

History of the Western Balkans Gateway

A Geostrategic Consideration of Slovenian Territory



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Preface

Although the Western Balkans is not a geographical term, but a notion with emphasized geopolitical and geostrategic components, it refers to the territory of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Albania, excluding the territory of the Republic of Slovenia. The reason the name is associated with harm due to the close connection with the wars that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia. Today, all of these countries – Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Albania, and North Macedonia – were either the location of wars between 1992 and 1999 or indirectly involved in them, where this especially applies to Albania. While a state of war was also declared in Slovenia, the conflict's considerably lower intensity, shorter duration and significantly less severe consequences mean that one cannot compare this war with the wars in other territories of former Yugoslavia. The concept of the Western Balkans ascribes the countries with a common label where the processes of post-war reconstruction, national reconciliation, the persistence of ethnic tensions, the continuing presence of strong nationalisms, intolerance, anomalies with the functioning of democracy and, as a result, below-average economic development are still ongoing.

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Nevertheless, despite some similarities between the countries that make up the Western Balkans, several differences can be detected. A closer look reveals differences in political stability, the functioning of state institutions, economic development, and maintenance of fundamental democratic values: human rights, the rule of law, and freedom of speech. Perhaps the greatest of them lie in the demographic picture of the area where considerable ethnic fragmentation prevails. Yet, even more important are the religious divides that in the past, notably in times of war, represented the fundamental dividing line between warring groups. In the territory of the Western Balkans, two of the world's largest religions coexist: Christianity and Islam, and among Christians we must mention two subgroups: Roman Catholics and Orthodox. One also cannot compare economic development since we immediately encounter vast differences between the countries, albeit the key difference is in perception of their geopolitical future. Some countries see it as lying in the embrace of Western organizations (NATO and the EU) and, as a result, aim for the fastest possible rapprochement. For example, Croatia succeeded to the full extent by managing to enter the monetary union and the Schengen system. However, others do not express this kind of belief so clearly. The war in Ukraine has also added to the polarization between the Western Balkan countries as Serbia and the Serbian people living in Bosnia and Herzegovina have only modestly joined in the clear condemnations of Russia's aggression and are

not implementing the sanctions policy expected and implemented by European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) member states. This leads to the question: is there a future in which the Western Balkan countries will be more closely connected and live together amicably?

Even though Slovenia is excluded from the definition of the Western Balkans, such a dividing line cannot easily be defined on the map. This is particularly because it is a geopolitical definition of the area that significantly overlooks both the geographical and historical components. Geographically, the territory of Slovenia is completely integrated into the area of the Western Balkans. The Dinaric Karst mountain range, that begins in the territory of Slovenia, determines the geomorphological characteristics of the Western Balkans the most. The same is true of the river network, which has the largest surface runoff right into the general area of the Western Balkans. Geologically, climatically, and biogeographically, it is also possible to speak of a single region. Slovenia's close connection with the Western Balkans is even more evident in the region's historical development. Already the Roman Empire incorporated the entire region within its state, namely in the form of several different administrative areas. With the settlement of the Slavs at the end of the 6th century, the administrative component was also added to the ethnically unified settlement of the Slavic tribes. While they started their nationhood together, divergences in the subsequent course appeared over time. The first to recognize administrative supremacy was the Slovenian order, although others soon followed. The medieval particularism that, due to the region's geographical closedness and difficult passage through it, enabled the development of individual state formations (kingdoms) and thus specificity in both linguistic and cultural areas, was followed at the end of the historical epoch by the unification of the coexistence of the vast majority of Western Balkans territory under the rule of two regional superpowers. First, the area of Croatia was included in the Austrian state; second, a considerably larger part was in the Ottoman Empire from the 16th century onwards. This dominance of the superpowers left a mark on the peoples of the area in direct proportion to the length of political control over these territories. In this respect, the territory of Slovenia held a specific position. The influence of the almost three-century rule of the Ottoman Empire cannot be directly detected since it stopped expanding right on the borders of the Slovenian ethnic territory, which became a bulwark against the invasion of Islam into Central Europe. The stabilization of the situation under the Austrian Empire's auspices included the territories of Slovenia and Croatia in the central European space, whereas the southeastern part of the Western Balkans remained in the hands of Istanbul until the end of the 19th century. The Western Balkans experienced territorial consolidation at the end of the Great War and

the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians, renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929. The coexistence of the South Slavic peoples finally came to an end in 1991 when the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia finally disintegrated in numerous wars and new independent and independent countries arose from its ashes.

The book sheds light on the role and importance of the contact area – the area which Slovenians inhabited in the period from the early 19th century until 1991. This area rightly enjoys the position of an area of contact as it represents and throughout history has represented the entry point to the entire Balkan Peninsula on one hand and acts a bridge for the Western Balkans in reaching Central and Western Europe. Moreover, it is the only corridor south of the Alps running in a west–east direction and the way of travelling from the Cote d’Azur in France to the Pannonian plains and all the way to Ukraine in Europe’s East. Everyone who sought to control either the Balkans, South-East Europe and/or wanted to reach Eastern Europe was aware of this geostrategic location. A paraphrase of the famous geopolitical theorist, known for the theory of the central territory or the Heartland theory, Harold MacKinder,¹ who established the axiom that whoever wants to dominate the world must dominate the steppe territories of Eastern Europe, can be transferred to the level of the Slovenian ethnic space: whoever wants to dominate the Balkans must first dominate this territory or way of access. Military historical events in Slovenia have in many ways predicted the course and development of events in Western Balkans territory, which means that to properly understand the extremely intense development of events in the Western Balkans, a profound understanding of the military history of Slovenian ethnic territory is essential.

The present monograph is the result of 20 years of research work the authors have invested in the field of the military history of the territory known today as Slovenia. Certain parts of chapters in this book were the result of numerous papers we prepared as part of cooperation with other established military

1 The theory that divided the world land into two parts: the world island (Africa, Asia, and Europe) and the outer islands (both Americas, Australia) was based on the fact of the dominance of the central territory, which it defines in the territory of today’s Russian Federation. In his opinion, the resources (natural and human) of this area are so extensive that by conquering the peripheral territories (rimland) it can conquer the world. He sees the only weak geopolitical point of the central territory in Eastern Europe, which he sees as an avenue of access and a point of breakthrough from the point of view of the central territory (today’s Ukraine). Therefore, the extremely important role of this territory follows from this (MacKinder, 2018: 87).

historians as part of the Partnership for Peace program of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Alongside military historians, the Conflict Studies Working Group brings together a host of military museums, professors, and scholars from various military academies and researchers from a number of research institutes operating in the field of military history. As representatives of the Republic of Slovenia, more precisely the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ljubljana and the Institute of Contemporary History in Ljubljana, respectively, the two authors of this monograph have frequently presented the peculiarities, interesting findings, and characteristics the military history of Slovenia offers.

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Ljubljana, December 21, 2023

Vladimir Prebilič and Damijan Guštin

INTRODUCTION

Even though the territory of Slovenia is excluded from the definition of the Western Balkans, the line determining the area of the Western Balkans cannot be clearly defined. This is especially because it is a geopolitical definition of an area that significantly overlooks both the geographical and historical component. The territory of what is today Slovenia historically formed an important part of the Balkan Peninsula. Already the Roman Empire included this whole region in its state but divided into Italian and provincial parts. With the decline of Roman Empire, defense lines were erected to resist possible raids of the Barbarians. One of very important defense lines or “limes” was precisely in the Slovenian ethnic territory known as *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum*.² Comprising more than 100 towers and over 30 fortresses and being 130 kilometers in length, it withstood the invasions into ancient Italy and controlled all entries into the area of ancient Italy for more than 200 years.³

As early as antiquity, certain territories were recognized as geostrategically extremely important. These were contact areas, bridges between regions, or avenues of access to a particular area. In other words, geostrategic importance refers to a space that is decisive while planning either a defense or an attack. It thus may be seen as an area that conclusively influences the options chosen by decision-makers in the most critical situations. Areas that are geostrategically important are thus extremely interesting because who is in possession of them ensures either security or the geopolitical interests of certain nations. On one side, the loss of such a space typically represents a significant deterioration in security and leads to a smaller chance of guaranteeing the existence of the state. All these facts are

2 *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* is a Later Roman barrier system consisting of several sections of stone walls, towers, forts, and fortlets. The time of its construction dates back to the second half of the 3rd century when the Roman Empire was on the verge of collapse and shaken by civil wars and invasions of the intruders. The barrier system was part of the military defense system until the 5th century. Its purpose was to control the main crossings to ancient Italy (Italia). The positioning of individual barriers was quite geostrategic as they took full advantage of the natural formation of the terrain and consequently exploited its defense potential. This is the largest architectural venture from the Roman era in present-day Slovenia and is thus comparable with the biggest antique monuments in Europe (limes between the Rhine and Danube Rivers and Hadrian's Wall in England). It extends across Slovenia and Croatia between the Julian Alps and Rijeka (Kos, 2015: 6).

3 Kos, 2015: 6.

essential for understanding of the geostrategically important territories, which may also include the projection of military power. Such territories are, accordingly, a magnet for military conflicts.

When it comes to definitions, geostrategy can be characterized as a science dominated by the integration of two others: geography and war. It places the planning and management of war in the context of the geographical, physical, and artificial (man-made) characteristics of a given region. Geostrategy also demands the precise inspection of an area's geographical characteristics from the point where military forces are deployed through to the intended destination.⁴ Geostrategy so defined indicates a clear and always present connection with geopolitics. In the context of this monograph, geopolitics is defined as the spatial distribution of power⁵. If, in principle, space is more of a constant component (but not necessarily due to changes in geography – the disappearance of the Arctic ice is opening up new transport routes), then it is impossible to argue for power. It is an extremely variable component that changes not only in its scope but in its appearance as well. This therefore constantly changes the relations among countries, alliances, and regions, and hence the ways communication occurs between them, even in the most extreme of forms – war.⁶ When the Slavs settled at the end of the 6th century, the administrative and self-government component began to emerge in ethnic Slavic tribes, an era of statehood that gave birth to new states and kingdoms across the whole Western Balkans. Yet, this period was short-lived. The predecessor of Slovenia established a governed state known as the Duchy of Carantania. The region's geostrategic importance meant that Slovenian ethnic territory was a matter of interest of Bavarian lords. Access to the Eastern Alps and controlling the gateways to Pannonia and the Western Balkans were reasons for military intervention in the 8th century that ended in recognition of the overlordship of Bavaria. By 828, the territory of Carantania had been incorporated into the Frankish Empire, then governed by Charlemagne. However, following the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation the Slovenian

4 Tovy, 2015: 24–29. On the eve of the French Revolution, military reasoning in Europe began emphasizing the integration of the science of geography into war plans. Thinkers at the end of the 18th century – most prominently Humphrey Lloyd, Georg Friedrich von Tempelhoff, and especially Heinrich von Bülow – claimed that when a commander plans his military progress, he must conduct a geographical analysis of the given battlefield.

