

SLOVENSKA VOJAŠKA POT V ZAVEZNIŠTVO**SLOVENIA'S MILITARY PATH TO THE ALLIANCE**

Povzetek Leta 2019, ko Severnoatlantsko zavezništvo oziroma Nato praznuje 70-letnico svojega obstoja, v Sloveniji zaznamujemo 15-letnico članstva. Pri tem je treba izpostaviti še dve obletnici, in sicer 25 let od začetkov mednarodnega vojaškega sodelovanja Slovenske vojske in 10. obletnico, odkar je bila sprejeta deklaracija o izpolnjevanju pogojev vojske za celovito integracijo v zavezništvo. Poleg tega ima slovenska vojaška pot v zavezništvo še nekaj drugih zanimivosti in posebnosti, ki jih predstavljamo v prispevku.

Ključne besede *Razvojna pot Slovenske vojske, pridruževanje, integracija, polnopravno članstvo, tranzicija, transformacija.*

Abstract In 2019, while the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is celebrating the 70th anniversary of its existence, Slovenia is celebrating the 15th anniversary of membership of it. Two more anniversaries must also be highlighted: namely the 25th anniversary of the beginning of international military cooperation by the Slovenian Armed Forces, and the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the declaration on the fulfilment of the conditions for the army to be fully integrated into the Alliance. In addition, the Slovenian military path to the Alliance has several other interesting facts and special features that are presented in this article. These include the relatively short transition from the army consisting solely of a military reserve and later a conscript army, to a professional army with a voluntary reserve; the accelerated and incomplete process of functional professionalization; and the successful integration into NATO, followed by rather irresponsible abandonment of the commitments given to the Alliance with regard to financial investments and capability building.

Key words *Development path of the Slovenian Armed Forces, accession, integration, full membership, transition, transformation.*

Introduction This contribution is based on the research for the book I wrote on the development of the Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF) and their pathway between transition and transformation (Šteiner, 2015). The article focuses on the characteristics of three milestones: the 25th anniversary of the beginning of the international military cooperation of the SAF; the 15th anniversary of full membership; and the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the declaration on the fulfilment of the conditions for the army to be fully integrated into the Alliance.

After the end of the Cold War, by 2019 NATO had enlarged from 16 to 29 member states¹. Slovenia has been a member since 2004, and belongs to the group of countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization which have small armed forces. The SAF belongs to the group of armies created after the formation of new democratic states at the end of the Cold War and bipolarity. This is not its only speciality, since the SAF has undergone a very dynamic development path in the past. This ended with the transition to a fully professional army, complemented by a voluntary reserve, and integration into NATO and the military structures of the EU. The country has entered into the Alliance, which is primarily a political and only later a defence and military process. In the case of Slovenia, the developmental processes of the SAF had many transformational characteristics during the transition period or afterwards. Because of this, the army has changed to a great extent in terms of its structure and organizational characteristics since the beginning of the 1990s, and is practically unrecognizable in comparison with its beginnings (Šteiner, 2015, p 20). At the same time, the developmental path of the SAF and Slovenian transformational changes are closely related to the Alliance and the process of integration into it, which will be demonstrated in the continuation of the article.

When we observe Slovenian military development (1991-2019) and its characteristics, we find an intertwining of the social, defence and military transition at the very beginning of the process of Slovenian independence and democratization. Moreover, we can ascertain the interdependence of these processes (Ibid, p 46) and cases where the developments in the military-defence area were steering developments in other social areas². The political, economic and social models, as well as those of defence, all changed. This intertwining also continued intensively in a third process, called Europeanization (Bebler, 2005). In the defence and military sphere, this is characterized by joining NATO, and the integration into NATO and the military structures of the EU. The process until accession in 2004 is called the association, and integration into NATO is the process that takes place after accession. The terms association and integration explain the entire period and both processes related to NATO (Šteiner, 2015, p 46).

¹ *The Republic of North Macedonia is in the process of ratification in national parliaments as the 30th member state of NATO.*

² *The fulfilment of conditions for participating in the Partnership for Peace (PfP), and later in the implementation of the Membership Action Plans (MAP), also had a significant impact on areas that are not just defence and military. See: Slovenia and NATO (<http://nato.gov.si/slo/>).*

1 25 YEARS OF SLOVENIAN INTERNATIONAL MILITARY COOPERATION

Firstly, the outstanding Slovenian transition milestones of its entry into the international environment, which were achieved predominantly by 2008, must be mentioned. On 22 May 1992, the Republic of Slovenia became the 176th member of the United Nations Organization, having joined the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) a short while earlier, on 24 March 1992, which at the same time marks the beginning of Slovenia's entry into international and global security³. With the accession to the Partnership for Peace programme in 1994, the path of cooperation and accession to NATO ended on 29 March 2004 when the Republic of Slovenia became a full member. The Association Agreement between Slovenia and the EU was confirmed in the Slovenian Parliament on 15 July 1997, and Slovenia entered the EU on 1 May 2004. At the same time, Slovenia entered the European Monetary Union on 27 June 2004 and introduced the common European currency on 1 January 2007. Slovenia presided over the OSCE in 2005, when it coordinated and led a number of activities of this organization, and it chaired the EU Council in the first half of 2008.

