Slovakia's perspective on NATO

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1. Introduction

Within the framework of the analysis of the Slovak Republic (SR), we could say that the country is positioned in an area that has no steady geographic boundaries. The Slovak Republic located in Central Europe is a relatively small democratic state, with a market economy. This region was quite unstable in the past and it was not easy to delimit its boundaries. Only after World War II (WWII) was the territory of this region arranged in the form as we know it today. Multi-nationality, multi-ethnicity and multi-confessionality represented the main problems of this region, which significantly aroused mutual disagreements. According to Slovak philosopher and political scientist Jana Lasicová, disagreements and conflicts themselves arose "rather through language and identity than by means of mutual conflicts. The conflicts in this area were always related to the ambitions of bigger actors and not to the risk factors resulting from a specific regional origin" (Lasicová, 2006: 26).

The independent Slovak Republic1 was established as a successor state of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic on January 1, 1993. Previously, it existed primarily as a part of the Soviet Bloc, which determined its political direction, international orientation and economic dependence. After the breakdown of the Soviet Bloc, the country started to search its new orientation. The Slovak Republic has become an independent small country with limited natural and human resources, depending on neighboring states economically. The main factor, which influenced the future direction of Slovakia, was the orientation in cooperation with neighboring countries and countries of the European space (Kmeč et al., 2005). Slovakia, together with other Central European states, perceived the North Atlantic Treaty

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Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) as a reflection of values peculiar to the Western civilization which they sought to be part of, values similar to the non-implemented, but offered, Marshall Plan in the past. From an economic perspective, Slovakia focused on the European Union (EU), where it expected to achieve economic stability and prosperity: NATO was perceived from the security and military perspective as the key organization that might ensure Slovak independence in the future. On the other hand, in terms of raw materials and energy resources, it has been bound to cooperate with the Russian Federation. Slovakia was well aware of its linkage to a partner outside NATO and the EU. After its establishment, the Slovak Republic has also become an independent player in the field of security and an integral part of the security environment in Central Europe. From the beginning, the orientation of the country in the sphere of security focused on entrenching itself in the transatlantic security structures.\(^2\) Today, the Slovak Republic is a full member of NATO and the EU. These two organizations significantly determine the direction of Slovakia inter alia in security issues.

In the following text we will attempt to point out fundamental tasks that the state has had to solve within the scope of its obligations for survival of the nation and its territory and explain why the security task/function of the state is inevitable in the preservation of the state’s existence. Particular emphasis will be placed on internal political changes in coalitions and thus in the governance of the state since 1993. By means of analysis and comparison, the key aspects are defined that determine the development of the Slovak territory which influenced the changes in the state’s foreign policy orientation within the surveyed period. The article consists of three parts. The first outlines a brief historical overview with the emphasis on the key historical events that have influenced the contemporary European value orientation, as well as on the changes after the end of the Cold War. The second part deals with the problems related to the changes in governments and their value implications on the development of the security policy and to the Slovak membership in the EU and NATO. The final part focuses on the contemporary changes in the security policy that are influenced by diverse challenges as well as the crisis in Ukraine.

2. Slovakia’s perspective on European security – historical background

The establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic (CSR) after World War II depended on the Soviet Union (also USSR) from the very beginning and the sentiments of the population were strongly pro-Soviet. The exiled government did not markedly interfere with prepared changes that were worked out and implemented by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia according to the results of the election. The following text is divided into two parts. The first explains the development of the Slovak strategic orientation in the contemporary era through the prism of historical events. The second part is focused on the period after the Cold War and the return of Slovakia to the European security traditions.

2.1. Period of the Warsaw Pact membership

Czechoslovakia had tried at first to pursue the European value tradition, but the seizure of power by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia inhibited this trend. In 1948, the communist constitution was adopted, without changing the name of the state, and the state was renamed after an amendment to the constitution in 1960 becoming Czechoslovak Socialist Republic; this period of 1945–1989 was a period of the Soviet Union influence (Michálek, 1997: 28), which brought in many radical changes to the development of Slovak security. The most important change was represented by the role of the army in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic that was no longer focused on national defense, but on its belonging to the Eastern Bloc and the defense of the Soviet Bloc’s territory and ideology. The primary responsibility for the defense of the Socialist Fatherland was carried out by the Communist Party (Vojensko Politický Zápisník, 1989). All fundamental issues were solved in accordance with the political direction of the party line, and the armed forces of the state also operated on the basis of the party’s resolutions.

In the sphere of international activities, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic was a member of the security organization of the Warsaw Pact\(^3\) and the economic grouping of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA).\(^4\) During this period, the Soviet Union realized the fragility of a newly established security grouping of socialist countries, and therefore it was trying to build a common doctrine for the protection of socialism in all member states. The Warsaw Pact had a clear predominance in the number of conventional forces at the beginning of the conflict. Western Allies and, in particular, the US had nuclear capabilities. NATO itself did not have the capabilities for conventional war until the 1980s. If there had been a conflict or war, it would have been within the territory of Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic.

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\(^{2}\) The first milestone was represented by its accession to the United Nations (UN), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) – formerly the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), and the next orientation was determined by the Partnership for Peace program (P4P), and later the accession of the Slovak Republic to NATO and EU.

\(^{3}\) Warsaw Pact was established 14.05.1955, the members states were Soviet Union, Albania (withdrew in 1968), Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, East Germany (acceded in 1956), Poland and Romania.

\(^{4}\) Council for Mutual Economic Assistance was established 5–8.1.1949.
The only way to achieve relative stability in Central Europe was to ensure a high fighting capacity of the Warsaw Pact troops. Only later was it evident how risky the time of armament had been and what had resulted from the mutual “competition” between Western and Eastern countries (Horemuž, 2013: 85). The whole period of rivalry between two antagonistic blocs of the East and the West was characterized by mutual distrust and efforts to balance power between capitalism and socialism.

The Warsaw Treaty Organization was of great importance to the socialist countries, mainly because of its collective defense. However, the year 1968 became an important milestone for the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in connection with its membership in the Warsaw Pact — which troops entered the Czechoslovak territory and stayed until 1991. This invasion was caused by the liberal reform efforts of the Czechoslovak political leaders — Alexander Dubček, Ludvík Svoboda, Josef Smrkovský and Oldřich Černík — which was a cause of concern for the Brezhnev government which feared that the reform would lead to the weakening of the USSR’s power position in the Communist Bloc. These events of Slovak history have never been investigated, none of the representatives who requested intervention and caused the invasion, were brought to justice (Michálek, 2008). It proved the prudence and will of politicians and the director of the Armed Forces to respect first of all the internal security and not to intervene in social unrest in the times of crisis. In 1968, the impartiality and passivity of the Army were purposeful and pragmatic and it enabled them to avoid bloodshed and a potential outbreak of the civil war. At the same time, it was proved that the international forum deals with the problems of small states only when it is in the interest of the major powers.

