

# POLITICAL STATE AND NATO

According to official state documents<sup>1</sup>, integration into NATO represents Slovenia's basic foreign policy interest and national security priority. NATO is seen as "the only efficient organisation for collective security in the existing European security architecture". NATO provides collective defence to member countries, but also assumes responsibility for European security and stability in general, including "out of area" operations. NATO demonstrated its efficiency in such a role during the Bosnian-Herzegovinian war, where European security structures failed to stop the conflict without a substantial transatlantic support. The Kosovo crisis in spring 1999 was another example of this kind.



According to the official view, the fundamental reasons for Slovenia to become a member of NATO are: (1) the membership in NATO would strengthen the security of the country and contribute to its long-term development; (2) the consequences of NATO membership are not estimated to be only those of security and military, but also refer to foreign policy, economic, scientific, research, technical, and organisational issues, (3) a potential NATO membership of Slovenia means the inclusion of country in the political and security framework of the most developed Western European and North American countries, it also means, promotion of economic and social co-operation and development, strengthening credibility of Slovenia, promotion of its international status and negotiating power, and consolidation of the international identity of Slovenia as a democratic and peaceful country.

Hence, the official standpoint of Slovenia as far as the potential membership in NATO is concerned, emphasizes security and non-security aspects of the membership as equally important.

While analysing the official statements, it could be seen that the attitudes of the highest representatives within the Slovenian state toward NATO membership were very general and political in nature. All representatives placed the discussion of NATO enlargement in a spectrum of globalisation and European integration, and they all viewed enlargement as a means to achieve a new European security 'architecture'. Therefore, Slovenian high state representatives envisaged NATO as a collective security organisation, rather than a collective defence organisation.<sup>2</sup> Another common element of all presented standpoints was the attitude toward military force in Europe as an artefact – their attitudes expressed a high degree of optimism about the low possibility of the use of military force on the continent.

Slovenian membership in NATO would mean the return of the country to a cultural circle that Slovenia belonged in the past, and is understood as a correction of the historical injustice caused by the consequences of the Second World War. It is also evident that NATO enlargement is

seen in a historical perspective, offering the chance for European nations to overcome the divisions of the past. NATO enlargement, as well as Slovenia's potential membership in the Alliance, is not directed against other states, including Russia.

According to high representatives of Slovenia, the country was eligible for the first round of post-Cold War NATO enlargement. Slovenia fulfilled all general criteria set by the NATO Enlargement Study; however, not one of the representatives spoke about defence or military criteria. It is most clear that inter-operability of Slovenian armed forces could be a subject of serious debate in this respect. Another important issue to be addressed here, are Slovenia's on-going disputes with its neighbours, especially Croatia. Despite this situation, there is an immanent hope that NATO will primarily respect its own objective criteria, rather than take into account different political considerations about the enlargement itself. It is also evident that the representatives of the Slovenian state believed in a democratic effect of NATO enlargement – membership would foster democratic political processes in Slovenia.

There is great optimism within Slovenia's official ranks regarding the relative costs of NATO: Slovenia is capable and prepared to pay and the expenditures will be lower than in the case of an individual approach to security.

The official document on NATO and Slovenia, adopted by the Government, is comprised of 23 pages, many which hardly correspond to the title of the document: *National Strategy for Integration of Republic of Slovenia into NATO*. Namely, the document addresses broader topics such as European security architecture, the role of OSCE, the history of NATO-Slovenia and WEU-Slovenia relations, and Common Foreign Security Policy of EU, while the activities to achieve membership are compressed in points with no firm theoretical or empirical background, therefore, hardly to be called "national strategy".

The official standpoint of Slovenia, as far as potential membership in NATO is concerned, equally emphasizes security and non-security aspects of membership, i.e. political, economic, scientific, and even cultural (values).