Slovenian politics took its first steps in the international environment in the field of defence and the military as early as in 1994, mainly due to the existing efforts towards enlarging the Alliance. The enlargement process and the geostrategic position of Slovenia prevailed over the military readiness and ability of the Republic of Slovenia and its army, which was called the Territorial Defence of Slovenia until 15 January 1995. However, in these processes the army was an important carrier of implementation solutions from the very beginning. At the time when the first activities related to the Partnership for Peace (PfP) began, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Slovenia were of a conscript type, and a large, reserve-based wartime structure with 77,000 members was foreseen for a crisis and military response. Such a structure and extent were primarily a response to threats to Slovenia arising from the spreading armed conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the fact that such a young and non-established country had to provide its national defence by itself.

In addition to Slovenia's entry into the NATO PfP programme, integration with neighbouring and other countries⁴ began in the field of defence and the military (Grizold, 2005, p 117). With intensive assistance from the countries with which Slovenia began to cooperate (the USA, Canada, Germany, the UK, France, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, Israel and others), the need to abandon models of military organization and patterns of action from the past was gradually recognized. The effects

³ This cooperation also involved the exchange of military data. Slovenia submitted the first data presented in the AEMI (Annual Exchange of Military Information) to the OSCE, and thus to the international environment, in December 1992.

⁴ The USA supported the Mil to Mil programme, which was mainly implemented through the partner National Guard of Colorado.

were reflected in reforms in the defence and security sector, further reorganization of the army, gradual distancing from territorial organization, and the pluralism of taking examples from abroad (Šteiner, 2000, pp 34-37).

The changes that followed included: the adaptation of military structures; preparations for participation in peacekeeping operations abroad; integration into international military exercises; and the use of opportunities for training and education of military personnel in foreign educational centres and military schools. On the basis of the Defence Act, the Territorial Defence Republic Headquarters (RŠTO/RSTD) was renamed the General Staff of the SAF (GŠSV/GSSAF) at the beginning of 1995, while its role remained unchanged, which also applied to its position in the Ministry of Defence.

In response to the »No« to Slovenia in Madrid in 1997, when it did not receive an invitation to join NATO, new and deeper reforms began. Important innovations were brought in by the Strategy of the Military Defence of the Republic of Slovenia in 1998. The Strategy redefined the aims of the military defence and the basic function of the SAF, set a basis for its different organization, and defined a number of basic external and internal activities for the transformation of the SAF on the path to NATO membership. The most important features were the provisions for ensuring an increased share of the professional structure; reorganization of reserve forces and announcements of the introduction of changes related to military service, introducing a new personnel structure in the permanent structure of the army; and in the projection of a gradual increase in defence expenditure (Šteiner 2000, p 28). On these starting points, the first General Long-Term Programme for the Development and Equipping of the SAF was prepared and adopted in February 2000⁵.

A different and extremely intensive »second cycle« of preparations for joining NATO was associated with the beginnings of professionalism and the transformation of the SAF. It also involved changing the command structure and the army, and dividing the structure of the forces into deployable and in place forces.

The period of the conscript army ended in 2003⁶ when it was clear that the draft system with general military obligation could not ensure the adequate manning of military units, although during the process of approaching the Alliance, the structure of the SAF decreased by more than half. The transitional changes up to 2002 are considered to have been progressive and relatively slow. The speed of the changes increased following the NATO Summit in Prague in November 2002, when a decision was made to invite Slovenia to join the Alliance as a full member.

⁵ It was amended in 2004 and again later in 2010 (see: ReDPROS and ReSDPRO SV 2025).

⁶ The decision was adopted by the National Assembly in October 2002 with the amendment of the Military Service Act. It envisaged that conscription would cease to be implemented by the end of 2003, obligatory military service by the end of June 2004, and obligatory service in the reserve force of the Slovenian Armed Forces by the end of 2010. The last conscripts completed obligatory military service in October 2003, i.e. one year before the announced deadline, and the substitute civilian service in December 2003.

The entry to the Alliance in 2004 coincided with joining the EU, and represented an important development milestone. The changes were accelerated further by the process of integration, for which a special Accession and Integration Plan (AAIP) was prepared in 2005 and completed in February 2010. The intensive five-year period of integration activities was set up as a comprehensive process consisting of several procedures and activities (Šteiner, 2013, p 18). At this point, we could complete the timeline of developments and connections to the international environment, and limit it to only 15 years. But we face a decade that stands out.

With the onset of the economic crisis and the recession in 2009, the period of growth that had characterized the entire development up to then ended in 2011 and, consequently, reinforcements for the army were reduced. The main characteristics of the following procedures were: structure adjustment, personnel consolidation, accelerated and sometimes forced continuation of professionalization procedures, reduction of operating costs, and the maintenance of vital parts of the military system and their activities.