On August 23 1968, in the aftermath of the intervention of the Warsaw Pact troops, the Czechoslovak issue was again on the table of the UN Security Council (Hájek, 1970). However, the USSR, US, Great Britain and France voted against the recognition of the intervention as the act of aggression. One of the reasons advocated especially by the US was that the intervention was regarded as an affair of the USSR. Moreover, in 1968 the US was dealing with its own foreign policy priority — strategic arms limitation and reduction (SALT), which it was unable to achieve without a positive attitude of the USSR. The issue of Czechoslovakia was removed from the agenda of the UN SC, which de facto legalized the intervention of the USSR and four other countries of the Warsaw Pact in terms of the valid norms of the international law (Pástor, 2004: 23).

The Warsaw Pact, as a security organization, justified its existence by the continuing Cold War. The period of détente had a short duration, but nonetheless, it laid the basis for ending the confrontation (the Geneva Conventions, the Helsinki CSCE Conference, the Paris Charter).

In order to understand Slovak strategic orientation, it is important to look backward. Slovak identity had a specific ability to enable the coexistence of Hungarian liberalism, Austrian conservatism and upper Hungarian (hence Slovak) national spirit since the 18th century. This inner identity was presented in Vienna and Budapest as a part of resistance, yet not at such a degree that would cause problems to the internal security of the monarchy (Rupnik, 1992). The idea of pan-Slavism was stronger than the national idea and it stemmed from the requirement to prevent the assimilation of the Slavic nations into the German identity of the Habsburg Empire and as the opposition to pan-Germanism. The idea of pan-Slavism was perceived as the alternative to the Slavic unity — not within the Habsburg Monarchy but under the protection of Russia. In spiritual terms, pan-Slavism stemmed from the ideology of Russian pan-Slavism, rejecting the Western cultural model; however, the strategic connotations of pan-Slavism were repugnant. When L. Stúr — a parliamentarian of the Hungarian assembly and an influential figure of the Slovak policy in the first half of the 19th century — placed Russia in the centre of attention of Slavs, he paradoxically caused a cleavage in the “Slavic reciprocity” (Stúr, 1993). Poland could not accept this concept given its vassal position in the czarist Russia and the Czech Republic inclined towards Austro-Slavism. Hungarian intelligence also perceived Russia as an enemy (especially after the defeat of the Hungarian revolution at Világos in 1849) and it had never belonged to the Slav nations in terms of their origin or sympathies (Rupnik, 1992).

From the historical perspective, Slovak policy experienced a period of orientation towards the USA and the West especially due to the activities initiated by Milan Rastislav Stefánik and Tomáš Garigue Masaryk. They led a proactive diplomacy and achieved sympathy from president Woodrow Wilson (Bútora, 2017). These activities contributed significantly to the establishment of an independent Czechoslovakia — a small Central European state which aspirations were appeased by the West.

The main features of the strategic culture have remained until today and they comprise: persistence of the idea of pan-Slavism within some groups of people as well as within some political parties, or the clash between the ideas of the East and West (individualism or even secessionism in opposition to the integration in transnational structures or the idea of a bridge between the East and the West); Slovak patriotism (eventually nationalism or even extremism that has been incorporated in the contemporary political and civil society); distrust towards the effectiveness of regional or global

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5 The USSR organized a series of conferences focused on stabilization in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, however despite the efforts, these talks were not successful and thus, the USSR intervened on the side of the regime (Michálek, 2008). They support their intervention with an invitation letter, in which representatives of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic demanded help in order to suppress counter-revolution in the country.

6 There were several reasons for removing the intervention from the UN SC agenda. Another reason besides the SALT negotiations stems from the European period of détente which was regarded in the years 1960—1970 as the pillar of the European and Euro-Atlantic security strategy. Moreover, there were internal political crises in several states of Western Europe related to student unrest. However, the most important reason concerns the preparation of the Helsinki conference and the change in the US foreign policy orientation “From Confrontation to Negotiation” (Davies, 2000: 137).
security (there were also several unsuccessful attempts during the Cold War to quell Russian influence and domination); persistence of the "spirit of time" and national pride with the emphasis on national values and the continuous necessity of a religious image.

2.2. End of the bipolar system — the return of Slovakia to the European security tradition

The collapse of bipolarity brought a new dimension to the development of international relations and started new processes that have continued to this day. The speech by M. Gorbachev on July 1989 at the Council of Europe may have been a significant breakthrough event, which signaled the deviation from the Brezhnev doctrine and renunciation on the influence of the satellitism of the USSR, but also the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in 1991, collapse of the USSR and the changes that emerged in reaction to the collapse of the bipolar system (Nagy and Kovács, 2006). In the CSSR, the discontent with the undemocratic regime, restrictions on human rights and civil freedoms culminated in non-violent protests against the regime in November 1989, known as the Velvet Revolution. It ultimately led to the elimination of the communist regime and a new government was established in December 1989. Slovakia became a part of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic (CSFR). These changes brought not only changes in the political arrangement, but also changes to the character of security and a new security orientation of the country. The post-Cold War era and the debate about the new orientation influenced the development of Slovakia and after the dissolution in 1993, Slovakia pursued ongoing reforms, although only formally. The Czech and Slovak Federal Republic had to deal with many problems after its establishment, and one of them was the removal of the Warsaw Pact troops from its territory (the troops maintained a presence in Slovakia after the invasion of 1968), which was successful only in 1991 (Dienstbier, 1999). The Czech and Slovak Federal Republic remained a member of the Warsaw Pact until mid-1991. Furthermore, 1991 was characterized by the extinction of the USSR, which created a new security arrangement in Europe and each of the states had to deal with this fact.

The ongoing debates in the political discourse were clearly anti-geopolitic, (Waisová, 2011) but ultimately, the ideas of resuming the European integration tradition prevailed. During the second half of the 20th century when the security agenda started to gain new contours, two developments in European security policy began to emerge. The first one developed institutionally from several types of military integration. It emerged in the immediate aftermath of the World War II and today, it is represented by NATO which is based on exclusive membership. NATO has trans-Atlantic dimension and by means of strategic conceptions it enlarges its operational base. Regardless of the US position in NATO, it may be still perceived as a European project, initiated by European states.

The second line of European security stemmed from economic integration. It is related to the creation of the EU, its establishment as an important international actor and the expansion of its territory. Yet, the expansion increased the risk of contact with unstable territories and provoked the need to establish and use the institute of civil crisis management. The latter would serve as a tool to eliminate non-military threats and risks and as an instrument of preventive diplomacy and post-conflict reconstruction (Ruzicka, 2013).

The European security is formally defined by conviction (as well as by the concrete security policies of NATO and the EU) as a security comprising three analytical levels that stem from the European value system.