Not everything was so clear regarding Slovenia's fulfilment of basic criteria set by NATO for the first round of its enlargement. Namely, the high representatives of the state claimed Slovenia fulfilled the criteria, while the document envisaged many foreign policy, military, administrative, and financial activities to be carried out in reference to those criteria. Therefore, we could assume, the Slovenian government accepted the (mainly American) criticism brought to Slovenia by US State Secretary Madeleine Albright after the Madrid Summit. Albright gave some credit to Slovenia for all its reforms accomplished by that

time, and mentioned that Slovenia was the best candidate for the next round of NATO enlargement. Included in her text, however, was also a warning that Slovenia should be more active in the conflict resolution process in South Eastern Europe, should continue economic liberalization, and be more open for foreign investments.<sup>3</sup>

One of the questions to be raised while analysing the document was the readiness of the Slovenian Army to join NATO. The document foresaw a lot of substantial activities to be carried out by the Army to achieve the NATO standards and interoperability with the armed forces of NATO countries. It seems the Slovenian Army has undergone constant reform since its conception, with few tangible results. The content analysis revealed that the deadlines set by the document are not respected by different governmental agencies, including the Ministry of Defence and the Army. That is to say, those "diplomatic rumours" on the weakness of the Slovenian Army, not enough educated military officers, and leaking of military secrets, were close to the truth.

The optimistic estimation of NATO membership costs seen in previous years is surpassed by the "national strategy". The Government envisaged an approximate 25 per cent increase in its defence budget due to the expected gradual accession to NATO (from 1.83 per cent of GDP in 1997 to 2.3 per cent in year 2003). In year 2000, this objective was postponed to year 2010, while the actual trend goes in the opposite direction – in 2000 the defence spending reached merely 1.45 per cent of GDP.

The document anticipates only positive effects of Slovenia's membership in NATO (enhanced stability and greater possibility of social development, enhanced security, better image of the country within the international community, economic, scientific and technological push, and even long-term reduction of defence expenditures) while the possible negative consequences of membership are not forecast.

## Parliamentary political parties' attitude toward NATO

Although differences existed among parliamentary political parties by the end of 1998 we might say that it is possible to classify Slovenian political parties into two groups with regard to this issue. The first group comprised the four most powerful parliamentary parties – the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS), the Slovenian People's Party (SLS), the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia (SDS) and the Slovenian Christian Democrats (SKD) – that unreservedly supported Slovenia's entry into NATO. The position of the SKD however, has not been set out in detail and justified – at least not publicly<sup>4</sup>. The second group contained the United List of Social Democrats (ZLSD), the Democratic Pension-



ers' Party (DESUS) and the Slovenian National Party (SNS), which declaratively supported NATO membership but with certain reservations or under certain conditions. The ZLSD was most divided with regard to this issue, since the party's Women's Forum and Youth Forum explicitly opposed NATO membership for Slovenia. The major shift occurred in the SNS which ceased to support the membership of Slovenia in NATO in Spring 1999 (see table 1).

It is fairly typical of parties not to deal with NATO as primarily a military, defence, or security organisation, but to attribute instead to it other properties. Thus the effects of Slovenia joining NATO are seen as being economic, cultural (value system) and political (the democratizing effect of NATO enlargement).

Slovenia fulfils the conditions set for potential candidates by NATO in its enlargement study, and its advantages include never belonging to the Warsaw Pact and having a favourable influence on the resolving of the political and security crisis in the Balkans. Despite the optimism re-

garding the fulfilment of conditions for NATO membership, it is important to stress that one of the basic criteria set by NATO was that disputes with neighbouring countries should be resolved. Obviously, Slovenia doesn't meet this criterion, since there are still undecided questions with Croatia, among them the question of land and sea borders. This is significant because, should Slovenia become a NATO member, its borders also become the borders of the Alliance. Some political parties also overestimated Slovenia's negotiating capabilities with NATO regarding its geo-strategic importance after the dissolution of the bipolar bloc structure of international relations, while others underestimated the costs of potential NATO membership.

The reasons for the non-acceptance of Slovenia in the first round of NATO enlargement in Madrid 1997 – and only here does the difference between government parties and opposition parties become important – were seen by government parties as mainly lying in external factors over which they themselves did not have a de-

cisive influence, while the opposition parties blamed the government for the failure. The two key coalition parties that made up the government – the LDS and the SLS – at least indirectly saw the difficulties of Slovenia's integration with NATO in the unsatisfactory readiness of the Slovenian Army. The opposition drew attention to the slowness of changes in society (incomplete political, economic and military reforms), the deliberate delaying of the restitution of nationalized property and with it the righting of wrongs committed under the previous "totalitarian regime", the over-slow process of privatisation and the hindering of foreign investment, Slovenia's lack of commitment in the resolution of the crisis in the Balkans, and the failure to accept certain required defence obligations, inadequate civilian supervision of the armed forces and the poor readiness of the Slovenian Army, a defence budget which lacks transparency, and purchases of weapons and military equipment from countries which are not NATO members.