The practice of inadequate financing of defence expenditure and the military budget then continued from 2014 to 2017, and was at »zero growth« and below 1% of GDP. Thus, according to the indicators, especially when it came to investing in investments and development⁷, and also according to the structure of expenditure, the Republic of Slovenia fell close to the bottom of the countries in the Alliance. Financial investments after 2017 were rather the consequence of the growth in Gross Domestic Product than real efforts to reduce the 10-year development gap and stagnation.

In addition, the SAF decreased the personnel capacity of the members of both the permanent and reserve structures. The personnel plan for the army was 96% (8737 members) implemented at the end of 2013 and 91.5% (8326 members) at the end of 2014, yet at the end of 2018 it was only 82% (7460) implemented⁸. This also indicates important changes in the labour market and unsuccessful responsiveness in the defence and military sector. It must be added that the departure of trained personnel directly reduces the readiness of the army, which has failed to attain an adequate assessment of readiness for the last four years.

2 PERIODS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SLOVENIA'S ACCESSION TO NATO AND THE INTEGRATION OF THE SAF

Slovenia joined the Partnership for Peace in 1994 based on the NATO PfP Framework Document and the Slovenian Presentation Document, and with a clear definition

⁷ See information on the website of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia: *Financial plans and defence expenditure of the Ministry of Defence from 2008 to 2018* (http://www.mo.gov.si/si/o_ministrstvu/).

⁸ See the *Annual Reports of the Ministry of Defence from 2011 to 2017* (http://www.mo.gov.si/si/zakonodaja_in_dokumenti/) and official data on the personnel capacity of the Slovenian Armed Forces (<http://www.slovenskavojska.si/o-slovenski-vojski/>).

that the country was a candidate for NATO. On this basis and following additional proposals from NATO, the first Individual Partnership Programme (IPP) was created that same year⁹, which included the defined political aims of the country, the military and other capacities available for PfP, and the objectives of cooperation and activities in this regard¹⁰.

2.1 Development periods on the route to NATO

In 1995, the SAF and the defence system participated in the joint exercises which were available to the PfP countries (Grizold, 2005, p 101), bringing the army to the international scene.

This was followed by inclusion in the Planning and Review Process (PARP) within the framework of the PfP, in which Slovenia began to cooperate in 1996. For some time, this process was a central mechanism for the reform of the Slovenian defence system and the reorganization of the SAF, and also for the establishment of more transparent defence and force planning. For this purpose, the Partnership Working Programme (PWP) was also set up within the PARP, in which defence policy issues, defence planning and reform efforts in the field of defence and especially in the military were addressed for five years, along with mechanisms for displaying defence resources, their deployment within the defence system and for military purposes. A particularly important and detailed part was the connectivity and achievement of the requirements for forces the state could devote to partner multinational exercises and NATO-led operations. The programme was also used as a basis for assessing achievements and forming assessment reports at the level of the Ministry of Defence, and for forwarding the issues within the competence of the SAF to partners in the Alliance. The partners reviewed and assessed the reports following a special assessment process, and sent the findings back to the partner country. The course of the described assessment in the partner countries was very similar to that of the members of the Alliance.

At the same time the accession to PARP was linked to the political level and to the involvement in the decision-making process that took place through the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC)¹¹. Plans and assessments were confirmed by this authority. At the same time, international agreements had to be adopted at the national level, which enabled the SAF to participate in the PfP; the most important of these were the Security Agreement, the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and the Brussels Agreement on the status of missions in third countries. This was followed by a gradual adaptation of a series of national regulations, such as memoranda and technical agreements for participation in PfP exercises and in crisis response operations, transit agreements, standardization agreements, and so on (Šteiner, 2015, p 83).

⁹ IPP was replaced by the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) after 2002.

¹⁰ See also: EPA 1414 of 14/03/1996.

¹¹ The role of the NACC has been carried out by the Euro Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) since 1997.

At the NATO summit in 1997 in Madrid, Slovenia and Romania did not receive an invitation to accession, which three Eastern European countries, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland did. This caused initial disappointment which did not prevail for long. In 1998, Slovenia hosted the Cooperative Adventure Exchange-98 military exercise as the first partner country, and at the same time examined the concept of host nation support (Grizold, 2005, p 102), the ability to cooperate in the international environment, and the degree of connectivity achieved, especially in logistics and communications. This exercise on Slovenian soil thereby took advantage of numerous opportunities for the public promotion of international cooperation and the meaning and advantages of the Alliance.

At the NATO summit in Washington in 1999, the Membership Action Plan (MAP) was adopted, which included Slovenia. This milestone marks the end of the first period of the Slovenian way to NATO. According to MAP, which represented the programme by which NATO defined the envisaged state of the next member. Slovenia had prepared Annual National Programmes (ANPs) for membership since 2000. National programmes covered five areas: (1) political and economic matters, (2) defence and military matters, (3) security matters, (4) legal and (5) financial matters.