5 Dodds, 2007: 4

6 Naim, 2014: 22.

territory became part of it and consequently after five centuries Carantania became part of the Habsburg Empire.⁷

The period of the Turkish invasions showed how important the ethnic territory of the Slovenians was due to its transitory and thus indirectly defensive role. In order to prevent looting and economic damage in the area of the Austrian Empire, a special defensive system was formed made up of numerous fortifications and the mobilization of relocated Serbian families – Uskoks. The area called Vojna Krajina or Warland⁸ successfully stopped the Turkish incursions and defended the vital lands of the Habsburg state from destruction (Styria, Carniola, Carinthia).

Although the ethnic territory was administered by the Habsburgs for over 600 years, it was always a border area in two directions: to the west, the border between the Italian nation was increasingly strengthened and, upon the formation of the Kingdom of Italy, represented a contact area between Italy and Austria during the late 19th century, while to the south the border became blurred following the end of the Turkish threat in the 18th century, yet nevertheless was a contact area between the two entities during the existence of Austria-Hungary in the 19th century.

The contact continued during the Great War as the front line between the Central and Entente Powers in the form of the Isonzo Front ran through ethnic Slovenian territory. Three years of fighting, ending in the final victory of Italy, left a completely devastated area and many refugees behind. With the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy and creation of a new political formation, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians, renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929, the contact area took on two new dimensions. The western border, as defined by the Rapallo Treaty of 1920, was associated with a great deal of dissatisfaction and harsh conditions from the outset. Italy, which wanted additional territories

7 Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, 2008: 46–65.

8 This special defense belt that existed on the Croatian–Turkish border in the period 1463–1881 and with which the defense of the Habsburg Monarchy against the Ottomans was finally formed in the 16th century. It consisted of a border system of fortifications with military crews. Commanding positions belonged to the nobility of the Inner Austrian lands. Later, the Warland became a large Habsburg war province. The defensive belt consisted of the Croatian Military Region with the administration in Karlovac and the Slavonian Military Region with the administration in Varaždin. The inhabitants of the Vojna krajina (Krajišniki, Uskoki) were contract mercenary soldiers who, in addition to military duties, also had ‘police’, firefighting, and sanitation duties. In 1535, Emperor Ferdinand granted them personal freedom, land, and freedom of religion for their military service. The Krajišniks thus defended their land, while also holding back the Turkish incursions (Simoniti, 2000: 319–320).

and did not receive them, with the advent of fascism immediately began to show territorial tendencies, which led to border area being strengthened also in a defensive sense – the former Roman *limes* obtained a successor in a new line of fortifications and defensive elements under the common name Alpine wall and “the Rupnik line”.⁹

The basic geographical characteristics of the entry points leading into the Western Balkans, i.e., contacts and the settlement’s homogeneous ethnic structure, posed a challenge for all involved in managing the territory. Occupation units repeatedly encountered resistance, asymmetric, and unconventional warfare, the inseparable connection of space with the rest of the Western Balkans, and the geostrategic interests of all the neighboring nations. This manifested in

9 The Rupnik Line is a system of fortifications that the Kingdom of Yugoslavia began to build in the territory of western Slovenia before the Second World War as a defense against the Italian attack. It was named after a Yugoslav general of Slovenian origin, Leon Rupnik. The Italians were the first to start fortifying the border. They started building fortified barracks as early as the 1920s. Officially, it began to be fortified in January 1931 when they began to build a large number of under- and above-ground fortifications and barracks connected to the Alpine Wall. The Yugoslavs also thought about strengthening the border. The first initiative appeared in 1926, but nothing significant happened until 1935. In 1935, Italy’s conquest ambitions were revealed with the attack on Ethiopia, which was then followed by the conclusion of the Triple Pact with Nazi Germany. This forced the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to start seriously thinking about the defense of its border, especially with Italy, which at that time was considered the most dangerous potential opponent. Special construction teams were assembled for the construction of fortifications, which in 1935 numbered around 15,000 people, distributed in 12 units. At the beginning, the units were mainly made up of soldiers, who until 1937 mostly built roads and other infrastructure. By 1939, the number of builders had grown to 40,000, and the construction of concrete bunkers and other fortified positions began. During the German attack on Poland on September 1, 1939, the construction was taken over by the army. This called up a large number of reservists who were then used as construction workers. According to the plans, the construction of the fortifications was to be completed in 1947. Due to the lack of financial resources, the beginning of the Second World War and the need to fortify the remaining borders of the kingdom, the plans were greatly reduced in 1940. The original plan was inspired by the French and Czech fortifications, which were designed from smaller bunkers and larger underground fortifications arranged in two defensive lines. Financial constraints, the lack of time, and the German occupation of the Czech Republic, from where much of the material for the fortifications was imported, caused the plans to be changed considerably. The construction of large underground fortifications was stopped, and they concentrated more on the construction of smaller bunkers and fortifications; still, many fortifications were not completed until the April War in 1941. The defensive line never served its purpose as it was abandoned even before the Italian attack on Yugoslavia (Marković, 1995: 39–41).

the constant attempts to occupy and integrate this area into their countries. The monograph focuses on the period at the beginning of the 19th century when Napoleon Bonaparte entered Slovenian ethnic territory by occupying it and establishing the new political formation of the Illyrian province with Ljubljana as its capital. In this administrative unit, the French united the territory of the Western Balkans in a narrow sense – parts of Slovenia and Croatia, Istria, and Dalmatia. The soft underbelly (Churchill) was the access way to the center of the Austrian Empire, the capital of Vienna.¹⁰ However, rebels were also waiting for him on Slovenian territory, and started to carry out asymmetric attacks on the French Army using paramilitary units. Napoleon regulated this contact territory by directly controlling it ideologically and politically (the Illyrian provinces).¹¹ The Slavic component, which for the first time in history enjoyed national recognition, the use of language, a certain level of self-government and freedom of expression, never accepted supremacy, much less internalized it. This short period of occupation came to an end in 1813. Still, the spark remained – despite this territory being reintegrated into the Austrian state, it left behind a national charge, the desire for a different status for the Slavic component in the monarchy and, above all, the desire for change.

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- 10 The term “soft underbelly”, coined by former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Winston Churchill, was first used in Allied talks in the autumn of 1942 when activities were being planned for the Allied landings in Western Europe. From Churchill’s point of view, the soft underbelly represented a strategic avenue of access for allied units as he believed that the elimination in southern Italy would be significantly easier considering the real defense capabilities of fascist Italy. In this part, his assessment turned out to be appropriate, and all the military operations that followed the successful landing encountered difficult terrain and, as a result, slowed down progress and penetration across the Apennine Peninsula (Lawton, 1986). We use the term “soft underbelly” in the context of a strategic avenue of access not only to the Western Balkans region, but also as a geostrategically extremely important territory.
- 11 The Illyrian provinces were founded by Napoleon after Austria was forced to cede the western part of Carinthia, Carniola, Croatia, and Vojna Krajina southwest of the Sava River, Gorizia, Gradisca, Trieste, and Istria to France after the defeat in the Battle of Wagram. Napoleon established the Provinces for strategic and economic reasons. They cut off Austria from the sea and established a land connection with the Ottoman Empire. France would thus have military and economic control over both coasts of the Adriatic Sea. In addition, the Illyrian provinces acted as the defense of Italy, which held great strategic importance as it protected the French south-eastern border and also ensured control of the Alpine passes to Germany. The provinces were not formally part of the French Empire but were completely subordinate to it. The Illyrian provinces initially consisted of ten intendancies, and since the reform of 1811, seven provinces similar to French departments. The ecclesiastical territorial division was also rearranged in accordance with the new political boundaries (Melik, 1986).

The entire 19th century was accompanied by the modernization and slow industrialization of the Austrian (after 1866 Austro-Hungarian) Empire and a period of gradual Slovenian national self-determination. The latter was also expressed politically with the program of the national administrative-political unit of United Slovenia, a conglomerate of interests of the traditional ruling class, and with the growth of nationalisms. This became even more pronounced upon the outbreak of the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913. The Kingdom of Serbia proved the Southern Slavs could live in an independent nation state, that they were successful and had become a player on the international, mainly of course European, geopolitical chessboard. The conflict, which is geographically distant from the contact space of the Slovenian ethnic territory, was ideologically much closer. In these otherwise brutal conflicts, many volunteers recognized the possibility, perhaps even the necessity, of closer cooperation between the South Slavic nations. The process of building a South Slavic identity began, experiencing an ordeal with the beginning of the Great War. The war divided the area of the Western Balkans into two camps: its western part was forced to fight for the goals of the Central Powers, while its southeastern part became an example of heroic persistence on the part of the Entente forces. The year 1915 introduced added complexity to this situation which, after the signing of the London Pact,¹² drew a front line across the Slovenian and Croatian ethnic territory. The establishment of the Isonzo Front was understood as a national front that was defending the South Slavic western edge of the ethnic territory.