**Table 1: SLOVENIAN PARLIAMENTARY POLITICAL PARTIES: PERCEPTION OF NATO**

Name of the Political Party	Ideological Orientation	Seats in the Parliament (Elections Oct. 2000)	NATO Membership	Rationalization of the membership	Reasons for the rejection in Madrid 1997
Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, government	Centre Left, Liberal	34	For	NATO provides the highest level of security, acceleration of economic progress, include the country in the democratic world, increase Slovenian influence in IC	the main reasons for rejection are outside of the country, politicization of armed forces, military secrets
Slovenian People's Party and Christian Democrats, government	Centre Right, Conservative	9	For	Enhanced social stability and economic development	The transitional process is too slow, defence policy mistakes, structure of the armed forces is inadequate
Social Democratic Party of Slovenia, opposition	Right Nationalist, Conservative	14	For	NATO goes beyond military alliance and offers economic security, NATO-the best way of achieving national security and a guarantee of internal democratic development	The policy of the government, unrealistic estimation of the situation, ignoring the Visegrad group, insufficient defence budget transparency, purchase of arms in Israel instead in NATO countries, underestimated role of Germany
New Slovenia, opposition	Right, Conservative	8	For	Slovenia becomes part of European value, legal, economic, financial and security environment	Government made an inappropriate judgement of political relations in international community, social reforms were too slow, Slovenia was inactive in the region (SEE), sabotage.
United List of Social Democrats, government	Left, Social democratic	11	For (with some doubts)	Inclusion in the circle of developed WE countries	The decision was made outside the country, government should perform more discrete foreign policy
Democratic Pensioners' Party, government	Centre Left	4	For	Opportunity for the long term integration into European political and economic areas, security interests	
Slovenian National Party, opposition	Right, Nationalist	4	Not clear ... against	Slovenia belongs to Western cultural circle ... neutrality is a better choice	
Representatives of the Italian and Hungarian Minorities	Centre Left	2	For		
Party of Slovenian Youth, supports government	Centre	4	Not against	Does not mention NATO in its Guidelines and starting points	

Some political parties (ZLSD, SDS and SNS) are openly committed to a referendum on NATO membership, while others feel that this would give a message of inconstancy or lack of conviction about our intentions to the partners in NATO.



### Civil society and public opinion on NATO

The institutions and individual members of civil society are a good deal more critical than the representatives of political parties towards the idea of Slovenia's membership of NATO. There is practically no uncritical and apologist advocacy of membership in the analysed material. If we group and generalize their arguments we see that for one group of arguments Slovenian membership of NATO is ideologically unacceptable (and some extremely irrational claims are also made here), a second group is concerned about the sovereignty of the state and national identity, a third group warns that for the political elite NATO membership is primarily of symbolic importance, and a fourth is afraid that the costs of membership will be too high. Members of the older generation, with their experiences of the Second World War, publicly stress that Slovenia should have a more solid negotiating role with regard to NATO since the importance of its geo-strategic position has been confirmed throughout history. Finally they remind us that in 1941–1945 the Slovenian national liberation movement was an ally in the anti-Hitler coalition, which should count for something in negotiations on the admission of Slovenia to NATO.

In dealing with the views of parliamentary parties and influential members of civil society, and indirectly of the institutions that they represent, we have noticed that individuals appeal to public opinion which supports their position regarding Slovenia's integration with NATO. Some political parties are also demanding that a referendum be held before a decision is made on Slovenia's entry to NATO. These are two of the reasons why it is also necessary to analyse the public opinion polls on the attitude of the Slovenian public towards possible membership of NATO.

Before examining the attitude toward NATO, let us look at the broader public opinion context regarding the security of Slovenia.<sup>5</sup> The public opinion polls in recent years show that Slovenes feel safer than they did in the past. They are increasingly aware of non-military sources of threat, notably ecological and socio-economic threats, while other sources of threat include crime, natural and man-made disasters, the sale and use of drugs, internal political instability, the possibility of social unrest, and a lagging behind in the area of science and technology. Respondents do not attribute major importance to external military threats. The question of "threats" is important since we may assume that the level of perceived military threat will influence the public's attitude to Slovenia's membership of NATO, an institution of collective defence.