1. Positive influence of the overall international environment;
2. Multilateral solution to the threats and crises in other parts of the world;
3. Solidary cooperation with the states that share the same ideals and interests.

The three analytical levels point to the flexibility of the Slovak European identity from the perspective of security interests as well as to the European legacy in line with the foreign policy of Milan Hodža, the first prime minister of Czechoslovakia.

At the same time, the new Czechoslovak political representation had to focus on the next foreign-political and security orientation of the country. There were three basic scenarios: 1) neutrality, 2) participation in existing structures, and 3) support of newly created structures, or the transformation of existing ones—CSCE/OSCE (Cottery, 1995). Soon after its establishment, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic attempted to join the Western European Union (WEU) and requested to join NATO. The CSFR saw NATO as a guarantor of its security. On the other hand, the position of Russia also found its legitimacy in the discourse. It was based especially on the maintenance of a strategic position (in particular in relation to the energy sector). Yet, today, we can still observe the maintenance of pragmatic contacts with Russia, which is not unique for Slovakia but it concerns other European states and possibly the US (Gabrizova, 2017). The change occurred in 1992 when separatist trends started in the common Federal state of Czech and Slovakia. This led to the creation of two independent republics in 1993. The Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic were confronted with difficult tasks such as the transformation of the country to the market economy, the establishment of a legal state and, the formation of its own security environment and national security policy. The division of Czechoslovakia occurred without any violation of internal security of the former as
well as the new states, which is one of the few such cases in the wider Central European region. Furthermore, the newly created republics security orientation gravitated toward soft security.7

CSFR ultimately decided to join the ongoing process of integration within the Euro-Atlantic area. The decision to seek security guarantees in the West stemmed first of all from the negative historical experience during the period when Czechoslovakia was provided the security guarantees by the USSR. At the same time, the political elites recognized a significant economic gap in comparison to the Western states as a result of the centrally planned economy. Therefore, the economic liberalization, open market, and pro-Western integration seemed like the most suitable alternatives that would enable prosperity and strengthen security and improve living standards. However, it was questionable, how the public would accept the fact that the state strives to integrate into the trans-Atlantic organization with the US as its driving force, while the US represented the ideological enemy of the Soviet Bloc that Czechoslovakia had been, until recently a part of.

Yet, the United States of America emerged from the Cold War as the most powerful state and only a system of collective security under the auspices of the US could have provided the CSFR with the security guarantees it required. The state had to assure first of all its own survival and protect its sovereignty and vital interests, and these assurances were offered by the collective security within NATO, which was considered the most effective security organization in the Euro-Atlantic area (Curda and Zatlkoj, 2003). The integration into the European and trans-Atlantic structures began to be perceived as the only rational choice for the CSFR striving to fill the security vacuum that emerged in Central Europe after the collapse of the bipolar structure.

3. From ambivalence to integration - Slovak Republic as a new actor

In 1993, the first steps to create an independent Slovak Republic were officially taken, and political leaders had to independently solve the issue of a national security policy. The first years of independence were typical of formation of an independent statehood. After adopting the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, first norms and laws, it was necessary to develop legislation aimed at the state’s security policy, then establish the state’s army and security forces. With respect to the geopolitical status of the country, political representation decided to channel its steps according to the trend defined by the discourse that predominated after the collapse of the bipolar division of the world. It opted for participation in the existing international organizations (NATO and EU) from which the country could benefit. In the area of security, the then government of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (MFDS) headed by Vladimír Mečiar declared an effort to enter NATO and the EU. The following text is divided into two basic subchapters that correspond to development in the modern history of the Slovak Republic in the security sphere. The first period of 1994–1998 is characterized by indecision and negative internal political development, the period of 1998–2004 by deep reforms in society as well as in security policy.


In the security sphere, the government led by Vladimír Mečiar declared an effort to accede to NATO and the EU, and also worked out the first documents. During the period of 1994–1998, three main security doctrines originated determining the direction of Slovakia in the following years: 1) The Defence Doctrine of the Slovak Republic was adopted in 1994, 2) The Basic Objectives and Principles of the Slovak Republic’s National Security adopted in 1996, and 3) The National Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic (1996). The first two documents, in their nature and context, expressed the opinions of former political representation regarding the security issues of the Slovak Republic as well as its status and its future direction. The last document has never been published and is of confidential nature, and therefore it is not possible to analyse it.

While the period between 1994 and 1998 was characterized by unfavorable internal political development, which also resulted in international isolation. The first statements of new Slovak political representation revealed interest to integrate into the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union. The program statement of the government from 1994 defines the integration of the Slovak Republic in the European and trans-Atlantic structures as the goal of the foreign policy of the state. The Defence doctrine of the Slovak Republic from 1994 declares that: “the Slovak Republic considers NATO the decisive, the most effectively functioning security structure on the European continent with the trans-Atlantic dimension,” and it states that “the main orientation of the security policy of the Slovak Republic consists of acquisition of full membership in NATO” (Obranná doktrína SR, 1994). The doctrine defines the

7 Meanwhile in this turbulent period, while the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic was still a unified country it tried to lead its security policy in a new direction; many new laws were adopted, amended and modified. Specifically those that regulated the change and deletion of everything that was “socialist”, including the leading role of the Communist Party. In the sphere of security, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic took the necessary steps to adopt a military doctrine that was based on the establishment of an independent state. It was interesting that the state did not declare an aim to join any military bloc, and efforts to preserve neutrality were obvious from the documents as a whole, especially from the Military Doctrine of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic. The UN was understood as the main pillar of international law, and with respect to further development of guarantee for its security, the CSFR refers to the CSCE (now OSCE) (Vojenská doktrína ČSFR, 1991). The CSFR wanted to build its army for the purpose of security, defence, and claim responsibility for European secure environment.
participation in the program Partnership for Peace as one of the instruments to achieve this membership. However, after the elections of 1994 when a new coalition government was established, the first discrepancies emerged which ultimately hindered the established foreign policy objective. Several members of the Slovak National Party and the Union of Workers of Slovakia, which were in the government of 1994–1998 together with the MFDS, openly disapproved the integration in NATO. They claimed that NATO enlargement may lead to destabilization of the continent and Slovakia should instead remain neutral.

It was an ambivalent attempt of political leaders to create a bridge between East and West (Bútora and Šebej, 1998). In 1994, the Slovak Republic acceded to the program Partnership for Peace, which was a good example of practical cooperation between member countries and partner countries - the prospective members of NATO. Its main objective was to create a mechanism that would help the acceding countries with the transformation of armed forces so that they would be able to participate in joint operations and missions. The Slovak Republic declared its desire to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization by signing the Framework Document (and by submission of the Presentation Document) in 1994. Subsequently, in 1995 the Individual Programme of the Partnership for Peace was approved that operates on a voluntary basis of a country to participate in the transformation of the security and defence policy in accordance with the standards of NATO’s member states (Kmeč et al., 2005). Based on this document, each of the countries chose basic tasks, according to the possibilities and capabilities which the country would like to accomplish during the next two years, which was followed by reconsideration (strengths and weaknesses) and the preparation of a new individual program.