Annual National Programmes were created in a special process of dialogue with NATO, on the basis of which the state defined the aims in the aforementioned areas and the implementation tasks, including deadlines, thus approaching the envisaged end state and the standards within this state (Šavc, 2009, pp 45-46). The programmes of activities by field and the assessment of progress towards achieving aims and fulfilling tasks were created by the state itself. NATO managed the development of the progress assessment and its confirmation by the competent working body and at the political level¹². A comparison between the PARP and the process of accepting and assessing the MAP shows a higher level of complexity and responsibility, although there were many similarities in the implementation work.

In October 2002, at the NATO Summit in Prague, Slovenia was invited to join the Alliance, and finally became a full member in 2004¹³.

Five Annual National Programmes significantly contributed to the image of the Slovenian national security system, defence, and military organization and their changes. The period between 2000 and 2004 is the second period on the way to NATO, in which the MAP was intensively implemented and the partnership aims of the forces were met. At the same time, this was the period when the transformation of the SAF prevailed, and there was also a significant change in the manning system with the transition to professional manning and a voluntary reserve, which triggered the process of the professionalization of the army. In this way, the structural aspect of professionalization was at the forefront, while the more demanding functional aspect depended on several factors, which will be explained in the continuation.

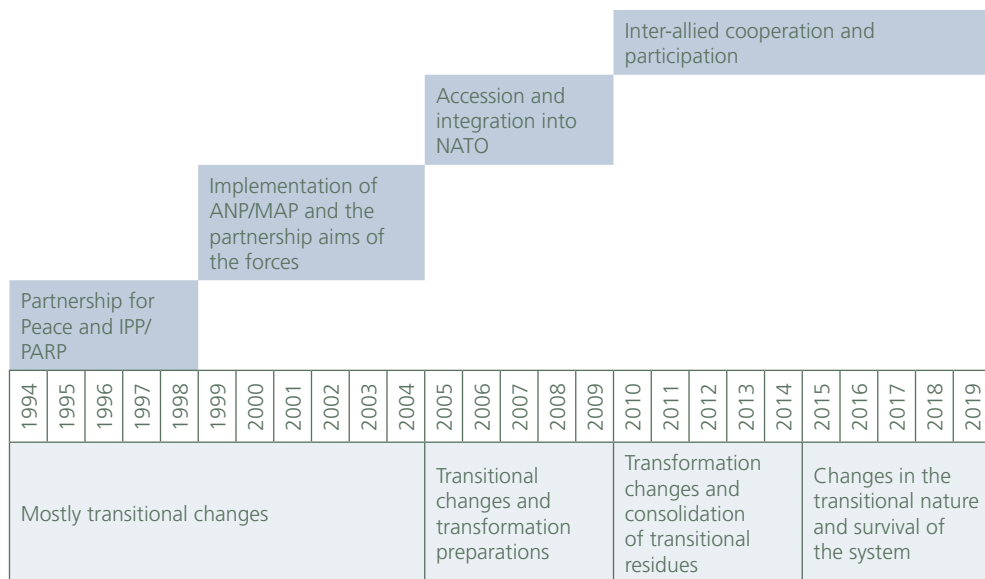
¹² The special working body was the Defence Review Committee (DRC), and the political body was the NACC/EAPC.

¹³ Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania were invited together.

The time after joining NATO from 2005 to the end of 2010 is the third period on the path of NATO accession, in which the integration process is at the forefront. At the same time, this is the period when the transition and transformation changes are most intertwined. The Accession and Integration Plan (AAIP) was prepared for this period, which envisaged an extensive list of integration activities by the end of 2010. After five years of implementation, the plan was implemented by the end of 2009, one year before the deadline; the special Alliance Declaration on the Integration of the SAF in NATO was signed on 10 February 2010.¹⁴

The fourth period starts in 2010 and coincides with the officially announced beginning of the transformation of the army¹⁵. This period represents a decade of inter-allied cooperation of the Republic of Slovenia and the full participation of the SAF in NATO. Unfortunately, due to the effects of the economic crisis and the intensive reduction of investment in the defence sector, the development of the army was halted and the trend of change reversed, so that developmental stagnation and efforts for the survival of the defence and military system are at the forefront, rather than transformation. The described development periods are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1:
Presentation of periods during the accession and integration of the Republic of Slovenia into NATO
Source:
Adopted to Šteiner, 2015, p 86.



¹⁴ On the importance of the Declaration on the Integration of the Slovenian Armed Forces in NATO, see: Pišlar and Grmek 2010, pp 12-14.

¹⁵ The Resolution on the General Long-Term Programme for the Development and Equipping of the Slovenian Armed Forces until 2025 (2010), which was adopted on 7 December 2010, formally defined the transformation as the aim of further changes and development of the defence and military system.