Furthermore, public opinion polls indicate mistrust of the international actors (NATO, UN, EU, OSCE) involved in the resolution of the political/security crisis in the

former Yugoslavia, while their contribution to guaranteeing world peace is given a very low estimate.

A relative majority of those questioned are in favour of reducing or ideally preserving the level of defence expenditure, although Slovenia sets aside a relatively low percentage of its gross domestic product for defence.<sup>6</sup> The public imposes on the army an imperative, which is in equal parts functional and societal and ascribes to it a modest societal role, but at the same time is absolutely opposed to the interference of the army in political events in the country.<sup>7</sup> A relative majority of respondents is in favour of reducing the size of the armed forces, which even now have only a modest potential.<sup>8</sup> The majority of the public is in favour of a smaller regular army and a larger reserve, a mainly conscript army with a smaller professional core, and a seven-month period of national service, all of which accords with the actual state of affairs in the Slovenian armed forces.

Data on the attitude of the Slovenian public to NATO is available from 1994 onwards. The first question put to respondents read as follows: "Below is a list of statements. To what extent do you agree or disagree with them?". One of the statements related to NATO: "We would prefer to look after Slovenia's defence ourselves, even if this costs us more, than to become dependent on the West (NATO)". The level of acceptability of this statement was extremely high, with two thirds of respondents indicating that they "agree completely" or "agree". Less than one-third indicated that they "do not agree" or "do not agree at all". From this we may conclude that in the spring of 1994 the public had not yet accepted the idea of Slovenia joining NATO.

About one year later (in January 1995) we asked the public once again about Slovenia and NATO. The majority of respondents believed that the Alliance would strengthen its political role in Europe and expand through the inclusion of certain eastern European countries. Only a small number of respondents thought that NATO would not change (25 per cent) or that it would be disbanded (5 per cent). Figures for the public support of NATO membership for Slovenia can be seen in table 2.

These figures show that a relative ma-

majority of the public supported the government's efforts towards NATO membership for Slovenia, but the support was by no means as high as among the political elite and state officials working in the area of national security. This result did not accord with their expectations and in fact represented a shock and a disappointment, since it was now seen that public support for NATO membership was not something automatic and that it would be necessary to justify the idea more systematically and professionally.

We invited the respondents to consider claims about the advantages and disadvantages of NATO membership and asked them whether they agreed or not with these claims. Respondents agreed most with the claims that in the case of Slovenia joining NATO our armed forces would have easier access to modern weapons, that the military security of the country would be strengthened, that its reputation in the international community would increase and that this would ease our approach to European integrations. The majority of respondents also agreed that NATO membership would increase the share of the budget to be used for defence purposes, that given the small size of the country the placing of NATO military bases would represent too great a loss of national territory, that membership would require cooperation in military operations outside the territory of Slovenia, that Slovenian companies would be able to cooperate in the military projects of NATO member states, and that Slovenia's armed forces would become more efficient. Fewer agreed with the claim that NATO would establish military bases in Slovenia which would represent an ecological burden on the environment, and even fewer that the personnel of these bases would be a disturbing factor in the social environment, or that the establishing of military bases would provide jobs for the local population. Fewest of all agreed with the claim that NATO membership would limit Slovenia's sovereignty.

A good quarter of those asked felt that Slovenia's security position has improved through its cooperation in the Partnership for Peace programme, while more than half felt that it has not changed. Approximately a fifth of those asked were unable to judge this.

More intensive public opinion research

**Table 2: PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT EFFORTS FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP IN JANUARY 1995 (in %)**

**The government is striving for NATO membership for Slovenia. Do you personally support such efforts or do you oppose them (Sample = 1050)?**

1 – I support them	44.2
2 – I don't support them but I don't oppose them	32.7
3 – I oppose them	8.6
4 – I don't know, I am undecided	14.6

**Table 3: PUBLIC OPINION SUPPORT FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP OF SLOVENIA (in %)**

	Oct 96	Jan 97	Feb 97	Mar 97	Nov 97	Jun 99
<b>Yes</b>	66.4	61.3	58.3	64.1	55.4	56.5
<b>No</b>	15.7	20.5	21.1	18.3	18.4	16.1
<b>Don't know</b>	17.9	18.2	20.7	17.6	26.2	27.4
<b>Sample</b>	958	996	942	965	2031	1001

was carried out from autumn 1996 to June 1999. Public support for the project of NATO membership can be seen in table 3.

