

**EDITORIAL****FIFTEEN YEARS IN THE ALLIANCE**

The year 2019 marks three anniversaries of great significance to the Republic of Slovenia, its citizens, its security and defence system, and the members of the Slovenian Armed Forces. The first anniversary commemorates 70 years of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the other two relate to the 15 years of Slovenia's membership of the European Union and NATO.

Celebrating 70 years of NATO is of central importance because of the Alliance's symbolic meaning. Although it was officially established on 4 April 1949, it is true to say that North Atlantic cooperation is far older. It began during the mass immigration of members of numerous nations from the territories of today's European Union and other parts of the world into North America. So far, several generations have been connected through family ties on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean; yet, these ties are not the only ones. These relationships overcame terrible ordeals in both World Wars, and resulted in cooperation, later officially named the Alliance, in the aftermath of World War II for one reason only – for it to never happen again.

On the celebration of the 70th anniversary of NATO in Washington, D.C., the NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, said that “[the Treaty's] reach is vast, and it has stood the test of time – because we have united around our core commitment to protect and defend one another”. In a wider sense, however, this long lasting Alliance is probably all about striving to safeguard, preserve and develop the Western European cultural, historical, political, sociological, security, defence, military (and so on) identity. Recently, the geopolitical aspect and the importance of the Alliance in relation to other emerging political actors, mainly from the East, have become increasingly important. Nevertheless, despite the major changes it has undergone in the past 70 years, the Alliance, having seemed obsolete to other security organizations, is now as vital as ever.

The fact that the Republic of Slovenia has already been a member of the European Union and NATO for 15 years appears logical, particularly from the historical perspective. The territory of what is now Slovenia, where our ancestors have lived for centuries, was part of the Holy Roman Empire for over a thousand years, the Austrian Empire for 63 years, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire for 51 years. The 20th century saw several different organizational structures, with us as part of them, together with those countries which are now collectively referred to as the Western Balkans. However, the 21st century brought us membership of the European Union and NATO, i.e. a “place” where we can finally belong. On 23 March 2003, a referendum on Slovenia’s membership of the EU and NATO was held, asking the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia if they were in favour of joining the two organizations. Almost 90% of voters favoured Slovenia joining the EU, while 66% voted to join NATO.

The current edition of *Contemporary Military Challenges* is dedicated to the 15th anniversary of Slovenia's membership of the Alliance. In 2009 and 2014, two special thematic issues were published, marking the 5th and 10th anniversaries respectively, highlighting the experience gained, and describing the best and also the less successful practices. We wanted to write them down, to remember them and leave them for generations yet to come. What is more, we wanted to share our experience with other countries aiming to join the Alliance. Our purpose here was to help those countries to not repeat our mistakes, and to assist them in avoiding mistakes altogether.

For this issue, authors from other countries were invited to share their experiences and views of their countries’ and Slovenia’s membership of the Alliance. Special thanks go to David Humar and Primož Šavc for their invaluable assistance in this regard.

In his introductory article, entitled *The NATO Alliance as a Coalition (of the Willing)*, **Boris Rutar** elaborates the theoretical distinction between an alliance and a coalition, with particular focus on the field of defence and the military. Although at first glance the two terms may seem to be synonymous, the author demonstrates through practical examples that there is a major distinction between them, both in theory and in practice.

The other countries which joined the Alliance together with Slovenia in 2004 are also celebrating the 15th anniversary of their membership in 2019, among them Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Their experiences are described in the article by **Viljar Veebel** and **Illimar Ploom** entitled *15 Years of NATO and EU Membership: Are the Baltic Countries Similar or Different in Terms of Their National Security Strategies and Defence Models*.

**Uroš Lampret** and **Blaž Grilj** are the authors of an article entitled *15 Years of Slovenian NATO Membership through the Lens of the Changing Global Security and Geopolitical Environment*. This article deals with the key changes in the international

security environment which are affecting the organization and functioning of the Alliance itself. In various ways, these changes are also reflected in Slovenia, affecting its security and defence, and impacting the functioning of the Slovenian Armed Forces.

The article *15 Years of the Republic of Slovenia in NATO – A Critical View on Defence System*, written by **Marko Čehovin**, critically addresses the making of political decisions in the field of security and defence in Slovenia. The author is also critical of the Slovenian media. In his opinion, the media lack an appropriate level of professionalism when reporting on security and defence topics. In addition, he deals with a specificity related to the interpretation of civilian control of the Slovenian Armed Forces.

During the preparations to enter NATO, several assessments in individual fields on the advantages and disadvantages of membership of the Alliance were produced in the Republic of Slovenia. One of the most intriguing topics was undoubtedly the cost of the country's defence. **Branimir Furlan** and **Zoran Barjaktarević** discuss the cost assessment prior to entering NATO and the cost of defence today in their article *NATO and Slovenia 15 Years on: How Accurate Were Projections about Defence Expenditure*.

According to **Alija Kožljak**, the Republic of Slovenia is a small country which can, independently of various indicators, make an important contribution to the progress of countries in the Western Balkans in the field of security and defence. To support his thesis, he draws from his own experience, gained as the military representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina. More on this theme in the article *When Small Becomes Big – Fifteen Years of Slovenia in NATO*.

Every country considers it a great success to become a member of NATO. But the true challenges only arise once it is actually part of a bigger group. **Andrej Osterman** analyzes the developmental stages of the Slovenian Armed Forces in certain fields, such as international operations and missions, personnel, standardization and so on, which have changed most considerably. His article is entitled *The Slovenian Armed Forces 15 Years After the Republic of Slovenia joined NATO*.

According to **Alojz Šteiner**, attention should also be devoted to two additional anniversaries when commemorating the 15 years of NATO membership, ie. the 25th anniversary of international military cooperation of 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. These two anniversaries, of great significance to the Slovenian Armed Forces, are described in more detail in the article *Slovenia's Military Path to the Alliance*.

In his article entitled *The Reform and Evolution of the Slovenian Armed Forces – a View from Abroad*, **Neil Grayston** shares the experience he gained when he was

appointed by the UK Ministry of Defence to the Slovenian Ministry of Defence to provide assistance with Slovenia's endeavours to join NATO. He compares the state of affairs in the field of security and defence prior to the accession with now, presents the developmental stages, describes the current state of affairs, and suggests various trends for the future.

**Andrzej Falkowski** shares his views on the Alliance, and Poland and Slovenia within it, in his article entitled *Animus in Consulendo Liber – A Mind Unfettered in Deliberation*. Poland, together with Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, is in a different situation to Slovenia in terms of security risks due to its geographical location. At the same time, however, it faces very similar – it could be said almost identical – challenges related to certain relevant security issues.

To sum up, this anniversary edition offers plenty of good reading. Nevertheless, the next anniversary will provide even more interesting articles, as we will be able to compare the future findings with the current ones, and assess the progress made.