In 1997, Slovakia became a member of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council that functioned as an official parliamentary institution as well as a discussion forum where also non-members could participate and acquire valuable experience in spheres such as defence planning, civil emergency planning in the events of disasters, and others. As mentioned above, the accomplishment of tasks was not expected and in July 1997 Slovakia was excluded from the first round of NATO enlargement at the Madrid Summit - Slovakia was not even mentioned as a primary candidate for the second round of enlargement. The year 1997, was a turning point for the Slovak Republic, because discussion regarding the possibility of accession to NATO peaked, but that year Slovakia also presented efforts to integrate into the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which some politicians considered to be contradictory to the integration into the EU and NATO (Ministerstvo obrany Slovenskej republiky, 1998). Slovakia was seen by them as a bridge between East and West (efforts of neutrality were also supported). Criticism from abroad concerned not only the lack of democracy but Slovakia was discredited by a lack of transparency during the investigation of the kidnapping of the president’s son, Michal Kováč Jr., and the murder of ex-police officer involved in the case Röber Remiáš. Also the thwarted referendum in February 1997 on the country’s accession to NATO was not accepted positively by foreign partners (Rybár, 2011: 165).

Based on the detailed analysis and the declaratory nature of three basic documents mentioned above, it becomes obvious that the Slovak representation itself struggled with the issue of orientation in the security sphere. Though it developed activities to support the membership of Slovakia in NATO and the EU at the international level, there was a significant disagreement among politicians about Slovakia’s further orientation in the security-political direction, which ultimately resulted in the rejection of integration trends from the external environment.

The first important document which determined the primary direction of Slovakia in the area of security, was introduced by the Defence Doctrine of the Slovak Republic issued in 1994.8 The document itself was unique. It presented the first definitions of security, national goals (interests) of the Slovak Republic, and also the tools of how to achieve them. The emphasis was on achieving membership in NATO and the EU as important guarantors of security in Europe, and it also mentioned the need to build up the European model of security.

During this period, the political representatives preferred to participate in existing security structures that could show new dynamics and quality under the influence of new members. The increase in the country’s internal stability in the form of external guarantees for security was considered the greatest advantage, because a smaller country could rely on the resources of the other members in the Alliance (Nečas and Ivančík, 2011). It was through the Alliance that the countries saw the possibility of achieving their national security interests using collective efforts. The possibility of common consultations was understood by new countries as an opportunity to transform the existing structures bringing to them new quality. The accession of new members opened them up to new opportunities, but also some problems, which the new members understood as a challenge for their participation in the formation of a new European security system, either through a common

8 This document is comprised of five chapters that mentioned Slovakia as a new actor in the international system, which does not feel threatened by anyone, and which will build up its security policy and defence to maintain its own national security as well as the security of the region in Europe where it is located. The majority of the document dealt with the characteristics of the terminology connected with the security that the Slovak Republic, as a new state, needed to define. The document expressed the intention to participate in the program of Partnership for Peace, which is understood as a step towards further strengthening relations among NATO countries and their partners in Central and Eastern Europe; this support should have led to full membership in NATO. Here, Slovakia also pointed to the necessity of building a new security system in Europe that should have been achieved through the state’s membership in the EU as well as in WEU. Further, in the document, Slovakia set out principles for achieving its main objectives, namely the right to prepare the state’s defence securing its independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and borders’ inviolability. The document also presented the structure of the Slovak Armed Forces, and an effort for its professionalization is mentioned for the first time (Obranná doktrína Slovenskej republiky, 1994).
forum, coordinated cooperation or direct involvement in several peacekeeping operations of the Alliance. This document was also important, because it formulated the objectives and tasks of the Slovak Republic for the future so that it might negate the concerns of NATO skeptics who were afraid that the accession of new members from the former Eastern Bloc would weaken NATO’s cohesion.

Another important document that followed the first one was the Basic Objectives and Principles of the Slovak Republic’s National Security, adopted in 1996. The document neither specified how to achieve these interests nor expressed any effort of acceding to NATO, but it emphasized the need to build a new model of European security. It was stated in the document that “the situation that developed in Europe, particularly in the Slovak Republic, required the building of a principally new complex system of its security as well as the security of individual states.” The Basic Objectives and Principles of the National Security of the Slovak Republic could be viewed as “the first security strategy of the Slovak Republic”. The period from the adoption of the Defence Doctrine of the Slovak Republic to the Basic Objectives and Principles of the National Security of the Slovak Republic was not a breaking point, but both documents presented an entirely different opinion in regard to the country’s security, specifically in the area of integration into international organizations. This shift can be primarily associated with the search for a security identity - looking for the strategic culture of a new state. Even though the Individual Program of the Partnership for Peace was being accomplished, talks about a possible accession to NATO in 1999 continued, though the internal political situation started to differ diametrically from the external actions.

Perhaps, it was the awareness of the difficulty of the transformation process of existing structures, outlined in the first document, that foreshadowed the new direction of the country in the security sphere developed in the second document. Looking for new security structures in Europe was in progress as a form of opposition to the geopolitical influence of the United States of America (such as the formation of defence and security structures in the current EU during the previous 15 years - from the summit in St. Malo in 1998), and thus, new and future members of NATO that were affected by the bloc division to a large extent, understood the rapid integration of the former bloc enemies as not an appropriate step, and began to consider the possibility and benefits of creating a new security system in Europe that would be ensured by another organization.


The suspension of the accession of the NATO process also continued during the first half of 1998, the loss of trust by foreign partners continued, and the first negative reactions from both organizations, NATO and the European Commission as representatives of the EU, appeared. Nevertheless, the upcoming election indicated a possible turn to a new direction. The change in internal political development was signaled by the elections in September 1998, when the leadership of country was taken over by Mikuláš Dzurinda, new prime minister from Slovak Democratic and Christian Union. This step brought changes not only in the internal political development of the country, but also set the transatlantic direction in the security sphere. Thus, at that time, there was a revival of negotiations on the accession of Slovakia to the EU and NATO.