Yet, the end of this world conflict caused major geopolitical changes in the Western Balkans. The challenge was not only to manage the crumbling military systems and implement the demobilization process amid the emergence of new states and new military systems, but also that this was needed at a time of the post-war demarcation of new states and accompanying military conflicts. In October 1918, the South Slavs invoked self-determination and established a temporary South Slavic state stretching from the Soča River to the Drina River. With

12 The Treaty of London was signed on April 26, 1915, after amendments were agreed to by the original Entente powers. Italian Prime Minister Antonio Salandra presented the Italian parliament with the *fait accompli* the following week: Italy was to declare war within 1 month against all of the Entente's enemies. The treaty should, however, remain secret until the peace conference; this produced a paradoxical situation wherein the majority of Italian people, who had remained neutral, did not even know why they were fighting. Nonetheless, the other allies, especially the British – who had also promised a GBP 50 million loan to Italy – were satisfied, for now the balance of power seemed to shift decisively in favor of the Entente (Bosworth, 1983: 58).

very limited possibilities, they also formed an army with which they intended to establish ethnic borders in the north, with Austria and Hungary, even before the unification with Serbia, but with its help. Still, the biggest problem was the Italian occupation of areas that went beyond what the London Pact had given it. This unequal position led to the fundamental misunderstanding of the unified South Slavic state, established on December 1, 1918 – how to provide for the national independence of the three then considered national entities (Slovenians, Croats, Serbs) within a unified state.¹³ At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, the international community sought to find a peaceful solution to the conflicts, but was unsuccessful, at least in the case of forming of the borderline of the new state of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians separating Italy. This was determined only a year later by the two countries themselves, but in a way that satisfied almost all Italian aspirations. Nevertheless, setting the boundaries for the life of the southern Slavs in their country did not bring about pacification of the multiethnic space. Conversely, when ethnic tensions became unsustainable for coexistence, King Alexander Karadjordjević in 1929 imposed an autocratic regime on the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which only suppressed internal disputes. In this situation, and given the country's general economic weakness, the state could only provide national defense by relying on the superpower France and the "Little Entente" regional pact.¹⁴ Yet, following the intervention of Nazi Germany in the

13 The preliminary kingdom was formed in 1918 by the merger of the provisional State of Slovenians, Croats, and Serbs (itself formed from territories of the former Austria-Hungary, encompassing today's Bosnia and Herzegovina and most of today's Croatia and Slovenia) and Banat, Bačka, and Baranja (that were part of the Kingdom of Hungary within Austria-Hungary) with the formerly independent Kingdom of Serbia. At the same time, the Kingdom of Montenegro also proclaimed its unification with Serbia, whereas the regions of Kosovo and Vardar Macedonia had become parts of Serbia prior to the Great War. The state was ruled by the Serbian dynasty of Karadorjević, which previously ruled the Kingdom of Serbia under Peter the 1st from 1903 onward. Peter the 1st became the first king of Yugoslavia until his death in 1921. He was succeeded by his son Alexander the 1st, who had been regent for his father. He was known as "Alexander the Unifier" and renamed the kingdom "Yugoslavia" in 1929 (Iglič, 2018: 62).

14 The Little Entente was a mutual defense agreement among Czechoslovakia, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and the Kingdom of Romania during the period between the two World Wars. It was based on several treaties (1920–1921) and directed against German and Hungarian domination in the basin of the Danube River and toward the protection of the members' territorial integrity and political independence. During the 1920s, the three nations sought economic and political cooperation and negotiated alliances with France. After Adolf Hitler took power in Germany in 1933, members of the Little Entente established a Permanent Secretariat and a Permanent Council, composed of their foreign ministers. They met three

Central European and Southeastern space, all items of defense collapsed. The political leadership therefore tried to keep the country in a neutral position, which it could only maintain until March 1941 when, under pressure from Germany, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia joined the Axis powers. The Anglophile-oriented part of the political elite responded to the approach to the German camp with an immediate coup d'état, in turn leading to inevitable conflict.¹⁵

The Axis forces' attack on the Kingdom of Yugoslavia on April 6, 1941 exposed the internal crisis in the country. After just 14 days, the king's army surrendered after the king and the government had left the country, and the occupiers divided the territory of the former Yugoslavia among themselves. They established occupation systems that predicted the gradual erasure of the existence of some nations, and large parts of the country were unilaterally annexed by the invaders. This included the Slovenians, whose ethnic territory was divided up between Germany, Italy, and Hungary.¹⁶

times a year to direct a common foreign policy. Despite the facts, the three states increasingly adopted independent foreign policies, especially after Germany occupied the Rhineland (1936). After that, French support, upon which the alliance was relying, lost its value. The Little Entente lost its remaining political value in April 1937 when the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Kingdom of Romania denied a request by Czechoslovakia, then threatened by Germany, the entente pledged full military aid to a member that was a victim of an aggression. The alliance finally collapsed when Germany annexed the Sudeten area of Czechoslovakia in September 1938 (Carr, 1961: 72–76; Vanku, 1969).

15 The Yugoslav coup d'état took place on March 27, 1941 in Belgrade, Kingdom of Yugoslavia, when the regency led by Prince Paul Karadjordjević was overthrown and King Peter the 2nd fully assumed monarchical powers. The coup was planned and conducted by a group of pro-Western Serbian-nationalist Royal Yugoslav Army Air Force officers formally led by the Air Force commander, General Dušan Simović. The putsch was successful and deposed the three-member regency (Prince Paul, Radenko Stanković, Ivo Perović) and the government of Prime Minister Dragiša Cvetković. Two days prior to its ousting, the Cvetković government had signed the Vienna Protocol on the Accession of Yugoslavia to the Tripartite Pact (the Axis). The coup had been planned for several months, yet the signing of the Tripartite Pact spurred the organizers to carry it out, encouraged by the British Special Operations Executive. The military conspirators brought to power the 17-year-old King Peter the 2nd (whom they declared to be of sufficient age to assume the throne) and formed a weak and divided government of national unity with Simović as prime minister and Vladko Maček and Slobodan Jovanović as his vice-premiers. The coup led directly to the German-led Axis invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941 (Tomasevich, 2001: 23).

16 The invasion of Yugoslavia, also known as the April War or Operation 25, was a German-led attack on the Kingdom of Yugoslavia by the Axis powers which began on April 6, 1941 during the Second World War. The order for the invasion came in "Führer Directive No.

Even though the conditions to form a resistance movement seemed impossible, this is exactly what happened. There were even two different resistance movements, one based on Serbo-Yugoslav nationalism and the other on communist ideology. They represented different resistance strategies, one restrained resistance, the other immediate uncompromising resistance. A few months after the occupation, the communist-led resistance “national liberation” movement began with armed resistance. The guerrilla warfare, which underwent a complete transformation within the partisan units, was extremely successful. Although in complete asymmetry, the liberation units achieved significant successes precisely by using unconventional combat tactics. Retaliation against the civilian population was cruel.¹⁷ Yet, something similar happened on the part of the rebels who also wished to secure the support of the civilian population by force. Both resistance movements soon entered into conflict, leading to internecine clashes and attempts to remove the supporters of one group or the other. There was widespread religious-ethnically motivated violence against the civilian population in the central ethnically mixed area¹⁸. All this led to an extremely brutal civil war, which took place with the clear support of the occupying authorities. The consequences were drastic. The Western Balkans region lost as much as almost 7%

25”, which Adolf Hitler issued on March 27, 1941, following a Yugoslav coup d’état that overthrew the pro-Axis government. The Germans and their allies prepared around 2 million well-armed soldiers for the attack, who attacked the country from the directions of Italy, Germany (ex Austria), Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania. The poorly armed and demoralized Yugoslav army had no chance of victory against an enemy six times stronger and thus on April 17, 1941, after the government and the king had fled the country, they signed an unconditional capitulation (Tomasevich, 1975: 63).

- 17 Slovenian territory was divided between three occupiers. Germany took Gorenjska, Styria, and northwestern Prekmurje Region, Italy Notranjska, Ljubljana, and most of Dolenjska (the Ljubljana province), and Hungary most of Prekmurje Region. A few settlements were also occupied by the Independent State of Croatia. After the capitulation of Italy on September 8, 1943, the Ljubljana province was occupied by Germany.

The occupying regimes implemented a extremely violent process of assimilation and mass expulsion of Slovenians, the and settlement of members of their nationalities. They responded to acts of resistance with reprisals against civilians (Ferenc, 2006: 37).

- 18 Many settlements were damaged, a large number were completely destroyed, some were burned by the occupiers, others were bombed by the allies (Maribor, Jesenice), and thus reconstruction was the first task of the new authorities after the war. In the liberated territory, reconstruction began already during the war, but took place amid a general lack of mechanization, so they worked with pickaxes and shovels. Since reconstruction work became a civic duty, it was unpaid, and people of all classes, professions, and ages were mobilized for it (Fischer et al (eds.), 2005: 868–873).

of its population, equivalent to one of the highest blood taxes seen during the Second World War.¹⁹

The formation of the new Yugoslavia led by the Communist Party ensured more equality among the peoples who coexisted within it. The federally organized state, otherwise ideologically located in the then Eastern bloc, i.e., the area of interest of the Soviet Union, decided in the 1960s on a “third path”. This orientation enabled it to gain independence from Soviet patronage. The Informbureau conflict of 1948–1953,²⁰ which initially involved differing interpretations of communist doctrine, turned into an interstate conflict in which the Soviet Union used all means, including the threat of military intervention. Feeling endangered, Yugoslavia prepared for a possible intervention with several measures, accounting for an enormous share of the defense budget, consolidating the territory, by extending military service, and asking for assistance from the Western powers. The U.S.A. provided a considerable deal of economic and military aid in terms of tank and combat aircraft. It expected Yugoslavia to join the regional defense alliance along with Turkey and Greece (the Balkan Pact) and thereby indirectly the NATO pact. Still, when the Soviet pressure eased, Yugoslavia diplomatically

19 The war hit Slovenia hard. Of the people who had the right of residence in Slovenia during this period, 99,865 or more than 6.3% of the total population died during and immediately after the Second World War. This ranks Slovenia third in the world in terms of the number of victims (following Poland and the Soviet Union) (Deželak-Barič, 2014).

20 At the end of the Second World War, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) took over the leadership of Yugoslavia and, after the elections, proclaimed the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia. In forming its rule, the CPY leaned heavily on the Soviet Union (SU) and connected with it economically and militarily. In 1947, on Stalin's suggestion, an inter-party body for consultation and cooperation, known as the Information Bureau, was formed. Although its function was primarily advisory, Stalin misused it to carry out “discipline” of the Communist parties and indirectly of the countries where these parties were in power. Such conditions led to the first conflict and thus a severe crisis between the communist parties. The dispute between the SU and Yugoslavia may be characterized as ideological, yet it significantly altered the geopolitical situation in Europe and the world. The result of the dispute was the integration of Yugoslavia with the West, especially with the U.S.A., which saw a great opportunity to gradually break up the ideologically solid Eastern Communist bloc and reduce the area of direct influence of the West. With its strategic location, Yugoslavia also represented an important territory for creating an effective defense in the event of a Soviet invasion of the West as it closed the exit of the Northwest to the Adriatic Sea and the direction towards Italy. The Yugoslav political leadership made good use of this situation, as the West gave Yugoslavia the maximum irreversible (financial, economic, military) aid in Europe after the end of the Second World War. At the same time, upon signing the Balkan Pact in 1953 Yugoslavia came very close to the North Atlantic Alliance (Prebilič and Guštin, 2010: 866).

deviated from its commitments and opted for an independent defense system. Politically, however, it linked its position outside of the two blocs, cramped in the Cold War, to the decolonized Asian and African space, which began to unite in the Non-Aligned Movement.