Certain trends in public opinion relating to support for the government in its efforts for NATO membership for Slovenia can be read from table: (1) from October 1996 to March 1997 public support for the government's efforts was relatively high and stable, (2) the level of opposition to government policy regarding NATO was relatively low (approximately a fifth of respondents) and stable in this period, (3) the group of undecided respondents in this period was relatively high (approximately a fifth of respondents), (4) in October and November 1997 support for Slovenian membership of NATO fell perceptibly, while opposition did not increase and the group of undecided respondents grew larger. This result was almost certainly influenced by the decision of the North Atlantic Council at its meeting in Madrid not to invite Slovenia to be one of the candidates for the first round of NATO enlargement since the end of the Cold War. The trend remained unchanged until June 1999.

coming from NATO on the further enlargement of the Alliance and the potential members? It is also true that closer we are to the objective (NATO membership), more rational and less emotional the judgement of public is. However, in May and June the support for NATO membership increased, the opposition remained at the same level, while the number of undecided decreased significantly: the two reasons for higher support could be deteriorated security situation in Macedonia and the Bush-Putin meeting held in Slovenia.

The crosstabulations of results from January 2001 poll showed that the demographic features of the public brought about some slight differences in their opinion toward NATO. The population under 30 and over 60 years of age are more in favour of the membership than other age groups. More educated people are less in favour of the idea than less educated ones, and male population is much more in favour of the membership than the female one. Female population does not oppose the idea more than the male one, however, the majority of undecided are women. In urban areas the support is higher than in rural areas, and housewives and farmers seem to be most undecided

**Table 4: PUBLIC OPINION SUPPORT FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP IN 2001 (in %)**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
<b>Yes</b>	49.6	53.4	52.7	49.9	53.9	55.3
<b>No</b>	31.6	28.4	26.0	29.9	31.5	29.7
<b>Don't know</b>	18.8	18.2	21.3	20.2	14.7	15.1
<b>Sample</b>	932	899	932	889	928	904

As seen in table 4, in January 2001 the opposition to NATO membership grew over 30 per cent while the support declined below 50 per cent for the first time in recent years. In February and March the support was slightly over fifty per cent, and in April again below 50 per cent. In May and June, the support grew again well over 50 per cent. The January decline is regarded to be a consequence of a situational context: the discussion on depleted Uranium as a side effect of the military campaigns in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo ran by domestic and international mass media. Perhaps, the American debate on National Ballistic Programme? Or, is the reason the lack of clear message

groups. The more people are satisfied with their life in Slovenia, the higher is support for NATO membership. Also, it is evident that the support for the membership grows from the left side of political spectrum to the right one. The religious or atheist attitudes have no influence at all in this case.

#### **The attitude of the state and political elites toward NATO**

One of the methods for obtaining relevant information is the interview, which was carried out in late April and early May 1999 (after NATO's Washington Summit and during the intensive NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia). The sample was com-

prised of twenty individuals, among them senior officials of the Government (Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Presidential Office, Members of the Parliament (Defence Committee), and high representatives of parliamentary political parties. The sample of Ministry of Defence involved senior civil servants and high-ranking military officers.

