engage in a process of restructuring and modernisation. The reform process began in the early 1990s as a top-down process, involving the transformation of the Ministry of National Defence and the Supreme Council of National Defence. Romania had to overcome the gaps in its military personnel, finances and equipment to be able to provide the necessary troops upon request, and gradually become a security provider. Prior to NATO accession, the Partnership for Peace framework was a primary asset in the transition and reform process. After that, all the efforts aimed at re-dimensioning the army, professionalising army personnel, establishing a credible defence capability and achieving interoperability with NATO members' armies were guided through the *Partnership Goals' Implementation Plan for 2001–2007*. In recent years, a restructuring of the armed forces took place, and currently, the focus is on major procurement programs, including missile defence systems, navy modernisation programs, rocket launcher systems, all tailored towards Article 5 territorial defence in light of the deterioration of the Black Sea security environment. Romania's increased level of commitment to its own and the NATO's security was perhaps most confirmed by its increased defence expenditure that almost reached 2% of GDP in 2017.



The impact of NATO was a critical factor concerning the Slovenian security and defence policy and the transformation of the Slovenian Armed Forces. NATO has provided the Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF) a robust framework for its development. Before joining the Alliance, the SAF was a territorially organised compulsory military organisation, while in 2002, it transformed into an all-volunteer force. The knowledge gained from MAP before accession was crucial for defence transformation since they offered a tool for dialogue with NATO and stimulated a reconsideration of the capabilities Slovenia should develop to achieve fulfilling national priorities as well as contributing to NATO. Cooperation with NATO in peace support operations, including in the Western Balkans, was a critical driver in this development. Slovenia has always supported the cooperation and development of capabilities that fulfil the needs of both organisations, NATO and the EU. In 2017, Slovenia joined PESCO and is, at the moment, actively participating in two projects, while taking the role of observer in additional five projects.

As Croatia opted for membership in the EU and NATO during its post-communist and post-conflict period in the second half of the 1990s, it started to develop its security system in accordance with basic principles of the transatlantic community. With a view on the challenging internal post-conflict political and economic situation and the problematic regional security environment, the guidance and assistance of the EU and NATO, as well as of their particular member states was crucial for consolidation of the security sector of the newly established state in such an environment (BOŽINOVIĆ 2007). Croatia as a post-conflict state had an oversized security sector and budget allocated for it that had a symbolic importance in the Croatian society. The SSR of the post-conflict Croatia was more a security sector reduction due to economic reasons than the security sector reform. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of NATO policies and political/symbolic significance of the accession process to the alliance for the introduction of a real SSR in the country at the turn of the millennium. The country profited immensely from participation in the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP) and the Membership Action Plan (MAP).

Croatia also abolished the conscript system and territorial concept of defence, as well as succeeded in making the troops internationally interoperable that was visible in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. While the newly established ESDP of the EU had a limited impact on the transformation process in Croatia itself, the civilian and military missions to be deployed within the framework of ESDP in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Kosovo in the following years have represented a cornerstone for the post-conflict stabilisation and a functional departure point for the viable transformation process. Croatia's participation in CSDP missions has also significantly improved the interoperability of its security sector and Croatia's image at the international arena. At present, all the main strategic documents in the field of security and defence are fundamentally conceptualising Croatia's security policy as a full-fledged member of the transatlantic community. The national security strategy and national defence strategy recognises the shared threats and challenges of its allies in its chapter dedicated to security threats, risks and challenges.

In case of Austria, membership in the EU and in NATO's PfP also resulted in greater engagement in international crisis management missions and operations. This had significant implications for the reform programs in the Austrian armed forces. In 2002, the Austrian Government started a major reform of the Armed Forces in line with the capability development processes Austria absolved in the context of NATO's PARP and the EU's



Capability Action Plan (ECAP). However, the reform was as much a strategic decision given the new global security environment as a political and financial necessity considering the obvious budgetary limitations. In this context, significant reduction in the size of the armed forces took place. However, unlike other countries examined, conscription was not abolished.