As a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia became important for promoting international peace and security (Bogetić, 2019). Active participation in many United Nations peace-keeping operations further added to its international prestige. Nonetheless, its newfound position in international relations had little effect in the economic and security spheres. The death of the long-serving president, the economic inefficiency and leadership vacuum that ensued created many important differences between the peoples of Yugoslavia. Most importantly, this included differences in views on their future coexistence. While Serbian nationalism saw the solution lying in centralization of the state and gradual domination of the Serbs, the understanding of both the Croats and Slovenians was diametrically opposed. Differences could already be seen in the 1960s when its autonomous territorial component was formed within the framework of the independent defense system of “general people’s defense”.²¹ While for the Slovenians this was a step

21 The Warsaw Pact attack on Czechoslovakia in 1968 convinced the Yugoslav political and military elite that Yugoslavia needed a more effective armed force. Therefore, the doctrine of general popular defense was adopted. The Territorial Defense of the Republics and Provinces was established. The main headquarters for general popular resistance was established in Slovenia on November 20, 1968. Following the experiences of the Second World War, the Territorial Defense (TD) was organized mainly in the form of detachments. In the organization of the armed forces, the TD played the role of auxiliary forces of the YPA. The language of command was Slovenian. The members of the TD felt like Slovenian soldiers and the residents accepted them in the same way. The command of the Slovenian TD tried to arm its units better than was planned by the YPA. Thus, the leadership was dismissed, and the army began to subordinate its headquarters and units more and more. Especially after 1974, ever more of the most responsible duties in the TD were taken over by active YPA officers. With Serbia’s increasingly obvious goals to subjugate the whole of Yugoslavia, mistrust of the Slovenian TD was growing. The democratic changes in Slovenia, which were crowned with the victory of the opposition at the 1990 elections, prompted the central government in Belgrade to issue an order to the Republic Headquarters of the TD (RŠTO) to disarm the units of the Slovenian TD. The story from 1945 was repeated when the Slovenian army was disarmed and subordinated to Belgrade. However, the order to disarm and surrender weapons was not fulfilled in all headquarters. In line with the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia and the General People’s Defense Act, the Ministers of Defense and Internal Affairs in the first democratically elected government of the Republic of Slovenia armed the Maneuver Structure of National Defense (MSNZ), which was the backbone of the creation

towards the republics participating in defense, the generals of the Yugoslav Army and the Serbian political elite saw this as possibly facilitating internal conflict in the country. How right they were shown to be in 1991. After the decision of both the Slovenians and Croats to separate from the federal state, which was also made possible by the SFRY Constitution, the Western Balkans found itself in a whirlwind of war. The premises of this war moved from west to east, from Slovenia through Croatia to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and then to Kosovo. The war reflected all the good and bad features of the Yugoslav system of general peoples' defense. The new states established their armed forces based on territorial defense formations and militias, while the Yugoslav People's Army (hereinafter YPA) maintained its integrity and acted ever more like an army of the emerging Serbian state, especially the Serbs living in Bosnia and Herzegovina. By the time the former state disintegrated, the war was responsible for about 300,000 dead, twice as many wounded, and completely destroyed infrastructure.²²

Slovenia's independence is an exception in this respect. The day following the proclamation of an independent state, the Yugoslav army intervened to a limited extent, officially to secure the borders of Yugoslavia and the customs regime. During the preliminary preparations, the leadership decided to defend itself against the ongoing intervention, mobilized the defense forces consisting of the Territorial Defense and the Militia, and opposed the intervention forces. As

of the Slovenian Armed Forces, in utmost secrecy. In the TD, on the one hand a narrow circle was formed, which stood by the YPA while, on the other there was the vast majority of TD members, who had accepted the democratization of Slovenian society with sympathy. The conflict reached its peak in October 1990 when the federal army forcibly occupied the RŠTO premises. After this event, the Slovenian authorities appointed a new Chief of Staff who assumed command on October 10. A sector for the development of territorial defense was established in RŠTO. In December, a new TD sign was introduced, and rank insignia were adopted. The first new uniforms were made. In May 1991, the training of conscripts began in two training centers. The first soldiers took the oath to the Slovenian state on June 2 (Kladnik, 2006a: 6–14).

- 22 Material and economic damages brought by the conflicts were catastrophic. Bosnia and Herzegovina had a GDP of between US\$ 8–9 billion before the war. The government estimated the overall war damages at US\$ 50–\$70 billion. It also registered a GDP decline of 75% after the war; 60% of the housing in the country had either been damaged or destroyed, which proved a problem when trying to bring all the refugees back home. Bosnia also became the most landmine-contaminated country in Europe: 1,820 km² of its territory was contaminated with these explosives, representing 3.6% of its land surface. Between 3 and 6 million landmines were laid across Bosnia. Five thousand people died from them, among whom 1,520 were killed after the war (World Bank Annual Report, 1996: 10).

these penetrated in the form of motorized columns, armed conflict remained limited and controlled. In addition, the intervention came as a shock to the YPA's multinational conscription team, and its units faced the mass surrender and desertion of soldiers of those nations that were opposed to the Serbian centralist rise to power. In these circumstances, the asymmetric conflict ended in Slovenia's favor, and the pressure of the international community brought an end to the conflict and imposed a 3-month moratorium to reach a political agreement on further coexistence in the country. Faced with defeat and under pressure from the Serbian leadership to establish a Greater Serbia state instead of a South Slavic state, the military leadership decided to withdraw unilaterally from Slovenia. Such autonomy and independence achieved on the basis of a legal and just war – especially from the engagement of Slovenian defense capacities – is a rare example of state-building in Europe and around the world. Why was this the case? How was this possible in Slovenia, but not in other countries of former Yugoslavia? In which ways can the independence of Slovenia be legal and fair? This along with several other issues are also highlighted in this book.

For those living in the contact space of the Western Balkans, the 21st century represented life in otherwise independent and sovereign countries, albeit with many challenges. Integration into the Euro-Atlantic integration, the establishment of national security systems and assumption of shared responsibility for ensuring international peace and security are the realities of today. While these seem to be less important challenges, modern societies in the region show a considerable degree of misunderstanding of the role and importance of the national security system. The defense system is becoming the center of political debate, putting the future of its operation in a precarious position. If at the beginning of the century the key question was whether the countries of this area wanted to unite in a defense organization, today (apart from Serbia) this question has become ever more relevant. However, NATO integration is slower, entailing major reservations and time extensions, and thus remains an unfinished process. The reverse situation is seen with veterans whom civil society regards as a burden and not as the most patriotic segment of any social community. All this can be attributed to the relatively high level of security illiteracy. The Slovenian reality is the plurality of veterans organizations divided according to the war (resistance movement during the Second World War, the war for independent Slovenia in 1991) and status (police veterans, veterans of the Territorial Defense, war invalids).

These dilemmas are also reflected in the post-independence development of the Slovenian defense system. Following the completion of transforming the Territorial Defense into the state army within the first 5 years, a decade-long effort to enter the Euro-Atlantic defense space began with the state leadership's

tendency to engage in collective defense. During this time, joining a defense alliance became an important internal political issue, fueled not only by the importance of the national defense strategy. The political struggle over defense issues did not end even after the successful referendum on joining NATO and joining the defense alliance. At the same time, the incompetence/corruption of defense system leaders led to ill-considered strategic decisions on armaments systems, replenishment, and the operation of the army abroad, which together with the economic crisis in 2009–2015 led to the neglect of the defense system. With new security challenges, it again faced the dilemma of how and to what extent to develop the territorial forces not only to defend Slovenia but also being able to intervene in joint operations far from home.

24

Knowing the history of the entry point for the Western Balkans, otherwise the ethnic territory of the Slovenian nation makes it easier to understand current events in the otherwise turbulent area, which still poses a major security challenge in the field of non-military sources – immigration flows into Europe and modified security risks – organized crime, terrorism, drug trafficking, and white goods. How and especially when this area will obtain a different, more positive geopolitical connotation, is almost impossible to predict nowadays. A step in this direction would no doubt entail the more intensive European integration of the Western Balkans in terms of EU membership. But along the way, many systems must first be significantly improved along with the understanding of the functioning of modern democracies, human rights, the rule of law, freedom of the media and speech. Namely, democracy in the independent Republic of Slovenia is still developing.

CONQUEST FROM THE WEST – GEOSTRATEGY AND NAPOLEONIC MILITARY OPERATIONS

Historically, the territory today encompassed by the Republic of Slovenia has been geostrategically very important, especially due to the huge interests of the great powers throughout history. Direct claims of ownership of this area emerged in the Roman Empire, the Republic of Venice, the Habsburg Austrian Empire, and Napoleon's Empire. The central reason for this is that Slovenian territory has represented the only strategic land gateway south of the Alpine mountain range in the east–west direction and vice versa. Moreover, this route has been considered to be the shortest way for the landlocked states of Central Europe to access the Adriatic Sea and Northern Italy. From the military point of view, most of the strategic concepts viewed this territory as a breakthrough corridor, not just in the aforementioned direction but also as a starting point for accessing all of South-east Europe. Passability was especially ensured by the Ljubljana Gap and crossing through the valley of the Fella River (the direction from Udine to Villach). The Ljubljana Gap is a low-altitude passage from the Adriatic Sea and the Po Valley to the basin of the Danube River as well as to the Alps in the north. In fact, this gateway involves a series of narrow passages (Razdrto, Ravbarkomanda, Trojane), where none is higher than 600 meters above sea level.²³ The other strategic direction, which however was losing its importance quickly, was the direction Udine – Gorizia – Kobarid – Tarvisio – Villach, and the even more important variation Udine – Pontebba – Tarvisio – Villach. This direction formed part of the path that crossed the Alps in the Middle Ages, making the Hohe Tauern passable in the direction from Freisach to Leoben and Judenburg. This direction already became less important during the 18th century as it included at least three high mountain passes unsuitable for freight transport.