The new prime minister faced important decisions: to change the attitude of partners who might markedly influence the participation of Slovakia in Western structures; to present the new direction of the country in strategic security documents; to complete the transformation of the army of the Slovak Republic at the required level; and to create conditions for public discourse about the orientation of Slovakia towards transatlantic structures (Juza and Weiss, 2000). These were the issues that echoed in the security policy of the first Mikuláš Dzurinda’s government, and during the first visit in Brussels and Vienna political leaders presented their unambiguous attitude to integration into the EU and NATO structures. Foreign partners accepted it with reservations, because they were also given guarantees from the previous prime minister, but in fact, the possibilities of opposite orientation were also opened at that time (the above mentioned accession to the CIS). An important event that resulted in a better understanding by foreign partners that the Slovak Republic was ready to begin the accession process, was the consistent attitude of representatives of the Slovak Republic during the Kosovo crisis in 1999 (Kmeč et al., 2005). In 1999, after the Washington Summit, Slovakia joined the

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9 The documents comprises of three main chapters, specifically expressing the national interests of the Slovak Republic. For the most part, this is a theoretical document. The first chapter sets the stage for the following national interests: sovereignty, territorial integrity, the inviolability of borders, security, economic prosperity, social stability and international recognition. They defined the possibility of achieving them as primarily determined by internal and external factors that either positively or negatively affected the implementation of these national interests. In the second chapter, the document deals with the definition of the terms of national security, security policy, the objective of national security and the principles of national security of the Slovak Republic. The third chapter comprises final provisions. The intention to define the objectives and principles of the national security of the Slovak Republic was important, because the Slovak Republic, as a new state, had to strengthen its own security structures, but they depended on the strengthening of overall political structures. This was mainly about the adoption of legal norms that would specifically regulate the position of the state in terms of defined documents. It was followed by the establishment of institutions at central, regional and local levels that should have protected the needs and objectives defined in the national interest. Next, it was necessary to define the system of tools that would legislatively influence all the components of internal policy, strengthen positive trends and eliminate negative trends (Základné ciele a zásady národnej bezpečnosti Slovenskej republiky, 1996). Under the ongoing transformation process, these new institutions, legislation and their tools were interconnected with rebuilding technical and social infrastructure, which caused many social problems. Therefore, it is necessary to see this document as one of the supporting tools which adoption was closely linked with future long-term development.
Membership Action Plan - MAP, which offered the country the possibility of further cooperation within the future membership in NATO. This document was presented as the so-called roadmap that highlighted the shortcomings of the country, and the identification of issues that needed to be changed or eliminated. This tool offered the country responses to issues that must be changed, modified or completed so that membership in NATO would become a reality. Furthermore, in 1999, Slovakia for the first time participated in the Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina that was conducted under the umbrella of NATO. The years 2000 and 2001 were marked by the spirit of reforms, positive statements from foreign partners, but also negative statements and reports from abroad about the state of reforms in Slovakia in the security sphere and defence policy. On the one hand, there was a positive presentation and statement from the Slovak political representatives, but on the other hand, there was not a positive public opinion of the accession to NATO. The reform of the Slovak Army lagged behind, and existed only in declaratory statements of politicians, and a valid orientation was still present in strategic documents from the past. Therefore, the second Mikuláš Dzurinda’s government faced major tasks – the transformation of the Slovak Republic Army; the formulation of a new documents of the Slovak Republic - there only existed documents from 2001 as the Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic, the Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic10, the Military Strategy of the Slovak Republic11; or the gradual reconsideration of orientation only of the US, and the orientation towards the European security and defence structures (ESDP).12

All documents, the Defence Strategy and the Military Strategy of the Slovak Republic, worked out possibilities of the practical implementation of the objectives referred to the Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic in 2001, and thus, the shortcomings criticised by experts from NATO member states were eliminated from the so-called Garrett Study on the complex state of the Armed Forces of Slovak Republic in 2000. All three documents presented the interest of Slovakia in accession to NATO, but on the other hand, it should be emphasized that the processing of these strategic security documents represented actual responses to reservations from abroad, as some formulations of these strategies only seem to meet the obligations as required by foreign partners.

In 2002, the Prague Summit was held to decide which of seven countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) would receive an invitation to NATO accession in the second round of enlargement. However, in early 2003, Iraq became a topical issue, and Slovakia had to assume an attitude corresponding to the resolution of the United Nations Security Council. The Slovak Republic sent abroad 75 soldiers who formally had a mandate for the area of Kuwait, to investigate the treasonable suspicion that weapons of mass destruction may have been used, they were allowed to enter the territory of Iraq (Ondrejcsák, 2005). Subsequently in 2003, the ratification process of the Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty on the Accession of the Slovak Republic started in each of member country of NATO. The process was completed on March 29, 2004 when Slovakia was admitted as a member of NATO (Lasícová et al., 2009).

As we mentioned above, the years between 1994 and 1998 were not favourite for the Slovak Republic in terms of efforts to integrate Slovakia into the European and transatlantic structures. The change after 1998 renewed efforts and negotiations on further development. The most problematic issue was to restore foreign partners’ trust, and the government of Mikuláš Dzurinda succeeded.

In terms of conceptual documents, it was the first important step to ensure the possibility for the Slovak Republic to enter into the alliance with other states’ constitutionally, specifically in the amendment of the Constitution of 2001. This

10 The Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic 2001 adopted within the complex of new documents, and with the emphasis on strategic aim of the country to fulfil the criteria for the accession to NATO. The aim of the document is to identify the military and political aspects of the security environment and to define threats and risks to Slovakia resulting from it. The main task of the defined strategic review of defence is to create the structures of Slovak Armed Forces that would be able to ensure the internal defence of Slovakia as well as its participation in international operations. The task, determined in reference to the Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic 2001, is to work out the Concept of the Security System in Slovakia. This document determines the basic direction within the defence policy of the Slovak Republic and the strategy of defence of the Slovak Republic with respect to the transformation of Slovakia for the accession to NATO, as the country bound itself to fulfil basic politico-military criteria. As a matter of interest, this document as well as other documents from 2001 was only adopted after criticism from NATO when the reform of the army and preparation for Slovakia’s membership in NATO between 1998 and 2000, took place regardless of security documents valid at that time. The main difference from the previous defence doctrine of 1994 lies in the exact definition of Slovakia’s interests in connection with entry into NATO, and methods and ways of adaptation to NATO standards so that the Army of the Slovak Republic could become a full member of the collective defence of the Alliance. All these statements in the Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic in 2001 are aimed at ensuring the reform of the Army of the Slovak Republic and defence policy as a whole with the clear aim of Slovakia’s accession to NATO (Obranná strategia SR, 2001; Bezpečnostná strategia SR, 2001).
11 The Military Strategy was the last adopted document that preceded the admission of the Slovak Republic to NATO that described the determination, mission and tasks of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic. As we mentioned above, the Military Strategy of the Slovak Republic is one of the sectoral strategies that assisted the fulfilment of major national security interests as defined in the Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic, and worked out the strategy in a specific segment. The Military Strategy of the Slovak Republic in 2001 was in particular focused on the fulfilment of NATO’s requirements with respect to professionalism and modernisation, that is, the restructuring of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic in accordance with NATO’s requirements. Specialization and professionalization were determined as the main objectives of the new Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic. The strategy also defines the main military threats of the Slovak Republic in connection with the possibility of armed conflict. Within the framework of non-military threats, it primarily focuses on those threats that may require the intervention of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, to eliminate them or to reduce the consequences - such as ecological or natural disasters. Among other things, the Slovak Republic Military Strategy of 2001 sets the direction, mission and tasks of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic so that their capabilities, structure, training, and readiness might fulfil NATO’s standards. The essential points of strategy also included the planning of defence and in particular the specifications of resources – financial and material. The Military Strategy is a document that works out the Security Strategy and the Defence Strategy, and sets the direction for members of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic (Vojenská doktrína SR, 2001).
12 Now known as Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).
amendment enabled the Slovak political representation to accede to NATO without previous necessity to hold a referendum on this issue. After the resumption, negotiations and invitations to join NATO and the EU, there was another and similarly important task, to create new presentation documents in the security sphere, that is, to adopt the Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic 2001. For the first time in the history of the existence of the Slovak Republic, this strategy resulted in a shift in the formation of the security and defence policy of the Slovak Republic, as the main emphasis is placed on the proclamation of integration into NATO and the EU as a vital interest of the Slovak Republic. Compared to the previous document - the Basic Objectives and Principles of the National Security of the Slovak Republic - it reflects a shift in the definition of the national interest of the Slovak Republic that is defined by means of vital interests and important interests. It states the first comprehensive analysis of the security environment as well as the definition of fundamental problems and threats for Slovakia.