Table 1.  
*Defence expenditure trends of countries in Central and Eastern Europe*

	2000–2004 average	2005–2009 average	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Hungary	1.6	1.3	1.04	1.05	1.04	0.95	0.87	0.94	1.01
Czech Republic	1.9	1.5	1.29	1.07	1.06	1.03	0.96	1.06	1.04
Slovakia	1.6	1.52	1.27	1.09	1.10	0.99	0.99	1.14	1.16
Poland	1.7	1.5	1.77	1.72	1.74	1.72	1.85	2.23	2.00
Romania	–	1.6	1.24	1.28	1.22	1.28	1.35	1.45	1.48
Slovenia	–	1.6	1.61	1.30	1.18	1.06	0.98	0.94	0.94
Croatia	–	1.6	1.54	1.60	1.53	1.47	1.41	1.37	1.23
Austria	–	0.85	0.82	0.79	0.78	0.75	0.75	0.66	0.66

Source: NATO 2018.

### **Policy related questions: Participation in peace support operations, perceptions towards Russia and the new defence initiatives of the CSDP – The Visegrád Four**

The security and defence policy perspectives of Central and Eastern European Countries with regards to the common security challenges of NATO and EU CSDP differ as much as they are alike. Participation in the out-of-area crisis management operations of NATO and CSDP not only had a significant impact on the military transition of these countries but also demonstrated the change in the security policy perspectives as members of the Alliance and of the European Union. Alongside the mutual interests in tackling common threats and challenges, participation in these operations differed according to the overall threat perception of the country, to the geopolitical priorities in terms of geography as well as security partnerships to the available capabilities. For Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary and Austria, participation in the Western Balkans stabilisation efforts also had a direct impact on their national security, while the connection and interests at stake were much different concerning the other Visegrád countries. Similarly, the response to the threat from Russia had a different level of impact on Poland's or Romania's security and defence policy in recent years than on Austria, Slovenia or Croatia, which could be also highlighted in their response within NATO. As for other "out-of-area" operations, especially the lengthy operations in Afghanistan, it is fair to say that while countering terrorism and the challenges of failed states certainly was an important factor, the most important motivation for these countries was demonstrating solidarity with the United States in exchange for long-term security guarantees.

The response to Russia's assertive behaviour after Georgia and especially since 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine has also varied among

the countries examined. Although all NATO members supported the alliance's reassurance measures, some were leading the calls for a stronger NATO approach – such as Poland or Romania, while others were more measured in their response to Russia, as Slovenia or Hungary. Meanwhile, the combination of deteriorating security environment, questions with regards to the long-term commitment of the United States as well as a need for greater cooperation in military capability development has led to greater openness towards the CSDP in the region. The V4 Battlegroup created in 2016 and scheduled to be operational again in 2019 is just one highly visible example of the increased regional defence cooperation in recent years.

As a neighbour of the Balkans, the security and stability of the region have been a core Hungarian interest. Therefore, contributing to NATO-led military efforts and later EU CSDP crisis management operations in the region became a priority for Hungarian security policy. In case of Bosnia, Hungary provided its territory and airspace to help the reinforcement of NATO troops destined for the peacekeeping mission, and it also contributed with an engineering battalion to the IFOR, and later SFOR efforts. Similarly, Hungary has provided a relatively sizable contribution to KFOR in Kosovo, with troop levels usually between 200–300.

Since Afghanistan became the focal point of NATO military engagement, Hungary has actively participated in the ISAF forces, and later from 2012 in the Resolute Support Mission. The HDF was involved in numerous roles, including protecting, guarding and airport engineering roles, the leadership of a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Baghlan Province, and other mentoring and training roles (WAGNER 2011). Between 2010–2014, Hungary's mission within ISAF became the largest international engagement of the HDF, with about 300–400 troops serving in the ISAF mission. Hungary also gave political support for the U.S. invasion against Iraq in 2003, and it took part for a short period in the stabilisation efforts of the country. In recent years, Hungary has contributed to the NATO mission in countering the Islamic State with a relatively large, 200-strong contingent. The latter commitment could not be explained only by alliance commitments, but by the direct effect of the instability of the region on Hungary's security in recent years, especially illegal migration. Hungarian contributions to the EU's CSDP missions except for the Althea mission in Bosnia were much more symbolic regarding numbers and commitments. However, Hungary actively took part in most of the CSDP missions, even in African operations. Subsequent Hungarian governments often used the relatively strong Hungarian contributions to NATO operations as a means to compensate for the criticism it received for its low defence expenditure levels.