2.2 Some highlights

If the military development periods of Slovenia are observed from the aspect of change, the periods that persist until 2004, when NATO and EU accession activities were implemented, can be marked by transition changes. After 2005, the integration process, along with the implementation of the project of army professionalization (abbreviated to PROVOJ), brought changes of a transformational nature, although it still very much clung to transitional, i.e. adaptation changes (Šteiner, 2013, p 9).

The period between 1994 and 2004, when the activities related to Slovenia's first steps in the international environment and association with the Alliance began, is a typical transition period, which was developmentally dynamic and exceptionally varied from the organizational and functional aspect. In the industrialized countries in Europe, mass armies were already intensively decreasing at that time and obligatory military service was being abandoned, while in Slovenia the conscript army was only just being established. In Slovenia, the concept of a mass army and manning disappeared soon after the turn of the millennium, due, among other reasons, to recommendations from abroad. In the period from 1994 to 2004, two models of military organization were established in Slovenia, the first related to the establishment and strengthening of a permanent army, and the second to the transition to professional manning and the beginning of army professionalization.

After 1995, the SAF continued to reduce its wartime structure, while its peacetime structure and operational capabilities without prior mobilization were strengthened. After beginning international military cooperation in 1994, the quarter-of-a-century long development of the SAF can be considered as a path from a militia territorial army, to a permanent army of the universal conscript – type II and type I according to Haltiner (Haltiner and Tresch in Bebler 2005, pp 285-301) – with a corps and division model of military structures, to a professional army and a voluntary reserve with a brigade and ultimately intertwining brigade and regiment model.

Significant changes occurred after the NATO Summit in Wales in 2014. They referred to readiness, insurance, integration and adaptation. These are the new centres of gravity, which are reflected in constantly ready forces, the provision of readiness of forces and initiatives, concepts, and programmes of joint training. The positions for strengthening national defence forces and focusing on international special forces must also be highlighted. Activities to improve the readiness of forces and joint training were important before, but they were more related to crisis response missions and operations; this time, however, they are more closely linked to readiness and the provision of deterrence and collective defence. This shift, which began after 2012 and is referred to as from a *«campaign footing»* to a *«contingency footing»*, means a change in focus from operations to deployable forces in the structure of armies, their more realistic preparation, and combat readiness to operate in the home area or in its vicinity (ACT, 2015). This could also be called a period of return to collective defence, with a focus on threats from the East and South of the Alliance.

When we observe the developmental periods of the army and indicate the dynamics of change, it should be added that the quantity of activity and change was at the forefront, and less their quality, which is also a feature of accelerated transition periods.

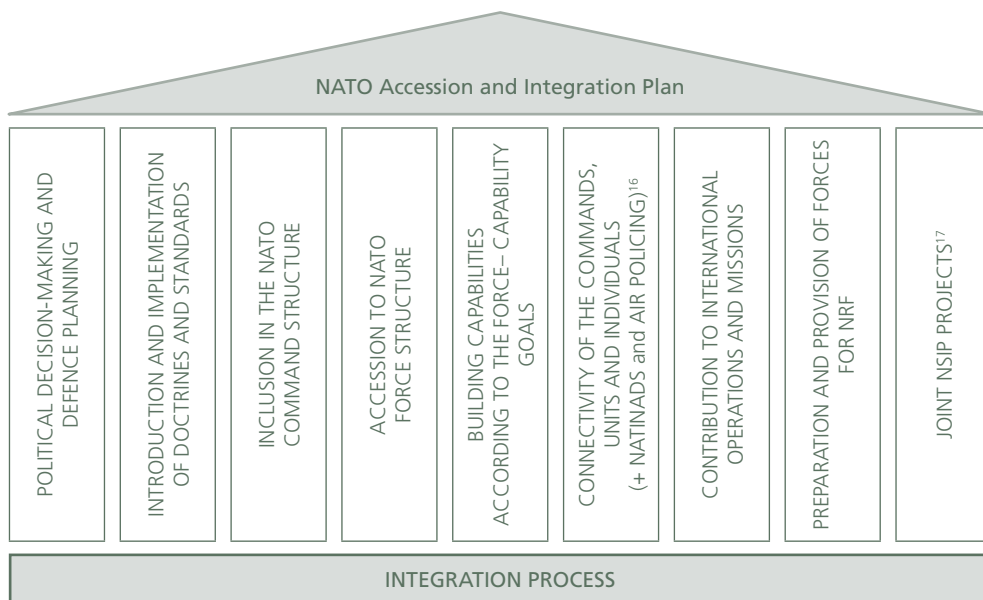
3 THE IMPACT OF NATO ACCESSION AND INTEGRATION ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A POST-MODERN ARMY IN SLOVENIA

The establishment of a post-modern army in Slovenia is of a transformational nature. This is closely connected to the Slovenian path to NATO and belongs to the accession and integration into NATO. The second milestone is connected to the establishment of a professional army, supplemented by a contractual reserve structure, which we also designate as professionalization.