4. Security policy of Slovakia after 2004

Significant changes in the development of security policy of the Slovak Republic occurred after accession into NATO and the EU. At that time, Slovakia had to determine its status and give opinions of the processes taking place in both international organizations and of intensified processes in the sphere of ESDP, and to take an attitude to various disagreements among NATO’s individual members. After election in September 1998, the Slovak political representation defined itself as supporters of the US as its strategic partner. As we mentioned above, the gradual strengthening of ESDP instruments (for example, “battlegroup” units) required from all countries, gradual integration, and thus, Slovakia had to deal with the issue of duplicate military structures that could also be used for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as well as the European Union. The new requirements for resource, material and staff were specified. Then, the Istanbul summit in 2004 set additional requirements for the Slovak Armed Forces (for example, the reinforcement of troops in Afghanistan, and aid for newly acceding countries) that the country had to ensure. During this period, documents relating to security were revised, as they had to be adapted to new conditions under which Slovakia started to operate. At this juncture, we can mention two important documents that determined further orientation. The Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic in 2005 and the Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic in 2005, they both were adopted in 2005.

The following text is divided into two subchapters. The first is focused on the period after 2004 until the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis. In 2004, the country successfully completed the process of accession into the EU and NATO, which today is typical of the gradual loss of part of sovereignty in some areas. The second part deals with the period after the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis. It brings up the question of the future context and its influence upon the direction of national Security.

4.1. New direction of Slovakia’s foreign and security policy

A more fundamental change should have occurred after the election in 2006, when Robert Fico from the Direction - Social Democracy, became the prime minister. He indicated by his strong campaign rhetoric the removal of the pro-American approach and orientation to transatlantic security in the European model of security (to distinguish himself from opposition parties). This attitude was strengthened by the coalition with the former Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar and the nationalist and coalition partner Jan Slota from Slovak National Party (SNP). In some cases, this event brought very negative reactions from foreign partners who expressed concerns about the inconsistencies of the political developments during the previous government (1994–1998) of these two politicians. During this period, relations between the Slovak Republic and

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13 The Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic of 2005 was the conceptual document in the field of security adopted after accession to NATO and the EU (as well as after the adoption of the European Security Strategy of 2005). This document presented the attitude of Slovakia to the issues of transatlantic cooperation and security (Bezpečnostná strategia SR, 2005). The preparation of this document was launched almost immediately after Slovakia’s accession to NATO and the EU, and the preparation of a new Security Strategy was the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - unlike the previous one that was developed under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and security experts. In this case, the preparation and implementation took into account the views of expert teams from the third sector and non-governmental organizations such as Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SPPA), Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs (CENAA) and others. The major change of this period was the change of understanding - from the protection of the country’s own territory, to the protection and defence of the Alliance’s and the EU’s interests; that is, the defence of security interests within the global security environment. Maybe that is the reason why we can see a significant influence of the Alliance’s Strategic Concept of 1999 and the European Security Strategy of 2003, as these documents represented framework documents for the authors.

14 The Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic from 2005 became one of the first prepared documents within the amendment after Slovakia’s accession to NATO and the EU, and it should have replaced the two previous documents - the Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic of 2001 and the Military Strategy of 2001. The strategy was worked out by the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, similarly as its previous version (Obranná strategia SR, 2005). The strategy has brought expected changes especially in the area of the defence of the Slovak Republic, defined new capabilities for operations of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic in the NATO mission, and the defence was subordinated to the collective defence of the Alliance. The main priorities of the Slovak Republic include such capacities of the Armed Forces of Slovak Republic that would come under the commitments of NATO and the EU. Figuratively, this commitment can be regarded as a declaration that the Slovak Republic would only create such capacities that NATO or the EU would determine, so that they might be compatible and usable in multinational missions and operations, and the Slovak Republic binds itself and determines the methods of how the armed forces would be used in missions outside the country.

15 In the year 2005 Act No.346/2005 Coll. was adopted regarding the state service of professional soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, that brought a fundamental ideological change, that is, the professionalization of the Armed Forces of Slovak Republic. The main task was the gradual removal of conscription and full professionalization beginning in 2006.
Hungary deteriorated. The statements and actions of the representatives of the political elite proved to be strongly populist in the end. A slight deviation occurred in the clearly previous pro-American stance, but significant changes did not occur, and political representation had only modified the ongoing processes within the framework of both organizations. Again, the ruling elite pointed to possibilities not only associated with pro-Western orientation.

The next coalition government led by pro-transatlantic Slovak Democratic and Christian Union by Iveta Radicova whose term only lasted two years, and she did not shape security and defence policy of the country to a large extent. First of all, she had to mainly deal with developing financial and economic crises, and to face problems related to the amount of financial resources allocated for the defence of the Slovak Republic. During this period, the process of the Strategic Defence Review started, which brought a basic conclusion – that is, to ensure the compliance of resources with the political ambitions of the state. It was found out that in 2010, the level of defence expenditures was only at the level of 1.1% of GDP. This imbalance was nothing new as Slovakia allocated sufficient resources to the defence neither the previous nor the following years. The trend is serious especially from the long-term perspective as the level of resources disables to prepare soldiers sufficiently and to fulfil commitments.

The short period of Iveta Radicova’s government was replaced after the elections in 2012 by the second government of Robert Fico. However, his government did only minor changes in the area of defence and security and no real reforms there were required. Only in 2013, the process of Strategic Defence Review was accomplished and the White Paper on Defence of the Slovak Republic was adopted (later updated in 2016). This document stemmed from the Outcomes of the Strategic Defence Review, it described the current state of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic and provided potential scenarios for future development.