Although the response to Russia's behaviour in Eastern Europe was not as dramatic as in Poland or Romania, Hungary supported all the major NATO decisions aimed at strengthening the Alliance's presence in NATO's Eastern flank. Within this context, Hungary has participated in many of the related NATO activities: troops from the HDF have been deployed to the Baltics almost every year since 2014, it has set up a Force Integration Unit in Székesfehérvár, it has contributed to military exercises in the region and continues to host the Strategic Airlift Capability in Pápa and a NATO Centre of Excellence (NATO 2018). Overall, Hungary did not take a leading role in any of the new NATO deterrence initiatives, nor did it initiate any major additional bilateral U.S.–Hungarian defence cooperation but supported maintaining a dialogue with Russia parallel to the defence and deterrence measures. Hungary's threat perception is as much oriented towards the South as to the East.

The 2015 migration crisis had a significant impact on the country's threat perceptions, and therefore, it pays attention to NATO's and the EU's activities in the region. Its participation in several PESCO projects also demonstrates the increased significance of the EU CSDP in Hungary's security policy.

In the Czech case, the political will to support NATO and EU operations demonstrates firm commitments to both organisations. Participation in crisis management operations has always been understood as a fair contribution to Alliance cohesion and the strengthening of its transatlantic link. The Czech armed forces contributed to the missions of IFOR, SFOR, KFOR in the Balkans and ISAF in Afghanistan. A Czech medical team was also deployed so far only to the NATO Response Force (NRF) activation to ensure consequent management after a large-scale earthquake in Pakistan in 2005. The Czech Republic's contributions were relatively large regarding the size of its armed forces and its overall population when compared to other NATO members, even compared to Hungary, though not as strong as Poland's (HILLISON 2014, 248). CZAF participation in the CSDP operations has remained at a relatively low level on the military spectrum concerning the degree of complexity, intrusiveness and coercion.

From a Czech perspective, after the annexation of Crimea, Russia has been seen as a risk to the country's security and as a country seeking to undermine the credibility of NATO, transatlantic unity, and weaken European institutions and governments (the Gerasimov doctrine) (Defence Strategy 2017). Since 2014, the CZR's defence policy has been dominated by the outcomes of NATO Summits in Wales and Warsaw, and in this context, NATO commitments influenced the amendments to the Czech defence strategy. As a result, the level of ambition regarding the deployable forces for Article 5 missions was increased in recent years, and the Czech armed forces contributed to the reassurance measures in the Eastern flank. The threat from Russia strengthened the notion that NATO's collective defence and transatlantic link will continue to play a principal role in the Czech security policy. In this context, the Czech Republic will develop a single set of forces for overlapping NATO and EU peace support operations. Prague also supports the EU's capability development initiatives with a view of its own sizable defence industry.

Slovakia also took part in the major NATO-led out-of-area operations. The largest contingent was in Afghanistan during ISAF. As the total number of troops deployed in the continuing Resolute Support Mission decreased, Slovakia also reduced the number of troops. However, the most substantial contribution for an international crisis management or peacekeeping operation is provided to UNFICYP in Cyprus. Its response to the Ukrainian crisis also demonstrated Slovakia's modest policies on the issue. Although it supported NATO's decisions to strengthen the Eastern flank, it initially did not want to host a NATO Force Integration Unit on its territory, though later it participated in reassurance measures in the Baltics. Slovakia has also been one of the main targets of Russian disinformation campaigns, and the government's response was slow to such new challenges. However, regional cooperation and the development in the CSDP became increasingly important for Slovakia. During its most recent V4 presidency, it set ambitious targets for security and defence cooperation, and as holding the EU presidency in the second half of 2016, it put great emphasis on the implementation of the newly agreed EU Global Strategy and moving forward the PESCO of the EU, later leading an artillery development project in the framework. Slovakia continues to put great emphasis on NATO–EU cooperation, recognising the primacy

of NATO in defence and deterrence, but also supporting a gradual strengthening of the EU's security and defence potential.