23 Bufon, 2003: 123–139.

This geostrategic perception led to many decisive battles, the creation and maintenance of defense lines and defense systems, preparation of strategic military plans and, last but not least, intensive diplomatic presence. The geostrategic importance of the territory grew and started to become highly important especially in cases of open confrontations between regions or states. Besides being a purely geostrategic location and holding significance, Slovenian territory must also be seen as an example of a contact region. Here (within an area of 20,500 km²) four basically geomorphologic units meet: Karstic, Alpine, Pannonian, and Mediterranean. Each of these defines all other physical geographic characteristics like climate, hydro-geographical facts, vegetation, and soil.²⁴ If geostrategy is understood as a subfield of geopolitics and a type of foreign policy, guided principally by geographical factors, given that these factors inform, constrain, or affect political and military planning, then the role of geographical space should not be underestimated.²⁵ This also means that mutual cooperation is essential in order to understand the geographical features of the region and the most important strategic decisions of military strategists. In the case of a transitional or contact landscape, this all becomes even more necessary because of its key feature – the possibility of passage or transit. A very important question is thereby raised: the question of security and consequently defense, not only of the contact landscape, but even more importantly the security of all the neighboring areas. Suitable answers to this question were offered by many military planners and geostrategic thinkers. Yet, while conducting military planning, two aspects should be taken into account: (1) the passability of an area is a positive factor, enabling spatial openness and unimpeded communication with the neighboring regions, which leads to better development overall; and (2) the passability of an area might also be viewed as a negative factor, requiring a great deal of careful defense planning and representing an (in)security challenge for all neighboring regions. However, in these aspects, supervision and control of the contact landscape is essential.²⁶ This explains why the territory nowadays known as Slovenia has been used as a site for battlefields, the construction and implementation of different defense lines, and all sorts of defense systems ever since antiquity.

At the start of the 18th century, the Habsburg Monarchy established the central trade route between Vienna and Trieste as the most important harbor of its

24 Melik, 1964: 6–9.

25 Palka, 2005: V.

26 Cohen, 2003: 12.

lands. Emperor Karl VI built the main commercial road running between Trieste and Vienna.²⁷ Therefore, this territory became more important in terms of trade and, due to the military logistics of the time, also gained military significance. As a result, the passage from the Friuli lowlands to Villach gradually became less important. At the end of the 18th century, the Habsburg state as a regional superpower did not have any significant opponents along its southern border since the Venetian Republic was then only a pale shadow of its former self in the Northern Adriatic (Agnoli, 2006). After a century of wars with the Ottoman Empire, the reconquest of Hungary became a fact, and the lively colonization added to the power and economic significance of the Pannonian plains. Only Bosnia remained an exposed Turkish bastion, extending far towards the west.

The geostrategic situation in 1797, 1805, and 1809: similarities and differences

In the spring of 1797, 8 years following the revolution in Paris, which also resounded among the nationally still undeveloped Slovenian national elite, General Napoleon Bonaparte, commander of the Italian Army, took advantage of the opportunity presented him in the north of Italy and conducted a forceful military campaign towards the east. He saw Italy as the soft underbelly of the Habsburg lands, and that it was strategically vital to drive the Austrian units out and protect the territory, which could represent a vulnerable right flank of Napoleon's campaign during the planned breakthrough and war in Central Europe. At the same time, this sole natural passage south of the Alps would allow the Austrian units to directly invade southern France, where the core of the French navy's might and a direct exit into the Mediterranean Sea were located. Napoleon himself was well aware of these geostrategic characteristics of the Northern Italian plains and the territory of what is today Slovenia. In this context, Northern Italy was to be the corridor to Austria. By drawing Austria's forces into successive offensives against him in Italy and by defeating them there, Napoleon obtained an open road to Austria 12 months later.²⁸

27 Holz, 1994: 14–16.

28 Liddell Hart, 1991: 99.

The conquest of the Habsburg lands in Lombardy was not enough for Napoleon. Instead, he reached far to the east, towards the Venetian Republic and Habsburg hereditary lands. The purpose of his military campaign was to invade the territory north of the Alps, and to that end he envisioned several invasion directions. The army he personally commanded was deployed in the Friuli lowlands, and then crossed the Alps in three directions. The main body of the army invaded in the direction Udine – Villach, whereas the right flank proceeded through the Ljubljana Gateway towards Carniola and Styria.

The Habsburg Army's task was to defend this territory, although it was unsuccessful because everything had already been decided in Italy. Namely, already on January 14, 1797 Napoleon achieved a decisive victory near Rivoli, and the Austrian garrison at the fortress of Mantua surrendered.²⁹

Since both sides persisted, in March the war intensified. Napoleon's primary body, consisting of three divisions, advanced towards the Piave and Tagliamento Rivers, while Masséna's division advanced towards the foothills of the Venetian Alps. The main body of the army then headed north towards the passages into the Isonzo valley and Carinthia. The southern, right flank of the French Army followed the coastline towards Trieste, which it conquered on March 22, before advancing towards Fiume/Rijeka. Bernardotte's division followed the retreating main body of the Austrian Army towards Ljubljana. The Austrian Army would close the passages over the rivers but did not initiate any decisive battles since it retreated towards Ljubljana through Gorizia.³⁰ However, the important passages leading to the interior of the Habsburg Empire were not defended. When the stronghold at Gradisca d'Isonzo fell on March 19, the way for the French Army was open. The retreating Austrian Army only established a defense after having retreated 80 kilometers inland, at the old Chiusoforte (in Pontebba Valley) and the Kluže Fortress (before the Predel mountain pass). They could only hold back the three advancing brigades of the French Army until March 24. Still, on March 22 the French Army was already in Tarvisio, on the Carinthian side of the Val Canale pass in the direction of Villach. The central counterattack, led by the commander of the retreating Austrian forces Archduke Karl, was carried out by the Austrian Army outside of Tarvisio on the same day, but was strongly defeated. Not all of the Austrian troops were able to retreat (especially the artillery stayed

29 Liddell Hart, 1991: 100–105; Tancik, 1964: 48.

30 Tancik, 1964: 48–50.

behind), and they surrendered to the French (3,000 men, 25 cannons and 400 carts).³¹

On the other hand, the majority of the Austrian Army did not attempt to keep the French Army back at the passages leading towards the east. In 3 days, the division commanded by General Bernardotte already arrived in the Ljubljana Basin via the Razdrto Pass and turned northwards, crossing the Ljubelj mountain pass and entering Carinthia.³²

Over the next 2 weeks, Napoleon and his army advanced to Carinthia and from there to Leoben. The advance formations reached the Semmering Pass, from where the French Army already endangered Vienna. The French Rhine Army was much slower, crossing the Rhine as late as in April 1797, and thus Napoleon wanted to buy some time with a ceasefire. The Austrian side realized there was a possibility of complete military defeat. The ceasefire in Leoben and then the peace Treaty of Campo Formio put a stop to the military campaign. Over the next few weeks, the French Army retreated to Italy, following the same routes.³³

The Year 1805

Eight years later, war between France and the Third Coalition of Great Britain, the Habsburg Empire, Russia, and Sweden broke out. The Coalition had around 400,000 men at its disposal on the line running from the Baltic to the Adriatic Sea. In the spring and summer of 1805, Napoleon gathered all his forces in Germany, reorganizing them into army corps.³⁴ However, the Austrians deployed two armies in the south, in the Alps and in Italy, with the intention of conquering Northern Italy in case of the French weakening. Namely, Archduke Karl, the military commander of the Habsburg Italian Army, believed that Italy was the “first and most preferable theatre of war”.³⁵ In this way, based on his experience from 1797, he intended to protect the Alpine Habsburg lands and the passage

31 Klavora, 2003: 130–138.

32 Tancik, 1964: 49–50.

33 Tancik, 1964: 50.

34 Fischer, 2001: 25; Gates, 1997: 18–20.

35 Gates, 1997: 19.

to Vienna. He gathered an army of around 95,000 troops along the Enns River. Archduke Johann proceeded to Tyrol with an army of 25,000 men.³⁶

Masséna's Italian army with 50,000 troops could only be deployed after Napoleon had already ensured a strategically decisive victory near Ulm, for which he engaged a major part of the Austrian forces from Tyrol and north of that territory in the battle.³⁷

On October 10, 1805, Masséna stopped outside of Caldiero near Verona, where the main body of the Austrian Army had been fortified. In the Battle of Caldiero on October 31, 1805 he was unsuccessful. He retreated to Verona, but the French strategic victory north of the Alps changed the situation completely. Napoleon's strategic victory there led to the hasty retreat of the Austrian Italian Army. Between November 2 and 14, these forces retreated from Verona to the Isonzo River, and in the ensuing days all the way to Graz and Western Hungary. In Carinthia, they came across the retreating forces of the Tyrol Army. The weaker French units, including those from Tyrol (Commander Ney), followed the Austrian army inland. As the French Army had already conquered Vienna on November 29, 1805, the further operations proceeded in a well-coordinated manner, from the north towards Graz and from the Celje–Maribor and Klagenfurt–Konjice directions, where the French forces had joined. As far as the southern passages were concerned, the Pressburg Peace Treaty restored the pre-war situation.³⁸

The French Army's advance through the Prealpine passages in the Slovenian territory proceeded in almost the same way as in 1797. In the main direction of the retreat from Gradisca to Ljubljana, the Austrian Army established defense positions at Kluže Fortress and at Razdrto, where it intended to stand up to its opponents who were pursuing them. However, at a critical moment the Austrian Army retreated without putting up a fight. The French Army was therefore able to reach Razdrto on November 16, Ljubljana around November 24, before continuing with its advance, following the retreating Austrian Army through the Trojane mountain pass towards Celje and Maribor.³⁹

36 Tancik, 1964: 53; Gates, 1997: 19–20.

37 Gates, 1997: 24–25.

38 Tancik, 1964, 52–53.

39 Tancik, 1964, Klavara 2003a, 138–140.

The Year 1809

In early 1809, the security situation of France had once again weakened considerably. The Fifth Coalition put together by Great Britain was finally ready, while the military operations in Spain and in Portugal were expanded. The Habsburg Empire had joined the coalition as early as in the autumn of 1808 and started to prepare to mobilize the army. Napoleon was only beginning to concentrate the French Army in the east. He expected the main battlefield would be in Germany and began to deploy forces in the Upper Rhineland (around Freiburg), in Bavaria and around Regensburg.⁴⁰

Although Italy was once again important, it was a secondary battlefield. Napoleon only designated 45,000 troops for that territory, who gathered at Vicenza, while another 15,000 men were deployed in Lika in French Dalmatia in what is today Croatia.⁴¹

The Austrian Empire had already been intensively preparing itself for war since the beginning of the year. On February 8, the order to mobilize was issued. The Austrian military leaders considered Germany to be the main battlefield while Italy, Dalmatia, and Poland were secondary ones. Approximately 200,000 men were sent to the German battlefield, whereas the Italian Army, tasked with defending the entrance from Northern Italy, was made up of two corps, the 8th and 9th.⁴² For the first time in the central territories, the Austrian Empire also established the “Landwehr” (Home Guard), namely, auxiliary forces to protect the hinterlands and to strengthen the regular army, which would thereby not need to deploy so many troops for protection. These militia units, established pursuant to the Emperor’s Decree of June 8, 1808, had barely been able to organize themselves, receive some training and carry out the first exercises before military conflicts began. The army’s preparations were accompanied by an extensive propaganda action organized by the authorities in order to entice the multinational population to join the war against the French.⁴³