The questionnaire wasn't extensive and highly structured, rather, it consisted of only thirteen open questions which could be divided into two sets: the first one pertaining to the personal views of the respondents regarding NATO membership for Slovenia, while the second set referred to the attitude of the institution/organisation the respondents represented, toward Slovenia and NATO. The latter also referred to the substantial processes taking place in the institution/organisation regarding security policy-making.<sup>9</sup>

The results of the interview showed that the great majority of respondents supported the idea of Slovenia being a member of NATO without any reservations. The arguments for NATO membership were as follows:

1. membership is of a vital interest for Slovenia in the context of 'de facto' and 'de iure' integration of the country into Euro-Atlantic structures; Slovenia would be closer to the Western democracies; only within a united Europe can Slovenia achieve greater prosperity,

2. membership would be a logical continuation of the country's independency process started in the late eighties,

3. geo-strategic and military-political situation of the country,

4. political orientation of the country and internal political situation; NATO membership could foster the democratic values of society,

5. Slovenia is on the edge of the turbulent Balkans, and NATO membership would bring greater security to the country; NATO, as the only effective organisation of collective defence in Europe, offers security guarantees,

6. Slovenia is forming its military system and it is necessary to accept the solutions that have already been tested in the past; the discussion on NATO membership itself has already brought a lot of positive effects into our military system – the options were narrowed down and the improvisations reduced,

7. the membership would attract foreign investors (positive economic effects).

The majority of respondents agree that Slovenia fulfils the membership criteria set by NATO: democratic standards, human rights, freedoms and rights of minorities, resolved territorial and other disputes with neighbouring countries, rule of the law, economic freedoms and market economy, democratic supervision of the armed forces, transparency of defence planning, and interoperability. Some respondents questioned the fulfilment of 'resolved terri-



torial and other disputes with neighbouring countries' criterion, since Slovenia still has some open territorial and property questions with Croatia, while the others questioned the rule of the law, transparency of defence planning, democratic control over armed forces and their interoperability with NATO.



Slovenia fulfills the criteria at least as well as Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic, but there are also some unwritten conditions to be met. It seems that in the case of those three countries, the most important reasons to accept them were geostrategic (geographical positions of the countries and their relative military strength) and moral 'historical debt'. Few respondents warned that the Slovenian government is too servile toward NATO (e.g., the permission to fly over Slovenian territory, land transit permission, 'no secret' policy), meaning, NATO has no need to be interested in Slovenian membership.

What can Slovenia do to enhance its chances? Slovenia has made a lot of mistakes in the past: poor political decisions, undefined national interests and strategy, too much political struggle within the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs, problems within the Slovenian Armed Forces (territorial instead of operational, level and type of officers' education, manner of promotion), delayed contacts with foreign defence ministries and lobbying, and inadequate activities of military and civil diplomacies due to a lack of political instructions. These are all areas where Slovenia could do more to improve its chances to enter the second round of NATO enlargement. The respondents emphasized the need for Slovenia to actively contribute to the security in South East Europe through peace operations (especially Bosnia – Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Albania), foster relationships with NATO (Membership Action Plan – MAP, Partnership for Peace – PfP, Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council – EAPC), and NATO member countries, accelerate internal political and economic reforms, improve the coordination of NATO related activities between

(and within) different branches of state power, increase defence budget and restructure it in favour of military defence expenditures, as well as reorganize and modernize the armed forces.

According to the respondents, the positive effects of NATO membership for Slovenia would be:

- Slovenia becoming more closely integrated with the European community,
- national self-confirmation,
- increased level of (national) security (security guarantees),
- enhanced credibility and better image of the country in the international sphere and especially within the region,
- respect of rule of law,
- indirect benefits in economic (lower 'country risk' and increased foreign investments), social, scientific, technological and cultural fields,
- rational and transparent defence planning and budget, and
- modernisation of armed forces.

Negative effects of NATO membership were estimated to be:

- part of national sovereignty will be rendered to collective bodies (limited sovereignty, threatened national identity – language, symbols, customs, tradition),
- the attitude toward defence in the public will change – we will lose the 'defence consciousness and readiness' achieved in the past,
- international obligations will increase due to the crises in Europe,
- degradation of the environment,
- foreign military bases on Slovenian territory,
- Slovenian soldiers will be sent abroad and will die there, and
- high membership costs.

The attitude of the institutions/organizations represented by the respondents toward the idea of Slovenia being a potential member to NATO was positive in all cases but one (Slovenian National Party changed its platform, and is now supporting the security policy of armed neutrality).

Less than two thirds of respondents thought the support for the membership of Slovenia to NATO was sincere, yet they were not always supported by adequate knowledge and, therefore, were not always objective. It is important that the military corps is supportive of the idea, and that military officers see their professional careers in a Euro-Atlantic perspective and not just a Slovenian one. More than one third of the respondents thought the support was not sincere in some political parties, nor even in the Government itself. Sometimes the latter promises a lot, but fails to back these promises with concrete actions. It is most evident the financial support of the Government for the 'project' to be accomplished is rather modest, despite the obligations accepted in NATO-Slovenia relations.