Although Warsaw had always preferred hard security guarantees with urging the strengthening of the collective defence as the essential task of the Alliance, it has continued to demonstrate strong solidarity to the Alliance regarding non-Article 5 missions. Already in the Balkans before NATO membership, Poland sent a significant number of troops to IFOR and SFOR in Bosnia (500–600 troops), to the Albanian AFOR and to KFOR (800) in 1999. It participated in the operations of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, first mainly with reconstruction tasks, and from 2008 taking over the military stabilisation of the Ghazni Province, which involved also combat operations. Poland was also one of the few countries that not only gave political support for the U.S. invasion of Iraq but took part in the combat operations. In 2005–2006 Warsaw also sent 140 troops to NATO's Swift Relief Mission in Pakistan and between 2005 and 2011 participated in NATO's training mission in Iraq (NTM-I). This strong emphasis on expeditionary commitments and crisis management operations received criticism from experts for over-committing the Polish Armed Forces and not paying enough attention to traditional Article 5 missions of the military (KOZIEJ 2012, 37–38).

After the Russian–Georgian war, Poland assessed that Russia poses a threat to Central European countries (TÁLAS 2014). Since then, Warsaw has stressed even more firmly the need to strengthen the collective defence and territorial defence tasks of NATO, and the security relationship with the United States (EK 2008, 6). Poland could claim some success even before 2014, with strengthening the collective defence pillar of the strategic concept adopted in 2010 or with the decision in 2012 to deploy a missile defence system in Europe with one of its key components to be based in Poland (PIETRZAK 2012, 61). The Ukrainian war only strengthened the perception in the Polish political establishment to view Russia as a direct threat to its territory and sovereignty. Strengthening collective defence efforts of NATO in the region seemed a crucial national security interest. From this perspective, the basing of 4,500 NATO troops – within NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) programme – in the Baltics and in Poland has a considerable significance (EFP Factsheet 2018). Despite the war in Eastern Ukraine, Poland continues to support further enlargement of NATO to the East, with regards to Ukraine and Georgia.

Concerning the EU's security and defence ambition, Poland's initial distrust gradually transformed into a careful support for the CSDP. The Polish position began to change after the Iraq war and the first successful crisis management operations of the EU. As a sign of its new approach, Poland took part in the creation of a Battlegroup within the Weimer Triangle with Germany and France (Weimar Battlegroup) and within the Visegrád cooperation framework with the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, taking up the role of a framework nation in all cases. It also took part in the creation of the European Defence Agency in order to influence the progress of the European capability development.

Poland's shift in its attitude towards the EU security role was also reflected at the doctrinal level, as Polish leaders identified NATO, the EU and the United States as the three pillars of Poland's security. However, from the late 2000s, this approach towards the EU was stalled due to several factors: the impact of the economic crisis, the slow response of the EU for external challenges (Georgia, Arab Spring, Ukrainian crisis) and to a change of government in Warsaw in 2015, which had a much more sceptical view of the EU and based its policies on the defence of national sovereignty (KUŹNIAR 2018, 66). Despite this trend, Poland has

supported the new EU defence initiatives of PESCO and EDF, seeking to maintain influence in the future direction of these initiatives and emphasising the capability development objectives of the initiatives as a way of strengthening the European pillar of NATO.

### **Policy related questions: Participation in peace support operations, perceptions towards Russia and the new defence initiatives of the CSDP – Romania, Slovenia, Croatia and Austria**

Romania also positioned itself as a reliable “security provider” concerning NATO’s international operations. Just one year after its accession in 2005, Romania was contributing all together with 2,300 troops, including the “Active Endeavour” operation, in ISAF in Afghanistan and in the Balkans in KFOR. The Romanian armed forces participated in many roles in these missions, including as instructors in the ISAF mission, intelligence structures in KFOR, and later as instructors for the Training Advice Command in NATO’s Resolute Support Operation in Afghanistan. Overall Romania’s contributions to these missions were quantitatively as well as qualitatively – concerning the few operational caveats – above the average NATO member contribution. Compared to this robust presence in NATO’s missions, Romania’s CSDP contribution was less robust but still considerable. Romania participated in every significant CSDP operation, its forces contributed to missions in Mali, Somalia and Central Africa.