Military operations commenced on April 11, 1809 when the Austrian forces started to move towards Villach, Tarvisio and Pontebba in order to reach the

40 Gates, 1997, 100–102.

41 Boppe, 2005, 24–25.

42 Gates, 1997, 113.

43 Klavara, 2003b, 16–17.

Friuli lowlands. Initially, the French troops (*Armee d'Italie*) mostly retreated, even over the Piave River, regrouping at Caldiero near Verona. On April 30, the strategic situation altered completely. Due to the defeat of the Austrians in Bavaria (Danube Campaign, Landshut, April 19–23), the Austrian Italian army started to quickly retreat towards Carinthia. By May 6, it had already crossed the Tagliamento River, reaching Graz in Styria as early as on May 24. The empty space was occupied by the French units. The French Army advanced in two directions, with the right flank headed through the valley of the river Fella towards Villach, Klagenfurt and Leoben. On 2 June the French reached Wiener Neustadt. The left flank of the Austrian Army, retreating in the direction Gorizia – Ljubljana – Zagreb, was followed by the French to Ljubljana; the French then headed towards Graz and finally were given orders to advance towards Vienna.⁴⁴

Despite the swift retreat, the Austrian Army defended passages in the north in the direction from the basin of the Soča River as well as those leading towards Ljubljana. In the meantime, the army was building improvised strongholds at Predel and Kluže – passages running through the valley of the Soča River. The passage through the valley of the Fella River was defended by Austrian garrisons in the redoubts and fortifications at Malborghetto, Predel, and Tarvisio. However, these garrisons, which had left, were incapable of holding the French forces back for a long time. Under the command of Eugen de Beauharnais, the French Army advanced through the Val Canale valley with 5,000 troops and through the Soča valley with a single brigade. The Malborghetto fortress defended itself between May 14 and May 18, while the fortresses at Tarvisio held on from May 16 to 18. The garrison of the stronghold at the Predel Pass defended itself fiercely, with 223 defenders being killed between May 15 to 18.⁴⁵ The Austrian Army also set up a defense in the direction Gorizia–Ljubljana. Near Razdrto, it strengthened the fortifications already built 4 years prior, deploying a large unit of the Home Guard (*Landwehr*) there. Around 3,000 workers were busily building five strongholds until the last minute before the battle. The advancing French forces attacked on May 17, 1809, succeeding to break through the fortifications in 4 days and capturing a significant number of soldiers. The advancing French Army also engaged in minor clashes on the road between Ajdovščina and Logatec near Col and Podkraj, where the Austrian division had deployed only modest defending capacities.⁴⁶

44 Tancik, 1964, 54–56.

45 Klavara, 2003b, 122–244.

46 Klavara, 2003b, 248–277; Švajncer, 1999, 66–69.

On May 19, the French forces reached Vrhnika, and on May 21 they arrived in Ljubljana. The corps commanded by General Marmont, heading from Lika via Rijeka and Ljubljana on towards Vienna, also joined these forces. From there, the French troops quickly proceeded northeast since they had to join up with the main army, which had advanced up to the Danube River. This army was defeated near Aspern on May 21 and 22.⁴⁷

The final decision was reached in the battle of Wagram on July 5 and 6 1809 where Napoleon's Army saw victory. A ceasefire took place immediately after the battle, and the new peace treaty imposing difficult conditions for the Habsburg Empire was signed on October 14 in Schönbrunn. This very peace treaty indicated Napoleon's far-reaching plans with the southern passages leading to the basin of the Danube River.⁴⁸

However, unlike the previous military campaigns, this time Napoleon did not decide for the French to retreat from this territory. According to the need to control as much of the coast as possible in order to ensure the efficiency of the continental blockade, he decided to thoroughly reorganize the territory in the hinterlands of the Adriatic, including control of the most important Prealpine passages leading to the basin of the Danube River and northeast. Under the Schönbrunn Peace Treaty, the Austrian Empire had to surrender the territory from Villach in the north to the territories of the Croatian Banate in the Northern Dalmatian hinterlands. Thus, Napoleon succeeded in uniting a very diverse territory which until then had belonged to the century-old Habsburg provinces of Carinthia, Carniola, Istria, and Croatia, together with Dalmatia and Dubrovnik. He bound these territories together within the 'Illyrian Provinces', with the capital in Ljubljana. The Provinces were established upon Napoleon's decree the day after signing the peace treaty in Schönbrunn in 1809. While they did not form part of France they enjoyed a special position. The population had its own citizenship, albeit this does not mean the French administration did not try to unite these lands as much as possible and introduce the French administrative apparatus.⁴⁹ Vojna krajina (the Military Frontier) with its disproportionately strong military force of border guards, consisting of six regiments, received considerable attention. The military administration saw these units as one of the important regional resources.⁵⁰ In the remaining territory, a military administration was introduced,

47 Gates, 1997, 127–134.

48 Gates, 1997, 135–140.

49 Zwitter, 1964, 29–36; Šumrada, 2006: 43–58.

50 Boppe, 2004: 33–50, 62–63.

involving only a minor percentage of servicemen, although the Illyrian Regiment was nevertheless used in the Grande Armée structures during the military advance towards Russia.⁵¹ So long as France could maintain its military supremacy on the European continent, its authority regarding this territory remained in place.

However, in the autumn of 1813, after Napoleon's defeat at the Battle of Leipzig, the Austrian Army mustered up the courage and invaded the territory of the Illyrian Provinces. Between August 1813 and January 1814, the Austrians managed, assisted by the Montenegrin and British armies, to conquer all of the Illyrian Provinces.⁵² The French Army then permanently retreated from the territories beside the Adriatic.

51 Vodopivec, 2003, 22–29; Švajncer, 1992, 69–74; Boppe, 93–148.

52 Tancik, 1964, 57–62.

WESTERN BALKANS UNIFIED: 1912–1913

During the summer of 1912, newspapers across the Habsburg Monarchy began reporting on growing tensions in the Balkans. Of course, the Austro-Hungarian authorities had already been informed of these developments as they had been watching Serbia closely given their over one decade of strained relationship with this Balkan state. Nevertheless, their main attention was turned to the south-western part of the Balkans, which was the primary sphere of Austro-Hungary's influence. Here, the Monarchy was opposed by Serbia where the dominant part of political structure stressed the policy of Greater Serbia. The fundamental idea of this policy was that the yet "unredeemed brethren" within the Habsburg Monarchy held the right to national self-determination. It is clear this emphasis chiefly referred to Bosnia and Croatia. Yet, as Serbia was ascribed the role of the Southern Slavic "Piedmont", these concepts gradually spread across all the Southern Slavic nations in the Monarchy, including the Slovenians, who had been living for the longest time and to the largest extent in Cisleithania.

The Circumstances on Slovenian Territory

The Slovenian nation began the early 1910s as one of the smaller national communities of the Habsburg Monarchy, Austro-Hungary. The lion's share of its population, around 95%, lived in Cisleithania and the rest in the border region of Hungary. It was a nation that had been unable to rely on any internal political border during the course of its national formation. Being traditionally in the orbit around the Holy Roman Empire of German Nation and the Austrian Empire, the Slovenian nation experienced its national awakening and self-definition within the boundaries of traditional inner Austrian lands formed back in medieval times: Styria, Carinthia, Istria, Trieste, and Gorizia-Gradisca. The Slovenian nation was the predominant ethnicity only in Carniola and managed to comprise about 95 % of this land's inhabitants through national formation during the 19th century. Elsewhere, Slovenian population was a minority and enjoyed less political representation because of predominant German language and cultural

setback. National formation was constituted against the German one; the lands where Slovenians were the weaker partner, this process had to once again undergo fierce struggles to resist the pressures exerted on it by the concept of Greater Germany. Moreover, it was not simply concepts that were fought against, but also economic, administrative, and cultural pressures, where however the state authorities were not entirely neutral since they operated subject to the inertia of the supranational state, the empire, whose nations were mere decorations – only to become ever more of a nuisance – of that state's operation.⁵³

This situation meant the political transmission of ideas and to a large extent their creation as such was only performed by political representatives. While the parliament in Vienna was already operating on the basis of universal suffrage, the assemblies of the individual lands were still a combination of the previous estate representation (cities, peasants, landowners, the general curia) and land deputies elected based on universal suffrage.⁵⁴ Slovenian political life was directed by political parties, which were only created as late as in the final decade of the 19th century:

- 1892: “Slovenska ljudska stranka” (the Slovenian People's Party, a conservative party based on the principles of Catholicism);
- 1894: “Narodna napredna stranka” (the National Progressive Party, with a liberal orientation); and
- 1896: “Jugoslovanska socialdemokratska stranka” (the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party).

Considering election outcomes, the Slovenian People's Party enjoyed the support of about 70% of the Slovenian constituency of the time, followed by the liberal party, which had about 15% support; around 5% of voters preferred the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party. The remaining part of the Slovenian constituency also voted for German conservative parties. According to the overall election arrangements, Slovenians held around 15 seats in the Vienna parliament distributed across several deputy groups according to members' political adherence.⁵⁵ The most crucial of these groups were “Slovenski klub”, the Slovenian Club (the clericalists' deputy club) and “Zveza južnih Slovanov”, the Southern Slavic

53 Ibid., 26–36.

54 Melik, 1999: 539–543.

55 Melik, 1965.

League (liberal deputies), in which Slovenian members of the Vienna parliament had either leading or very important positions.⁵⁶

The fundamental Slovenian political program, already defined in 1849, was “Zedinjena Slovenija” – United Slovenia, which highlighted the need to create a single administrative and political entity on the basis of Slovenian ethnic territory. Even though this program was not always explicitly called for by Slovenian politics of the time, the achievement of a single Slovenian political entity within the Monarchy was a mainstay of Slovenian political parties’ aspirations. Such a principle would call for a federate reorganization of the state and also entail doing away with the organization of the state based on the lands.⁵⁷

