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EDITORIAL

TRANSFORMATION OF THE ARMED FORCES

Introduction After the end of the Cold War, when the Warsaw Pact was abolished and consequently the Soviet Union collapsed, the Atlantic Alliance lost its main adversary. As a result, European countries in particular started to cut their defence budgets, which affected the size, weapons and capabilities of their armed forces.

It was not until the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on 11 September 2011 and the (US-led) global war on terror that the trend of military capability cuts slightly changed. However, strategically, the Europe's ability for (self) defence has not changed. Even the armed conflicts in the Middle East and the Caucasus, as well as the Russian occupation of Crimea and Donbas, have not changed the minds of European politicians and economists that military capabilities - not only armed forces, but also military industry - need to be strengthened.

The new Russian 2022 invasion of Ukraine opened the eyes of politicians, who substantially increased defence budgets, which in turn translated into increased purchases of weapon systems and military equipment, increased staffing levels, increased investment in military and dual-use industries, as well as other measures to transform the armed forces and protection and rescue forces.

1 PROGRESS IN THE FIELD OF DEFENCE

The same has happened in Slovenia. In March 2023, the new Resolution on the Long-Term Programme for the Development and Equipment of the Slovenian Armed Forces until 2040, was adopted, and at the end of May, the Medium-Term Defence Programme of the Republic of Slovenia 2023-2028 was adopted. In 2023, €12.5 million was earmarked for the needs of development, research and innovation in the Ministry of Defence, while €23 million is earmarked in 2024 (Ministry of Defence, 2023).

In the first half of April 2024, the Ministry of Defence announced a partial transformation of the structure and organization of the Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF). The planned increase in SAF manpower will lead to a larger volume of contracted reserve personnel and thus the territorial segment of the SAF that will operate exclusively on the national territory of Slovenia. The reinforced territorial component of the SAF will thereby complement the manoeuvre component of the SAF, i.e. the active component. Consequently, by the summer of 2024, an SAF Territorial Forces Command will be established at brigade level to oversee the planned territorial commands and the two existing territorial regiments. Two new regiments (each comprising one company-level detachment) will be established at the same time, followed by eight new territorial regiments within one year. A training centre will also be established within the SAF Territorial Forces Command, which will work exclusively in the field of strengthening and functioning of the SAF spatial organisation. In addition to the announced changes in the field of the SAF spatial organisation, the (re)establishment of the Aviation and Air Defence Brigade followed. By the end of 2024, the Engineer Battalion and the Nuclear, Radiological, Chemical and Biological Defence Battalion, as well as the Non-Kinetic Battalion Level Unit will be re-established. By next July, an unmanned combat air systems unit will be established (Ministry of Defence 2024a, 2024b).

In the second half of April 2024, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted another three more fundamental development-orientation documents in the field of defence, namely the Defence Strategy, the Military Strategy and the Civil Defence Strategy. All three documents are based on the Resolution on the National Security Strategy, and have also taken into account the latest security challenges facing Slovenia as a member of the EU and NATO.

The Defence Strategy dictates the pursuit of the following defence objectives: “to deter military and other threats and risks to national, collective and common security; to defend the independence, integrity and territorial integrity of the state and its interests in the framework of collective and common defence; to ensure the continuity of the functioning of the state and society”. The new Military Strategy is also relevant to the achievement of defence objectives, and sets out the following military strategic objectives: “credible and effective deterrence assured; sovereignty, spatial integrity and other vital interests of the Republic of Slovenia protected, secured and defended; credible contribution to and participation in collective defence and mutual assistance; visible contribution to international peace, security and stability; contribution to enhanced resilience of the state and society”. The importance of the Military Strategy also lies in the emphasis on strengthening our own military capabilities and only then relying on collective defence within the Atlantic Alliance and the European Union. The Civil Defence Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia complements the Military Strategy by involving the civilian part of society in the provision of national defence, namely “by supporting the Slovenian Armed Forces and the military defence of the country, maintaining the continuity of the functioning of the authorities, and economic and other activities important for the defence and the supply, protection and survival of the population.” (Ministry of Defence, 2024c)

2 THE SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ARMED FORCES

In the past, *Contemporary Military Challenges* has published several articles addressing the transformation of the armed forces from different perspectives: infantry squad, platoon and company transformation (Potočnik, 2020), capability transformation (Svete and Jankovič, 2009), military strategic reserve transformation (Vegič, 2017), peacekeeping transformation (Grošelj, 2009; Schmidl, 2009), on the transformation of NATO (Šteiner, 2010, 2017), on the transformation of the Slovenian Armed Forces (Šteiner, 2015, 2017) and the Hungarian Armed Forces (Padány and Földi, 2018), etc.

In this issue of *Contemporary Military Challenges*, we are publishing new perspectives on this topic from national and international experts.

The first contribution is by **Lawrence E. Cline** and is entitled *Planning for Strategic Information Operations*. In the paper, the author points out that military decision-makers need to act strategically in the planning and execution of information operations, as many military decision-makers currently consider information operations to be outside the military domain. At the same time, it also highlights the fact that information operations are both offensive and defensive in nature.

This is followed by a contribution by **Urban Praprotnik** entitled *The Principle of Distinction in Cyber Warfare*. Cyberspace is increasingly becoming the scene of various forms of attacks and other forms of action. In his paper, the author defines the importance and necessity of applying the principle of distinction when it comes to acting in cyberspace. This is because most cyber activities take place on civilian cyber infrastructure that enables (normal) life for the general population. Consequently, the principles of international humanitarian law must be applied to protect civilians also when it comes to operating in cyberspace.

Guillermo López-Rodríguez and **Daniel Montoya-Roldan** have written a paper entitled *Challenges and Prospects in Urban Warfare: An Analytical Framework*, which outlines the obstacles faced by modern conventional forces when fighting in urban environments. The dimension of military organisation, the use of dual-use technologies and the role of the civilian population are becoming key elements in modern urban warfare. Based on an analysis of the factors, the authors offer solutions for future urban warfare using both cognitive and kinetic actions.

Jelena Juvan's paper, *The Cumulative Effects of Conflict Drivers in the Sahel Region*, provides an analysis of different factors or causes that influence the security situation in the Sahel region of Africa. The author defines, analyses and classifies the factors into four main categories, and then analyses the interplay between these drivers of conflict. In doing so, it turns out that conflicts spread not only across national and regional borders, but also to neighbouring regions as well as to other

continents, making the Sahel one of the most problematic regions in the world in terms of security.

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