Russia’s assertive actions in Ukraine and in the Black Sea in recent years raised serious concerns in the Romanian political and security establishment. The new threat perception was reflected in Romania’s active contribution to Alliance defence and deterrence activities. Since the Wales Summit in 2014, Romania has begun to host significant NATO structures and capabilities on its territory: the Multinational Division Southeast Headquarters, a NATO Force Integration Unit, a Deployable Communications Module Element and the Deveselu Missile Defence Base (Mod 2016). At the Warsaw Summit, Romania also committed itself to creating a multinational brigade and an intensified instruction program, both focusing on Black Sea contingency scenarios. While Romania welcomed NATO’s contribution to the security of the Black Sea region, it considered the Alliance to be taking less attention to the Southeastern flank than to the Eastern flank near the Baltics and Poland. Therefore, it is continuously sending a message to NATO allies and especially to the United States to increase their military presence in Romania.

With regards to the EU’s security and defence initiative, Romania is focusing on multinational capability development projects. Previously it was involved in several pooling and sharing projects, and currently, it participates in five PESCO projects. Romania took over the EU presidency in the first half of 2019, and the government intends to boost Romania’s efforts in the CSDP framework. However, the role of NATO and bilateral security partnership with the United States unquestionably remains the cornerstone of Romania’s defence policy.

Since its independence, Slovenia has participated in 26 international peacekeeping operations, among them many NATO and EU missions. Due to its geographic proximity, Slovenia is canalising its security efforts to the Western Balkans. This is clarified by the fact that 61% of the Slovenian troops deployed for international peace support operation were sent to Kosovo, while only 12% to Afghanistan. The historical, cultural and ethnic ties, as well

as its close proximity to the Balkans, have made security in the region a top priority (VUGA 2014). Active Slovenian contributions to NATO's efforts in the region are highlighted by the relative strength of Slovenian forces in KFOR and by Slovenia acquiring the command post of NATO's operation in Macedonia in 2012.

However, after the Ukrainian crisis, Slovenia also demonstrated its solidarity with countries on the Eastern flank and sent troops to support NATO's reassurance measure there. At the same time, it supported Germany's position of maintaining a dialogue with Russia in a NATO framework. In this context, Slovenia continues to have a balanced approach towards Russia of deterrence and engagement. Slovenia has also taken part in CSDP operations, including Althea in Bosnia and has always been supportive of cooperation between NATO and the EU. The Slovenian Armed Forces also contributed units to the EU Battlegroup led by Italy. The initiative for this battlegroup has roots in the Multinational Land Force (MLF). Within the context of the recent EU defence initiative, Slovenia participates in two PESCO projects, and is active in the European Defence Agency.

Croatia has always demonstrated a strong commitment to NATO's out-of-area operations. Croatia was punching above its weight even before accession to NATO from the very beginning as a way to cement its close relations with the U.S. and remove last doubts about its NATO accession perspective. In this context, the Croatian armed forces contributed to ISAF with twenty contingents and more than five thousand officers in fifteen years, offering a wide range of services, including training Afghan military forces to help develop the educational infrastructure in the Afghan society. Since 2009, Croatian forces also contributed to KFOR missions in Kosovo, mainly conducting transport roles.

Since the annexation of Crimea, Croatia has also firmly supported NATO's measures to strengthen the Article 5 commitment to the Alliance's Eastern flank. Compared to the size of the country, the Croatian contribution with mechanised infantry units to a German-led battlegroup in Lithuania and with U.S. troops in Poland is considerable. As a country located in a still unstable region, Croatia considers the demonstration of solidarity a vital aspect of NATO membership. However, the importance of the CSDP in European security is also recognised by Croatia. Since 2009, it has participated in numerous CSDP military and civilian missions, with an emphasis on the EU's security engagement in the Western Balkans. Croatia also took part in the Nordic EU Battlegroup 2011 and the EU Battlegroup 2012 led by Germany. However, the focus of Croatian international defence efforts remained within a NATO context. From this perspective, it is clear that the transatlantic concept of cooperative security will hardly have any alternatives for the country in the foreseeable future.