In the period of escalating internal national tensions inside the Monarchy, the Slovenian political elite once more started to look for a wider alliance due to its unsuccessful efforts at forming a Slovenian national entity and the pressures exerted by the concepts of Greater Germany, which covered Slovenian territory as well. This alliance was found in the Czechs and the remaining Southern Slavic nations under the rule of Hungary. At the turn of the century, and especially in 1908 when Austro-Hungary annexed the previously Turkish-held Bosnia and Herzegovina, the programmatic demand for a United Slovenia was expressed in the concrete political program of trialism. Led by its chairman, Dr. Ivan Šušteršič, the Slovenian People’s Party produced a trialist concept in 1905. The latter envisioned that a third state entity was to be formed in the south of the Monarchy, comprising the Southern Slavic lands of both Cisleithania and Transleithania, which would encompass Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Istria, Vojvodina, as well as the Slovenian parts of the Inner Austrian lands. The proposed entity would hold all the competences possessed by two dualist units. The center of the “great, administratively unified Southern Slavic territory” would be in Zagreb. Political leaders of Slovenian People’s Party stressed that the concept was completely identical to the one endorsed by the Croatian “pravaši”, “Stranka prava” (the Party of Rights). In the same year, the Slovenian People’s Party launched political activities with a view to ensuring as many endorsements as possible for its program among the remaining Slovenian and Croatian parties. In 1909, the head of the party submitted a long memorandum to the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Franz Ferdinand, which contained the proposal for a trialist rearrangement of the Monarchy. The chairman stressed this trialist rearrangement of the Monarchy was the necessary cure

56 Rahten, 2001: 107–124.

57 Vodušek Starič, 1985: 3–11; Granda, 1999: 17–62.

for the three great perils of the time: Italian irredentism, Serbian irredentism, and Hungarian chauvinism.⁵⁸

Namely, the “Yugoslav problem”, as the topic was dubbed at the time, was extremely complicated. It not only problematized the dualist arrangement, but also concerned the foreign policy dimension. The Southern Slavic Serbia and Bulgaria were a stark reminder of the possibility that unification within a national (Southern Slavic) state would also be possible outside of the Monarchy and the context of the Habsburg state. Moreover, it reminded that this could even be achieved in two ways – either with the inclusion of Serbia in the Monarchy or the exclusion of the Southern Slavic part of the Monarchy and its merger with Serbia (and Bulgaria). Neither option was viable for the Monarchy and it actually forged an alliance between the two state elites, the Hungarian and German-Austrian, although the (reserved) support for the trialist concept acted as a secret weapon of the Kaiser court against the pressures of the Hungarian elite, which sought to implement dualism in a manner giving Hungary the greatest autonomy possible.⁵⁹

The Slovenian People’s Party opted for trialism, for a concept of the Yugoslav state within the Monarchy, since it was dynastically patriotic, desired to avoid the problem of religious heterogeneity and other differences, assert its own specific influence, and avoid being ‘suspected for grand treason’, which was how the Austrian state authorities were perceiving the notion that the Southern Slavic states would exit Austro-Hungary.

The same concept in terms of its principles was also embraced by the Liberal Party, although it later amended this plan by adding three more sub-federal units, of which one was Slovenian.⁶⁰

In the Slovenian political arena, the radical Yugoslav solution was advocated only by the most radical and simultaneously marginal political groups. These included the liberally oriented group “Preporod” (Rebirth), comprising several dozen secondary school and university students. It was based on the premise of a single Yugoslav nation, “narodno ujedinenje” (national unification). Still, this implied the dissolution of the Monarchy rather than its seemingly impossible constitutional rearrangement.⁶¹

58 Rahten, 2001: 107–116; Rahten, 2012: 73–74; Pleterski, 1998: 233–234.

59 Pleterski, 1998: 220–232.

60 Rahten, 2012: 69–85; Pleterski, 1998: 293–94.

61 Rahten, 2012, 144–147.

Even more serious was the problem of how to practically realize the concept among the political powers of the remaining Southern Slavic nations. Paradoxically, the Slovenian political elite was still establishing contacts with the rest of the Southern Slavic area at the time. It cooperated well with the Croatian lands of Dalmatia and Istria. The border between the two dualist halves of the empire impeded political connections as well. Between 1909 and 1912, the Slovenian People's Party was already building bridges, reaching out to the Croatian Party of Rights. In September 1912, the two-party groups forged a close union and established the joint "Hrvaško-slovenski izvršilni odbor Vseslovenske ljudske stranke in Vsepravaške organizacije" (the Croatian-Slovenian Executive Committee of Pan-Slovenian People's Party and Pan-Rights Organization), that was actually a sort of a merger of these two political groups.

The contacts of Slovenian political elites in Bosnia and beyond the Monarchy's border, in Serbia, were even weaker. Only certain liberal politicians-maintained contacts with individual Serbian politicians there.

The Balkan War as a Trigger for Internal Stratification

With Montenegro declaring war on Turkey on October 8, 1912, war in the Balkans had in fact commenced. Nine days later, Serbia and Bulgaria joined the conflict with their own declarations of war. Regardless of the capability held by the four allied Balkan armies also in terms of mobilized troops, military equipment, and arms (715,000 vs. 320,000 Turkish troops), general opinion expressed strong doubts regarding the actual outcome of the war; the majority was betting on the Turkish being victorious. European superpowers responded to the crisis accordingly. They hoped it would be resolved within the context of the Concert of Superpowers which, however, proved to be illegitimate and quite inefficient.⁶²

Immediately after the war had begun, Slovenian public opinion expressed a release of tensions. The main and immediate taking of sides by the population and political structures alike was specifically pro-Slavic and even more so pro-Serbian. This not only concerned a political choice in favor of the Slavic states, but also the influence of deep-seated stereotypes about the Turks who had been notorious

62 Hall, 2000.

pillagers on Slovenian soil 300 years before and, moreover, they were Mohammedans. According to the prevalent opinion of Slovenians at the time, these were the basic reasons for the just war that Slavic Balkans were fighting against Turkey; the status of subjugation and uncertainty that Slavic populations had been subjected to within the Turkish state, which was utterly incompatible with the European cultural and administrative sphere – in terms of both administration and culture.⁶³

For the Slovenian political theatre, mid-October was the time of the first meeting of the Slovenian-Croatian “sabor” (assembly) at which the Pan-Slovenian People’s Party and the “Vsepravaška zveza” (Pan-Rights Alliance) merged to form a single political party and emphasized the effort towards a trialist rearrangement of the state.⁶⁴ Unexpected and quick victories of Balkan states (at Lozengrad on October 24 and at Lille Burgas on November 1) provided fresh encouragement to the Christian-social wing within the Slovenian People’s Party to take accelerated political action since the fate of the trialist concept was at stake. The newspaper “Slovenec” (The Slovenian), whose editorial board was in the hands of the Christian-social political group within the People’s Party, began reporting on the war with an explicitly favorable stance shown towards the Balkan states and armies. Serbia was in the news headlines, while Bulgaria’s thrust towards Istanbul, which was the most important development in military terms, was also closely covered. The motif of this political orientation was, according to Dr. Krek, an increase in Slovenians’ self-esteem: “Behold the heroes, who are now amidst breathtaking braveries, (...) they are our brethren, this is one nation with us! This shall reinvigorate our national awareness and the force of resistance against Germans more than all of our national defense societies put together.”⁶⁵

Two fundamental political groups existed within the Slovenian People’s Party. The first was more conservative (led by the party chairman Dr. Šušteršič) and the second had a Christian-social orientation. The most important person among the latter was a high-powered member of the party, Janez Evangelist Krek. This group also tried to make sure that the trialist idea would actually take root in Croatia and Dalmatia. It was especially active in Dalmatia where it assisted with the founding of cooperatives. Already in the early days of the war, the political group gathered around Dr. Krek decided to express clear support for Balkan states and at the same time to criticize Austrian policy on the war in the Balkans. The

63 Prebilič and Torkar 2013: 333–352.

64 Rahten, 2012, 137; Slovenec, October 21, 1912.

65 Rahten, 2012: 138.

newspaper with the greatest impact in Slovenian territory immediately started to focus on covering the course of the war and simultaneously made it clear that it supported the Serbian, Montenegrin and, to some extent, the Bulgarian sides.⁶⁶

The other political group centered around Dr. Šušteršič stood up both indirectly and directly for more reserved news coverage of the war, particularly because the coverage by Slovenec had sparked many polemics with (greater) German and pro-government newspapers, which began to reproach Slovenec and the Slovenian People's Party for engaging in "high treason". After 3 weeks, party leader Dr. Šušteršič managed to impose only a single directive article on the newspaper (on November 11, 1912), in which he argued for a more reserved stance towards Serbia. Above all, he stressed the need to turn back to the original trialist idea of a special Slavic state within the Monarchy. However, this move caused strong resentment on the part of Dr. Krek, even though he did not express it publicly for the sake of the party. The disagreement between the two men nevertheless grew even deeper. Yet, Šušteršič then resigned as head of the deputy club so as to maintain his leeway as governor of the land of Carniola.⁶⁷

The liberal National Party, then in control of the newspaper "Slovenski narod" (The Slovenian Nation), also supported the struggle of the Balkan states against Turkey for national and political reasons. Of course, its optics were somewhat different. It had been the first one to establish ties with the Serbian domain. Since it had been witnessing the propagation of its larger competitive party among the "pravaši" in Croatia, it felt even more compromised. Still, since its points of departure were explicitly national, it placed greater emphasis on the national aspects of the war against Turkey. One of the leading politicians of the party, Ivan Hribar, was the sole Slovenian politician to visit Belgrade in February 1913 where he met with the then Serbian Prime Minister Pašić.⁶⁸

Naturally, this was not all about party orientations and dribbling. Spontaneous sympathies towards the Serbs, Bulgarians, and Montenegrins who were fighting the Turks arose in a considerable share of the Slovenian people. Societies that were not political in the narrower sense of the word began collecting aid for the "Serbian brethren". As early as the second half of October, Ljubljana saw a committee being established to collect humanitarian aid for the Balkan states. Several of the first volunteers departed for Serbia in order to help in its war effort.

66 Rahten, 2012, 137–142.

67 Ibid., 137–138; Pleterski, 1998: 294–295.

68 Prunk, 2023: 109–111.

Around 150 volunteers, including several physicians, served with the Serbian army. Especially the latter would come to Serbia in fairly large numbers until the end of the Second Balkan War, some 30 in total, because Serbia was inviting them with favorable offers to work on providing medical care for the wounded.⁶⁹

Alongside detailed coverage of the developments and the course of war, the news media made good use of people's interest and strongly increased general knowledge of the Balkan situation among Slovenians. Many news articles informed Slovenian readers considerably with respect to the history of the Balkan nations, political structures, their everyday life, ethnologic characteristics etc. Several newspapers hired correspondents from Belgrade, Cetinje, and Sofia, who would then submit detailed, albeit biased, accounts of events in those states.