3.1 Characteristics of integration into the Alliance in the Slovenian case

It should be highlighted that in the Alliance there is no uniform definition of what falls into the integration process. For the analysis of the Slovenian case (Šteiner, 2015, p 155), nine areas were selected, which were also included in the Accession and Integration Plan (AAIP). These areas are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2:
Integration areas
of Slovenian
accession and
integration into
NATO
Source:
Šteiner, 2015,
p 155)



¹⁶ NATINADS – NATO Integrated Air Defence System and AP – air policing represent an integrated air defence and control system and airspace management and protection system.

¹⁷ NSIP - NATO Security Investment Programme is an Alliance programme of joint investments.

The process of integration into the Alliance has enabled Slovenia and its army to integrate credibly into defence and military structures and NATO's joint activities, and to participate in them. This involves, in particular, activities of joint defence planning, participation in joint commands and their activities, integration into the Alliance structure of forces, provision of a contribution to the response forces, participation in international operations and missions, and the building of national capabilities that, through doctrines and standards, can be connected to others in the Alliance. At the same time, Slovenia benefits from the joint control and protection of its airspace and NATO investment in airport facilities. Integration into the Alliance created the conditions and the need to change the national security strategy and consequently the military doctrine (Šteiner, 2011, pp 5-6).

During the accession and integration, through mechanisms such as the PARP, IPP, ANP/MAP, AAIP and the aims of the forces, lessons were learned in the Slovenian defence and military system which were very important for providing the conditions for transformation. The PARP and ANP/MAP contributed to the transformation and establishment of a comparable and transparent methodology of defence and force planning. Subsequently, the implementation of the AAIP was linked to the achievement of the force goals (later capability goals). This was a focal point for the design and construction of new capabilities that could be used for national and Alliance needs, and would ensure the foreseeable contribution of the country to the joint allied forces structures and international operations and missions.

Since Slovenia's involvement in international operations and missions and its contribution is not addressed in detail here, this is merely referred to as an important and outstanding characteristic. It should also be pointed out that the SAF joined the first international operation in 1997 when it participated in the Alba operation in Albania.¹⁸ In twenty-two years (1997-2018), it has participated in 28 operations and in missions on three continents, and by the end of 2018, more than 12,800 people had been sent on them (Maraš, 2017, pp 47 and 51; International operations and missions).

International operations and missions were a key driver of change, an important promoter of development, and an effective tool for transforming the army, integrating it into the command structures of the Alliance and the multinational force structures and for providing connectivity in the military field. Particular emphasis should be given to the connection of international operations and missions to defence planning, building of military capabilities for them, and the achievement of connectivity, integration into multinational command structures, and affiliation to multinational force structures¹⁹.

¹⁸ For more details, see Maraš, 2017.

¹⁹ For more details, see Šteiner in Maraš 2017, pp 63-66.

The next important aspect of integration concerns the access to and exchange of experience gained during joint military education, training, exercises, practical capability building procedures, and operations in international operations and missions, as well as those resulting from the implementation of numerous and comprehensive IPP, ANP and AAIP plans.

The provision and maintenance of the connectivity of national commands and units enable the Alliance to operate jointly, and they are achieved through training, joint exercises and operational activities, which, together with standardization procedures, contributes to an accelerated transformation.

Additionally, Slovenia contributed financial resources to the financing of joint projects through the NATO Security Investment Programme (NSIP), while at the same time receiving funds from it.

3.2 NATO and changing the means of manning and professionalization of the SAF

In changing the means of manning and professionalization of the SAF, influences from the international environment were important, in particular the PfP programme and the experiences of the countries that abandoned the conscript system at that time and introduced voluntary manning with professional members and contract reservists. In Slovenia, the formation of the first professional units of the army began in 1991 and continued in 1995, under the recommendations of the PfP, by the formation of the 10th battalion for international cooperation, which was an attempt to complete the first Slovenian battalion with a permanent structure. At the same time, there were also studies and analyses of the changes in the means of manning of the army. Nevertheless, Slovenia at first tried to achieve entry into NATO only by adapting the conscript system, and gradually upgrading the already well-established combined manning of the army and the structure of forces and military personnel adapted to it.

The planned approach to changing the means of manning of the army and its professionalization began in 2001 with the Programme of Measures to Improve the Readiness of the SAF from 2001 to 2004 (Government of the Republic of Slovenia 2001). On this basis, and on the basis of the results of a study of the possibilities of transition to manning with professional soldiers (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia 2001) and other analyses, the Resolution on the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia (2001), the General Long-Term Programme for the Development and Equipping of the SAF (2001), the Concept of the Development of the SAF until 2004 (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia 2004) and the documents defining them: the scope and structure and organization-mobilization development of the army, and the direction and aims of its development and transformation, were adopted.