As a member of the EU but not part of NATO, Austria's participation in international crisis management operations concentrated on contributions to the CSDP and to the UN. However, as a PfP partner for NATO, Austria has also been engaged in missions led by NATO. In comparison to its size and officially neutral status, Austria's 1,200-strong engagement in international crisis management and peacekeeping operations is quite robust. This is partly because Austria has traditionally been very active in UN peacekeeping operations in Africa and the Middle East. Austria's geographical responsibility lies clearly in its neighbourhood, and the political guidelines of Austria's security strategy reflect this reality, prioritising operations in Central and Southeast Europe. Within this context, Kosovo and Bosnia have been one of the priority areas for crisis management contributions.



Alongside CSDP and PfP structures, Austria has been also active in finding alternative frameworks to enhance regional security cooperation. One such framework is the Central European Nations' Co-operation in Peace Support (CENCOOP), in which Austria is an active member. Vienna was also active in the creation of the Central European Defence Cooperation with the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia. The main focus area of the CEDC has been the Western Balkans, and cooperation on selected military projects and border control. A similar setting is the Salzburg group, though it is focused mainly on justice and home affairs. However, Austria's accession to the EU and its contribution to the CSDP missions have led to a higher level of solidarity towards EU members also in the area of security and defence. In this context, Austria's security policy is fully embedded into the CSDP and is perceived to be a member of an alliance of the EU states.

NATO membership is still not a desirable option for most Austrians, and one factor in this general perception is the different attitude towards Russia. Despite its historic memories of the Russian occupation, Austria has historically enjoyed good relations with Russia. The Austrian Security Strategy continues to call for targeted cooperation with both the U.S. and Russia taking European values into account and asserting the rights and fundamental freedoms with self-confidence. In practice, Vienna's approach towards Russia certainly differs from most NATO members examined in the paper, and this has been demonstrated by Austria's political and economic engagement towards Moscow ever since the Ukrainian crisis broke out. The critical question for the Austrian security and defence policy seems to be focused instead on the EU, as any further deepening in the security and defence realm could open up old and new debates about Austria's neutrality and whether it can be sustained.

## Conclusions

NATO and the EU had an unquestionable role in maintaining peace and security in much of Central and Eastern Europe in the past three decades. Although conflict is again present at Europe's periphery in Ukraine, the likelihood of a significant conflict between any of the two members of the EU and NATO countries examined is still extremely remote. This is not a small achievement given the problematic history of these countries. As security institutions with a defining role in transforming the internal and external security and defence postures of the region, NATO and the EU deserve credit for this achievement. If one examines the similarities and differences of the respective countries' security and defence policy, several conclusions can be made. NATO and the EU in many ways streamlined the security policy orientation of these countries. Alliance solidarity, common structures and common threats led to similar patterns in how these countries conducted their security policies in the past two decades. It is important to note that it was not only NATO or Western countries shaping the security policy of these nations, but as they engaged with each other more often and more deeply through the structures of NATO and the EU, they also began to shape each other. It is important to note that this has not led to a significant convergence of threat perceptions, national interests or strategic culture. However, it provided a platform that enabled a level of security and defence interaction and cooperation not seen before in the region. Whether these countries will be able to build upon this experience, constructively going forward in light of the many external threats and internal political challenges this region faces remains to be seen.



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The negative developments in the security environment of Europe in recent years have placed NATO and the European Union's defence policy to the centre of political debates in East Central Europe. In order to provide a general overview, the essays in the volume will cover the most significant aspects of the security and defence policy of the respective countries in the region. Understanding the general perceptions of NATO and the EU is the foundation for any deeper exploration of the related issues. The countries in the Central and Eastern European region will continue to rely on greater powers and multinational institutions to maintain their security. None of the current geopolitical and security challenges, let it be Russia, failing states in the South, terrorism or illegal migration appears to be weakening in the years to come. Therefore, preserving NATO and EU unified and strong on security and defence matters remain to be a strategic interest for the countries in the region.

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