At the end of the interview respondents were asked to make an estimation of how Slovenia could provide its own security in the meantime, i. e. before NATO membership occurs. Here are the most popular answers:

- by enhancing international co-operation, especially with NATO (PfP – allows consultations with NATO if the country feels threatened, MAP, EAPC),
- by exercising peaceful policy in international relations and good relations with neighbouring states,
- by building up its own, effective defence system,
- by adopting Armed Forces to NATO standards, 'modernisation' of techniques and thought, introducing an all-volunteer force (AVF), fostering educational programmes within the armed forces.

## Conclusions

Slovenia is one of the 'transition states', aiming at NATO membership, but was not invited to start the membership negotiations to enter the first round of NATO enlargement after the end of Cold War. From this group of transition states there were only three of twelve European countries that expressed their desire to join NATO, i. e. Hungary, Czech Republic and Poland. These three nations were invited to start the membership negotiations in Madrid in 1997, during the North Atlantic Council meeting, and entered the Alliance in the spring 1999. The Madrid Declaration on Euro-Atlantic Security and Cooperation mentioned Slovenia as one of the potential candidates for the second round of NATO enlargement after the end of Cold War.<sup>10</sup> The Washington Declaration, issued by the Heads of State and governments participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NATO, emphasized the Alliance remained 'open to all European democracies, regardless of geography, willing and able to meet the responsibilities of membership, and whose inclusion would enhance overall security and stability in Europe'.<sup>11</sup> None of the potential members was explicitly mentioned in the document. At the same time, the Washington Summit adopted the document 'Membership Action Plan', the programme of activities, which should assist aspiring countries in their preparations for possible future membership. Although the sceptics doubt there will be a second round of enlargement, senior political representatives of NATO countries and NATO officials emphasize, that the enlargement is a process, composed of several phases, and all countries which fully meet the membership criteria and conditions, will be invited to join NATO.

The general impression received by the observer of the internal social and political scene in Slovenia is that NATO membership is supported by all security policy-

making actors, as various state institutions, political parties, civil society and public, or at least that no actor is explicitly opposed to the project.

The political state displayed a great enthusiasm about NATO membership in official documents and public statements, but there is still a lot of work to be done:

1) more analytic and systematic approach to the foreign and security policy in order to avoid senseless initiatives like the one on the abolition of nuclear weapons triggered in United Nations, despite the fact, NATO understands nuclear weapons as an important factor of deterrence; or the hesitation during the Kosovo crises in Autumn 1998 when Slovenia was asked by NATO to provide the permission for NATO aircraft to fly over the territory of Slovenia if needed;

2) more substantial and concrete work in the security, defence and military fields, like the formulation of the White Paper on defence and other important legal documents, the reform of the defence system and especially the armed forces from their still predominantly "territorial" to "operational" nature, in order to be able to co-operate in international military campaigns.

An impression, made according to all official statements of parliamentary political parties, is that the Slovenian political scene as a whole is genuinely in favour of Slovenia joining the Western integration processes, including NATO. Behind these general preferences there are discrepancies between statements and actual behaviour, in the intensity of working towards acceptance, in measuring the effects of NATO enlargement, and in expected procedures of joining the Alliance:

Institutions and individual members of civil society are a good deal more critical than the representatives of political parties towards the idea of Slovenia's membership of NATO. There is practically no uncritical and apologist advocacy of membership in the analysed material. If we group and generalize their ideas we see that one group argues that Slovenian membership of NATO is ideologically unacceptable, a second group is concerned about the sovereignty of the state and national identity, while a third group warns that for the political elite NATO membership is primarily of symbolic importance, and a fourth is afraid that the costs of membership will be too high.