The following one-party government of Robert Fico after 2012 defined the orientation of the security policy in relation to decreasing defence expenditures and especially the orientation of Slovakia in relation to the European security architecture.

4.2. Slovak security from the perspective of Ukraine crisis and its aftermath

Last but not least, the development of the Slovak security policy has been influenced by the conflict in Ukraine which started in 2017, this needs to be dealt with by the contemporary political representation. However, there is an ambivalent attitude among representatives towards this crisis and its origins, and especially towards its solution, which do not always comply with the attitude of representatives of other European states. The ambivalence reflects pro-Eastern features of the Slovak strategic culture. The official state documents reveal also the advocacy of political way of finding a solution during any phase of the ongoing conflict as well as the ambivalent attitude towards the sanctions imposed by the EU on the Russian Federation (Zameranie zahraničnej a europskej …. 2015: 14; Horemuž, 2017). All of these above-mentioned problems of the security policy of the Slovak Republic point to the major problem — the ignorance of the security policy by political representation. It is imperative to change the position on defence funding, to define a clear stance towards the crisis in Ukraine and its origins and to define priorities.

The elections in 2017 represent an important milestone. The Slovak National Party (SNP) headed by Andrej Danko became involved with Robert Fico’s government. Andrej Danko voiced concern in regard to defining the problematic relationship with Russia. In the Slovak political representation, there are currently two or three streams. The first one is represented by the president of the Slovak Republic Andrej Kiska who promotes strong ties with NATO and the EU. In between, there is the Prime Minister Robert Fico who adjusts his statements according to external circumstances. The last stream is represented by the head of the parliament, Andrej Danko, who favors strategic partnership with Russia. This was also reflected in his attitude towards the expulsion of Russian diplomats from the EU member states in March 2018, as well as the condemnation of the Syria chemical attack in April 2018. The subsequent political crisis in 2018 resulted in changes within the government and Peter Pellegrini, from Fico’s political party the Direction - Social Democracy, became the new Prime Minister. However, personnel changes involved only a few government positions, while the domestic as well as foreign orientation has for now remained the same.

The perception of Russia by the Slovak political elite is divergent, hence there is no clear and concise message to the public. This trend is not unique, the states of Central and Eastern Europe are divided. On the one hand, there is Poland and the Baltic states, where politicians and the public are clearly anti-Russian. These states perceive Russian geopolitical endeavours as existential threat. On the other hand, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary present a more pragmatic stance — ambiguous when it comes to political elites as well as the public. Although the Czech attitude toward Russia is currently perceived as the least defined, the president Milos Zeman has clear pro-Russian statements (Zgut et al., 2017). The pro-Russian policy of Hungarian prime minister, Viktor Orbán, can be also perceived as a “swing diplomacy” or a calculation given Hungarian energy and economic interests (Paks power plan). Currently, the Central European states strictly follow the European line, hence they promote territorial integrity of Ukraine and support sanctions against Russia. Sanctions are one of

16 Slovakia as a NATO member state is committed to allocate annually 2% of GDP to the defence.
17 A political and social crisis emerged in reaction to the murder of investigative journalist Jan Kuciak and his fiancée. His last story pointed to connections of political elites with organized crime and the Italian mafia. Mass civil protests were organized and demanded to derive political responsibility on various levels, especially on the post of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior.
18 The crisis in Ukraine revealed differences in the attitudes of the Visegrad countries towards the essence and nature of the crisis and towards the Russian federation. In this case, the Visegrad states currently diverge. If we were to place them on the axis from cooperation to conflict, both poles would be present in central Europe. Hungary is perceived by many analysts as a pro-Russian oriented country, while Poland, on the other hand, regards Russia as a source and origin of the overall conflict. In between, there are the Czech Republic and Slovakia, that oscillate between the two poles according to current situation and defined priorities. This ambivalence is reinforced by divergent opinions within domestic political elites.
the ambiguities of the Central European states including Slovakia. Ambiguities can be found in the statements of the political representatives (especially Robert Fico’s Party) who tries to justify pragmatism in relation to Russia despite the current state of open hostilities between Russia and the West (Gabrižová, 2017). On the other hand, Robert Fico has been recently a strong proponent of the reinforced European integration (Fico: pre Slovensko … , 2017), which implies the necessity to cooperate with NATO. His successor Peter Pellegrini maintains similar attitudes and even followed up on the previous coalition agreement and government declaration. In April 2018, Peter Pellegrini gave a speech at the Assessment conference of the foreign and European policy of the Slovak Republic in 2017, and claimed that “the European Union has remained the basic living space for Slovakia and that we continue to perceive NATO as the basic pillar of our security, but at the same time he does not renounce on the cooperation with other parties” (Yar, 2018). Despite this, when Britain demanded from EU member states to expel Russian diplomats, he maintained a neutral stance in terms of foreign policy orientation, and up to now, not a single Russian diplomat has been expelled from Slovakia.

Unlike the political discourse, the strategic documents clearly reveal the position of Slovakia. Currently, both documents are still valid (Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic of 2005 and the Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic of 200519), despite the last initiative from 2016 to update them. Proposals of a new Security strategy, Defence strategy and Military strategy have been submitted in 2017, but they still need to be approved by the national parliament, hence they are not officially valid.20 One of the most recent and valid documents, the White Paper on Defence from 2016, deals with the defence of the Slovak Republic, it reacts to recent changes in the security environment and defines further threats to the state security including economic instability, violation of international law, decline in military expenditures, allocation of missile complexes nearby NATO member states, but also the spread of propaganda, information war or the use of hybrid means of leading combat operations (Biela kniha o obrane, 2016).

Since the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis, the Slovak society has divided on what attitude to assume towards Russia. Moreover, the political discussion on how to interpret the events in Ukraine is unintelligible for an ordinary Slovak person. The political thinking of some of the contemporary representatives. On the same day that Andrej Danko spoke in the Russian Duma about the significance of Russia for Slovakia and for the peace in the world, Andrej Kiska designated Russian propaganda as a threat during his plenary speech in the European parliament (Bútora, 2017). Several politicians, like František Šebej, for example, designated the speech of Andrej Danko as a violation of Slovak foreign policy. Within the society, the threat of Russia is perceived in softer terms. Only 23% of the population incline towards the USA while as many as 33% trust Russia.利亚/С20

Contemporary security of the Slovak Republic and its citizens is endangered not only by external but also internal threats such as radicalization and extremism which usually manifests itself when it comes to the attitude toward migrants and minorities but also in the question of the Slovak membership in the organizations of collective security. Hence, there is a threat of polarization of the society. Pro-Russian pan-Slavism from the second half of the 19th century has persisted in the political thinking of some of the contemporary representatives. On the same day that Andrej Danko spoke in the Russian Duma about the significance of Russia for Slovakia and for the peace in the world, Andrej Kiska designated Russian propaganda as a threat during his plenary speech in the European parliament (Bútora, 2017). Several politicians, like František Šebej, for example, designated the speech of Andrej Danko as a violation of Slovak foreign policy. Within the society, the threat of Russia is perceived in softer terms. Only 23% of the population incline towards the USA while as many as 33% trust Russia (Zgut et al., 2017).