Within the dynamics of professionalization, the Ministry of Defence and the SAF studied different variants. From the proposal submitted to the Government, it can be seen that Version A was based on a gradual transition from the then combined system of manning of the army to professional manning with a voluntary contractual reserve in the period 2002-2009. This approach was, by its extent and dynamics, comparable to countries that had already taken a decision or made a transition to professional manning. Version B envisaged an accelerated transition to a professional army in the period from 2002 to 2006, in line with the starting points and solutions offered by the amendment to the Military Service Act proposed by a group of Deputies in February 2002.

After considering the final version of the material, the Government (Šteiner 2015, p 92) adopted resolutions for the implementation of amendments and supplements to the system of completing the SAF, which concerned: (1) Amendments and supplements to the General Long-Term Programme for the Development and Equipping of the SAF for the period up to and including 2015; (2) The definition of milestones in the course of changes to military service, which had to be implemented one year after the entry into force of the amendments, and the amendment to the Military Service Act; (3) The total size of the SAF, which amounted to 26,000 members, was expected to be reduced to approximately 18,000 members by the end of 2007, after full membership of NATO; (4) The commitment to fulfil the normative, personnel, financial, material and other conditions for the implementation of the transition to completing the army with professional members and a voluntary reserve, including the resolution of personnel incompatibilities in the army and the ministry.

To achieve this, the Ministry of Defence undertook the change in the means of manning the army by creating a special project and project organization entitled Transition to a Professional Army, Supplemented by a Voluntary Reserve (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia 2002a). By November 2002, the project team had prepared a Project Preparation Study: PROVOJ – Professional Armed Forces Supplemented by a Contractual Reserve (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia 2002b). The project defined the strategic plan, organized the work with project managers, sub-project managers and project works custodians, and defined interconnections.

The launch of the implementation of the project was set for February 2003, and the PROVOJ project dynamics were set by the end of 2010 (Ibid., p 12). An examination of this shows that in the project as many as 11 out of 14 milestones were expected to be completed by the end of 2004. Most of the set milestones, ten of them, were focused on structural professionalization; only four were on functional professionalization, and of them only two had a completion date after 2004. By 2010, the planned operational capabilities of the SAF should have been achieved and its annual manning (Ibid., p 20) ensured, which was also in line with the later Accession and Integration Plan (AAIP). This meant that the aspects of professionalization related to manning and changing its structure were at the forefront.

The next change in the project originated from the intermediate report on the implementation of the PROVOJ project, dated the end of 2004, when it was found that some sub-projects were being poorly implemented. To improve the situation with regard to these irregularities, some measures were implemented in March 2005. The method of project management was changed, and the project management team dismissed²⁰. Monthly monitoring of the situation and undertaking of measures concerning individual sub-projects was organized. The activities were focused on ensuring sufficient staffing of professional members and voluntary contractual reservists, and on other outstanding issues of functional professionalization, such as entering and leaving the army, moving to the civil environment at the end of an army contract, preparation of legislation on service in the SAF, the normative regulation of the special features of military service abroad in international operations and missions, and supplementing the Rules on Service in the SAF (Šteiner 2015, p 95).

In 2007, a decision was made to place the project tasks of professionalization among the regular tasks of the Ministry and the army in order to abandon special transparent reports on their implementation, which some designate as early formal completion of the project (Kotnik, 2012, p 22). In the Slovenian case, criticism can also be made that professionalization was imposed, was too fast and incomplete (Ibid.) and was unfinished in the functional sense. Regardless of the above, it is important to emphasize as a positive fact that the processes of professionalization finally became an integral part of the transformation of the army. In addition, transformational changes which were wider in their nature had already started.

The PROVOJ project was formally completed in 2009, when the final report was prepared (GSSAF, 2009). It outlined the aims achieved, and also those that were still being implemented or had not been realized at all. It should be emphasized that some aims were simply not feasible, mainly due to the effects of the economic crisis, especially in the areas of the implementation of integral care for members, support for exits from the system, the payment system²¹, and the establishment of a personnel competence model and a comparable education system based on national professional qualifications.

4 THE POSITIVE IMPACTS AND THE DEFICIENCIES OF SLOVENIA'S JOINING PROCESS AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE ALLIANCE

The starting point is that Slovenia gained the status of a safe country with a low level of business risk, the opportunity to participate in the scientific, technological and information environment of the most developed countries, and economic cooperation with the most developed countries, including in the military field.²²

²⁰ *The project office continued work until the end of June 2010.*

²¹ *See also Kotnik (2012, 22-23).*

²² *See: Slovenia and NATO (<http://nato.gov.si/slo/>).*

4.1 Key positive achievements

From the transformational aspect, the key positive achievements in the field of defence and the military in the Republic of Slovenia are:

1. The preparation of missing strategic documents and updating of the current ones in the field of national security, including new doctrines: military doctrine, the doctrine of military logistics and the doctrine of the military strategic reserve²³;
2. The transformation and alignment of the national defence planning process with the Alliance, and linking it to the planning of forces and building the operational capabilities of the army;
3. The changed readiness of the army, its responsiveness and capabilities of operating with peacekeeping capacities, including the alignment of the national readiness test with NATO CREVAL and TACEVAL;
4. Structural and process integration into the Alliance, as presented in Figure 2;
5. The implemented tasks of the professionalization project and improvement in the professional army structure, together with the provision of starting points for the continuation of professionalization;
6. The achieved level of relations and rights of the professional army (professional members) and the social and functional imperative;
7. Participation in international operations and missions, and the implementation of foreign policy directives of the country in contributing to international security and stability by improving the quality of the military contribution and increasing the complexity of tasks;
8. Effective implementation of military support to the system of protection against natural and other disasters, and the balancing of engagement in the international environment and the tasks of defence readiness in national territory;
9. Reforms and improvements in the system of military education²⁴ and training, and the alignment of it with the Alliance, which enables connectivity, cooperation and the use of experience and reliance on common capacities in this field;
10. The ability to follow the Alliance's trends, the inclusion in initiatives, projects, concepts and programmes, and the effects of this on the transformation of the SAF;
11. The adoption and enforcement of national safety rules and their alignment with the Alliance, and the improvement in the infrastructure and technical conditions for them;
12. The transfer of Slovenian experience to other partner countries.

It should also be added to the above that the army maintained a high level of the confidence of the Slovenian public. In addition, the credibility of the army within the Alliance, and in international operations and missions has been preserved.

²³ *Military Doctrine (2006), Doctrine of Military Logistics (2008) and the Doctrine of the Military Strategic Reserve (2012).*

²⁴ *It should be noted that in the military education system not all possibilities are being exploited and implemented, especially in the basic training of professional and reserve officers and non-commissioned officers.*

Up to the end of the integration process, Slovenia was a good example of objectivity in what it promised and what it managed to achieve, as well as what the Alliance is returning to it in the form of greater security or support with capabilities that the state does not provide or will not develop²⁵, as is the case for air defence and airspace protection capabilities.

4.2 Cases of deviations and aims that are not achieved

Cases of deviations and objectives that were not achieved:

1. The provision of political attention and support to accepted commitments;
2. The unachieved planned share of defence expenditure in GDP, thereby increasing the gap between planned and real defence expenditure;
3. The reduction in the already adopted defence budgets, and making significant interventions in the investments for designing the envisaged capabilities;
4. Lagging behind in achieving the adopted capability objectives;
5. Paralyzing the already reduced modernization due to complications or scandals in equipping projects;
6. Limitations to or non-achievement of employment of the planned number of permanent personnel and achievement of the planned extent of the contractual reserve of the SAF;
7. Changes and transition to a new competence model in the broad sense of the word, and in the normative regulation of the status of military professionals;
8. The implementation of normatively set mechanisms of integrated care for the professional army and its family members.

Conclusion On the developmental axis of the SAF, which was described and explained at a distance of 10, 15 and 25 years, it can be concluded that the beginning was a very dynamic period of change of a transitional nature, which was very intensive from 1999, when the Republic of Slovenia was invited to join NATO at the second attempt. This was followed by integration, completed by the beginning of 2010. At that time, the SAF in the Alliance were an example of good practice in achieving the development challenges and objectives of capabilities and connectivity. After 2010, we witnessed a decade of developmental stagnation and reliance on what had been achieved in the process of accession and integration, or conditionally speaking, the utilization of the peace dividend. Time will tell whether the state interfered too much with defence expenditure and disproportionately reduced them to the detriment of its defence and military readiness during the period of the economic crisis. This kind of behaviour cannot be assessed positively.

In assessing and comparing other indicators of achievements and deficiencies in the development of the SAF and the Slovenian defence system, it can be concluded that there are more positive solutions and cases than deficiencies. Critics who bet on a self-sufficient armed forces without integration into international alliances would

²⁵ See also Young, 2019.

oppose this line of thinking, and argue that the national army has disappeared, that it is poorly prepared for the defence of the country, and is lagging behind in development. They would ignore the fact that in the former common state (i.e. Yugoslavia) we contributed around 4.5% of GDP to federal defence structures in the 1980s, and up to 1% for the structures of territorial defence in the federal republic, but even then Slovenia was not defensively self-sufficient. Compared with investments in the military budget in the last ten years, since we have been integrated into the Alliance, this is five times less.

We have established that we relied on some achievements too much and allowed ourselves to miss some development opportunities. As mentioned above, from being an example of good practice a decade ago, we fell to the bottom of member states with regard to positive indicators of defence expenditure and investments in military capabilities. The professionalization of the army was not entirely completed, despite a good approach to a comprehensive project. Moreover, at the peak of the economic crisis, the important transformation efforts were brought to an end and were superseded by survival efforts. The economic crisis was mainly reflected as a financing crisis and a crisis of political consensus on investing in the defence sector. The future will show whether we are back at the very beginning, or at the beginning of the end due to missed opportunities. But the warnings are completely recognizable.

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