Public opinion polls indicated that a relative majority of those surveyed were in favour of reducing or preserving the level of defence spending with regard to military defence. Seventy per cent of those interviewed either fully or partially opposed the increase of defence spending due to NATO membership. Despite that the support for NATO membership in Slovenian public was relatively high in years 1996–1999, declined slightly below 50 per cent in the beginning of 2001 for the first time in recent years, while in mid

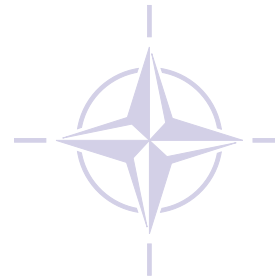
2001 the support increased again well over 50 per cent.

The attitude of the political and state elite toward potential membership of Slovenia in NATO was mainly a positive one, and in conformity with the attitude of the institution or organisation they represented. The arguments for, and at the same time the most positive effects of membership, could be summarised as follows: definite inclusion of the country into Europe and Western society, strengthening of democratic values, enhanced national security and economic prosperity. Beside the positive effects, the respondents identified negative ones, as well: partial loss of sovereignty, increased international security obligations and in this context possible casualties of Slovenian soldiers abroad, degradation of environment and increased defence costs. Slovenia fulfils all basic membership criteria set by NATO, but the decision whom to invite in the Alliance is expected to be a political one.

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Sources:

- 1 Facts about Slovenia: Defence. Ministry of Defence 1998.
- 2 Madrid Declaration on Euro-Atlantic Security and Cooperation, Madrid, 8–9 VII 1997.
- 3 – Malešič, Marjan. 2000. Slovenian Security Policy and NATO. Groningen: University of Groningen, CESS.
- 4 – Slovenian public opinion data from 1994 to 2001. Ljubljana: Institute of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana.
- 5 – The Washington Declaration, Washington D.C., 23rd and 24th April 1999.
- 6 – Žabkar, Anton. Geostrategski položaj Slovenije v 20. stoletju (Geostrategic position of Slovenia in 20th century). A paper presented in the National Assembly in January 1999.
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- 8 12 e.g. National Strategy for Integration of the Republic of Slovenia into NATO, adopted by the Government of Republic of Slovenia on 26 February 1998.
- 9 13 It is interesting to note that the American Senate, while voting on the resolution for ratification of admission of Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic into NATO, on April 1998, tabled by 82 vs. 18 votes an Ashcroft amendment to make it clear that collective defence will remain at the heart of NATO's mission, rather than adopting a broader mission such as peacekeeping.
- 10 14 Summarised by the lecture of former US Ambassador to Slovenia Victor Jackovich, delivered to the post-graduate students of American Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana.
- 11 15 The SKD and SLS merged into one party in year 2000 but few months later one faction left and established a party named New Slovenia (NSi). It became a parliamentary party after the elections in October 2000. Concurrently, the Party of Slovenian Youth (SMS) entered the Parliament as a new one, as well.
- 12 16 The public opinion research we are relying on was carried out by the Institute of Social Sciences which operates under the wing of the Faculty of Social Sciences of Ljubljana University. The author of this article is himself a researcher from this Institute and took part in obtaining data.
- 13 17 According to Ministry of Defence figures 1.83 per cent of GDP in 1997 was earmarked for defence including investments in basic development programmes, military pensions and civil defence expenditure, 1.89 per cent in 1998 (Facts About Slovenia: Defence, April 1998) and 1.45 per cent in 2000.
- 14 18 The Law on Defence prohibits officers from being members of political parties and only allows them passive electoral rights (they may vote but they may not be elected).
- 15 19 In 1997 the Slovenian Army numbered 4,200 professionals (soldiers, officers and non-commissioned officers) and 5000–6000 conscripts. The total number at complete mobilisation (including the reserve) was 56,000 (Facts About Slovenia: Defence, April 1998).
- 16 20 The first set of questions referred to the personal attitude of the respondent toward potential NATO membership for Slovenia, argumentation of the attitude, the membership criteria set by NATO, and the positive and negative effects of potential NATO membership for Slovenia. The second set of questions referred to the attitude of the institution/organisation toward the possible membership of Slovenia to NATO, information and advisory processes that took place in the organisation/institution, the decision-making process, and the question of how to provide national security prior to Slovenia's potential membership in NATO.
- 17 21 Article 8 of the Madrid Declaration on Euro-Atlantic Security and Cooperation, Madrid, 8–9 VII 1997.
- 18 22 Article 8 of The Washington Declaration, Washington D.C., 23rd and 24th April 1999.



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