This is a result of several internal factors comprising not only double-track and ambiguous statements of political representatives, but also the rise of extremist and populist parties in Slovakia, some of which are characterized by strong skepticism towards NATO or they even promote the exit of Slovakia from the EU and NATO. There are also several external

19 The document specifies the requirements that are imposed on the defence of the country and how further development of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic should be executed. The main purpose of both documents was to reflect the position and presentation of the transition from individual security to collective security, as well as to define the principles of security policy development within the new institutions of NATO and the EU.

20 The proposals of the strategic documents from 2017 demonstrate a new situation that Slovakia has encountered. Although the risk of military conflict has significantly decreased in the 21st century, the contemporary situation in Ukraine reveals that it has not been completely eliminated. The proposal of the new Security strategy 2017 points that for small state, is the most serious violations of the international order the disruption of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state, as in Ukraine. Moreover, Europe faces new threats as a result of the Arab Spring, civil war in Syria and conflict in Ukraine, which have contributed to the emergence of unstable states on the periphery of the EU and NATO, the increase in the threat of terrorist attacks and illegal migration. Although contemporary Slovakia is not imminently threatened by these threats, as a NATO and EU member state it is well aware of the increased security risk and new challenges that require the effective reaction. On the other hand, as a result of new threats and obligations of the Slovak Republic as a member state of organizations of collective security, there are increasing skeptical attitudes towards the Western integration structures within the society as well as increasing manifestation of ultra-nationalism, xenophobia, racism and intolerance” (Proposal - Bezpečnostná strategia SR, 2017).

21 Divergent attitudes towards the position and role of the USA and Russia has deeper roots. It began in relation to the establishment of anti-missile defence, it further continued during the Russo-Georgian war, and finally, it culminated during the Ukraine crisis. R. Fico categorically refused the participation of Slovakia in the anti-missile defence project (despite the fact, that Slovakia was not offered such an opportunity); already when the negotiations between the USA, the Czech Republic and Poland were only in the preparatory phase. During the Russo-Georgian war in 2008, Poland clearly defined Russian aggression as the origin of the conflict. On the other hand, Slovakia and especially the Prime Minister R. Fico claimed that situation is ambiguous. The following Polish initiative to establish a central European coalition to help Georgia has remained unheard from the part of Slovakia. A similar stance has been observed also in relation to the development in Ukraine (Goda 2015).
factors such as a warning regarding anti-Western propaganda in the proposal of the new Security Strategy from 2017. The aim of propaganda is to undermine democratic values, contest the history, create the impression that the EU and NATO are non-functional, to question the truth and finally to undermine the unity of Europe. The overall position of Slovakia towards Russia is softer and more pragmatic. Russia is not perceived as existential threat and in the context of relations with NATO, it is understood by several politicians and a part of the society especially as one of the tools of the European cooperation.

These threats have often transnational nature and they are experienced also by other states in the Euro-Atlantic area. Their elimination requires a coordinated approach and cooperation while the membership in international security organizations including NATO provides Slovakia with the instruments and possibilities to face individual threats more efficiently and in cooperation with other actors.

5. Conclusion

The evolution of the security policy of the Slovak Republic was predetermined by its location in Central Europe, which used to be often designed as cordon sanitaire — the area that creates a territorial barrier between empires and ideological blocs. At the beginning of the 21st century, the security situation in Europe radically changed, the so-called cordon sanitaire ceased to exist and instead, a new border-line emerged as a result of NATO expansion towards the states of the former Eastern bloc. From the beginning the foreign policy of the Slovak Republic was focused on integration and cooperation. The primary objectives of foreign policy have been fulfilled with the accession of the Slovak Republic to the UN and OSCE and later with admission of Slovakia to exclusive organizations of NATO and the EU.

The Slovak Republic is not an isolated state, it does not exist in a vacuum and it is a part of the Western democracy, that is why the country has adopted the values that enabled it to reach the contemporary stage of social evolution. Hence, it is important to protect these values in order to maintain the achieved standard. The threats Slovakia faces are not insignificant, but in terms of their scope, they threaten not only one particular state, but the whole region or continent. In addition to traditional military threats, the Slovaks encounter at the present other security problems, elimination/reduction of which often requires a coordinated approach of several states. Probably the major contemporary problem stems from the polarisation of the society in all areas including manifestations of ultra-nationalism, xenophobia, racism and intolerance, spread of propaganda, information warfare and a hybrid means of leading a war, as well as discussions regarding the approach towards migrants, minorities but also regarding the Slovak membership in the organizations of collective security. Yet, it is the membership in international security organizations such as the North Atlantic Alliance, which provides Slovakia with the instruments and possibilities to face individual threats more efficiently and in cooperation with other actors.

However, it is important to take into consideration the external issues that influence Slovak strategic orientation such as German and French reinforcement of the European integration in contrast to the declarations of Donald Trump contesting alliances with traditional partners and NATO significance. Hence, the reaction comprises stronger orientation towards the European pillar of defense materialized in PESCO. The NATO secretary general Jens Stoltenberg labelled PESCO as a tool of how to reinforce European defense, which would be thus beneficial not only for Europe but also for NATO (PESCO: Na Stálej struktúrovanej …, 2017).

During the NATO summit in July 2016, the partners agreed to strengthen collective defense on the Eastern borders of NATO: in Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, in reaction to the increased perception of Russia as a threat in the Baltic states and Poland (SITA, 2017). Slovakia also participates in the reinforced protection of the outside borders of NATO by its own units. It has thus expressed formally its foreign-policy orientation.

During the history, the territory of Slovakia became repeatedly and involuntary a part of other entities. However, the effort to survive when it comes to small states that have lost their independence during history, indicates the need to establish their independence through cooperation and integration. They were not striving for defense, yet for the survival of the nation and maintenance of national identity in the environment that tried to enforce assimilation. The period after the creation of independent Slovakia has been accompanied by ambivalence, the endeavors of anti-geopolitical orientation and oscillation. Pragmatism, that may ensure long-term survival, is characteristic for small states. The effort to ensure the security of small states has been focused inward — for the protection of their own cultural values, territory and identity so that the population survives in the assimilated environment. Yet, the defense of such a territory has been related to the question of sovereignty. Given these points, the major interest of small and weak states is the acquisition of status through mutual cooperation with strong allies.

References


Documents