42

In addition, the Balkan war stimulated yet another latent Slovenian issue. It was the question of whether the Yugoslav idea implied that Slovenians would have to abandon their language in favor of a general Yugoslav (Croatian or Serbian) language. This dilemma was already strongly reverberating in intellectual circles. Two sides emerged, the neo-Illyrian, where the first argued for the melting of the Slovenian language and identity with a uniform Yugoslav language. The other side rejected this view, stressing the importance of the language and culture for the definition of the nation and labelling the neo-Illyrian option "national suicide".⁷⁰

The Critique of Austrian Foreign Policy

Slovenian public and political structures were dissatisfied with the foreign policy of their own state on the Balkans and thus expressed strong criticism. They only agreed on one point, i.e., that Austro-Hungary should play an important if not decisive role in the Balkans. As seen through the eyes of its newspapers, Slovenian politicians were convinced that Austro-Hungary had been "embarrassed and isolated" by such developments. To overcome this situation, the state had to take action in a completely different spirit: "An agreement with the Slavic nations, which, in the aftermath of the events so far, is the precondition of every Balkan policy".⁷¹ The Slovenian view on its own state diplomacy's task was wholly

69 Sekulić, 2010: 7–21.

70 Fischer et al (eds.), 2005: 56–57; Prunk, 2023: 102–107.

71 Straža (The Guard), October 30, 1912.

different. The main point Slovenian news media made was that the Austro-Hungarian foreign policy had to be very careful concerning how it would act and that it had to abstain from obstructing the expansion of the Balkan states. Due to the military success of these states, the criticism of foreign policy became closely tied to the argument that the resolution of the Yugoslav question had now become the issue of the very existence of the state, rather than remaining a question of mere internal equity regarding the Southern Slavs living within the Monarchy. “Previously, we were the ones who demanded that our homeland be free, now it is the Monarchy’s very existence which demands the same.”⁷²

On the other hand, the diplomatic moves by the European superpowers opened up the question of Albania. Serbian aspirations to gain access to the sea were met with approval.

At the end of 1912, the relationship of Serbia and Austria moved closer because of Serbia’s advance into Albania. Slovenian newspapers were in favor of Serbian interests. The escalation was perceived as unnecessary. Albanians were largely depicted as savages who did not deserve their own state and the establishment of an Albanian state was strongly opposed to, with the exception of the social-democratic newspaper “Zarja” (Dawn).

Nonetheless, Slovenian newspapers perceived the London peace conference and the resulting peace treaty as positive.

The Confrontation of Bulgaria and Serbia

Already in the spring of 1913, Slovenian newspapers noticed dissensions among Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece over the fate of Macedonia. However, they mostly opted for an optimistic stance that the abovementioned states would eventually arrive at an agreement and resolve the dispute peacefully. There was a distinct tone of regret that the allied states had failed to agree upon the matter. In the summer of 1913, the growing tensions between the victorious Balkan states manifested themselves in the Slovenian public as well. The latter was primarily confused, as were the political newspapers, as an outcome of divided sympathies towards the individual states in question. This unease saw news media paying scant attention to the escalating conflict. Yet, the Slovenian public gradually opted predominantly

⁷² Krek, January 18, 1913.

for the Serbian side. Bulgaria was seen as responsible for the mutual altercation, the “war pitting brethren against each other”, even though pro-Bulgarian articles and regrets over its defeats still appeared. Attempts were however made to at least distinguish between the Bulgarian people on one side and Bulgaria’s military leadership with the king on the other, as the latter were to be blamed for the false decisions regarding the war.

Still, the position of the Slovenian People’s Party had drastically changed since the spring of 1913. The Christian-social wing had abandoned the initial excitement of the autumn of 1912 and now held a very reserved stance on Serbia, which was also the point of unification of both wings of the Slovenian People’s Party.⁷³

73 Rahten, 2012: 238–241.

PREPARING FOR THE GREAT WAR

The popular slogan “*All for faith, the fatherland and the Emperor*” was not simply a phrase used by Slovenians living in the Habsburg Monarchy at the time only when necessary to show their allegiance and loyalty to the state – it was a genuine expression of the spirit prevailing in Slovenia before the First World War.⁷⁴ It signified a fundamental political and social orientation, i.e., loyalty to the ruler, the traditional allegiance to the Habsburg Monarchy, and national as well as regional patriotism.⁷⁵ As war broke out, this loyalty became significantly more overt. On the second day of the war, i.e., June 29, 1914, the Trieste-based *Edinost* (“Unity”) newspaper reported: “However, no matter what the uncertain future might bring, we can be definitely sure of one thing: the Slovenian nation, whose fate is tied to the fate of the Monarchy, will fulfil, as always, its patriotic duty”.⁷⁶ His appeal to his fellow countrymen led Carniolan Governor Ivan Šušteršič to call Franz Joseph, the Habsburg ruler, the “emperor of peace”, whom Serbia had forced to draw a sword in order to win his subject nations honorable and ever-lasting peace. According to the Governor, “the loyal people of Carniola are happy to lay any sacrifice on the altar of the fatherland” to prove their fealty.⁷⁷

The initial enthusiasm Slovenian conscripts showed about the war, and their loyalty and patriotism towards the Emperor, were now enhanced by a love for their nation and homeland. This was particularly evident when it came to soldiers. On the Galician front, where almost every soldier conscripted from the Slovenian territory (approximately 35,000 men) fought during the first year of

74 Dobaja, Guštin, Prebilič, 2017: 210–227.

75 The saying “All for faith, the fatherland and the Emperor” was first used as a motto in the Catholic political circles, hence the loyalty to faith added to the fatherland and the Emperor. Although the political opposition rejected the slogan, it became the most widespread and popular political phrase in Slovenia (Sluga, 2007: 4).

76 Simčič, 2014: 32.

77 Slovenec, 4th August 1914. Publicly expressed enthusiasm for the war, loyalty to the Emperor and belief in the Monarchy also met its opponents, some of them showing their discontentment in public. The *Slovenec* (“The Slovenian”) newspaper thus reported that a scoundrel who had, near the Franciscan Church in Ljubljana, insulted Austria, the Austrian dynasty, and soldiers who were passing by at the time, had regretfully evaded the law (Simčič, 2014: 32).

the war, their motivation was the result of their loyalty to the Emperor and the greater homeland.⁷⁸ Despite the great losses and all-present hardships of the battle, conscripts did not try to avoid military duty. The Governor's report noted that the "conscription of inactive and Landsturm troops went smoothly and those called to take up arms passionately followed the appeal of our Supreme Commander".⁷⁹ Although reports of mobilization in various Slovenian towns and cities indicated a high level of response, it is also true that the mobilization was a chance for conscripts to show their patriotism and go into battle carrying their national flags – to the displeasure of the military command. What then followed was the declaration of a state of emergency, which had palpable results, i.e., the pursuit and arrests of about 900 Slovenian patriots, including a large number of priests. Even though censorship managed to keep the mass persecution from the public eye, the events certainly resulted in a much more restrained attitude to the Austrian war among the general, politically vulnerable population.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, as already mentioned, it did not lead to soldiers resisting the military drafting of further same-age groups, who left every 4 weeks for the regiments on the front to replace the fallen, wounded, sick and those who had deserted. Despite evidence to the contrary, many still believed that the war would be brief and, for the majority, glorious, or at least that the Emperor's war machine would win the fight.⁸¹ The frustrations of Slovenians and dissatisfaction with their social and, especially, political position in the multinational monarchy nevertheless persisted, although they did become less overt and more carefully expressed in the new circumstances.

78 Horne, 1997.

79 Lukan, 2014: 29.

80 Lukan, 2014: 30–32. During the war, a surveillance system was established with the mission of monitoring both individuals and the entire society. Censorship was particularly strict when it came to the letters that soldiers wrote to their families and vice versa. The censorship authorities tried to assess the general mood among the people and their attitude to the war, the emperor, and the state authorities.

81 The initial excitement about the war and the certainty about its briefness were followed by the impact of its reality. Many soldiers expressed their innermost feelings and attitudes regarding the war in journals they wrote during combat, hiding them from their superiors. These reflect their fears, despair, the feel of senselessness of war, and a soldier's fight for survival, i.e., to stay alive with God's help and return home. Although many soldiers published their memoirs after the war, the publications do not reflect the despair and rage over what they were going through in the war, as can be sensed in the journal entries, which was probably due to the time distance. The memoirs were written once the soldiers had already processed the tragedy of the war, in the new circumstances brought about by the creation of new countries, new heroes, and new situations.

As Slovenians represented a mere 2.5% of the population of Austria-Hungary, they could not expect the structure of the dualist monarchy to change significantly. Still, the circles espousing a trialist concept were becoming increasingly notable, demanding at least formal national and legal equality for Austrians, Hungarians, and those Southern Slavs who were part of the Habsburg Empire.⁸²

A Sudden Turn in 1915

Even though in the autumn of 1914 it seemed impossible that Italy would join the Entente Powers, this is exactly what happened in the spring of 1915. Until that moment, Italy had always been thought of as Austria-Hungary's ally. It also appeared to be unlikely that Italy would risk a confrontation with the Habsburg Monarchy armed forces, which were commonly believed to be much more powerful. Secret preparations for the war were nevertheless already underway along the western border. In the winter of 1914 and spring of 1915, such activities consisted of strengthening the fortifications and defense trenches, and defense points on Nanos, Kovk, and Mala gora mountains were further fortified and upgraded. Notwithstanding the negotiations and diplomatic charades, the locations of future battlefields on the western front were becoming ever more apparent. The workforce required for these activities, despite their military nature, included local civilians.

Yet, in the spring of 1915 the social and political situation saw a significant reversal. The Italian negotiations, first with Austria-Hungary and then with the Entente, were not kept strictly confidential, at least not from April 1915 onwards.⁸³ These events acted as a wake-up call for the Slovenian political elite, which started to draw up national responses to the new circumstances. The

82 Rahten, 1999: 65–74.

83 While politicians and diplomats negotiated, rumors of an upcoming war with Italy were circulating among the people even as early as the autumn of 1914. Only a month before the hostilities with Italy started, the Austria-Hungary authorities were still calming people by saying that there was no reason to fear war, explaining that Austria still held enough reputation, that its people were patriotic, and that the country was powerful enough to ensure that no country still hanging on the sidelines of the war would dare attack the monarchy any time soon. However, the people knew that they had, in the winter of 1914 and early spring of 1915, helped with the construction of fortifications and trenches at Nanos, Kovk, Mala gora,

situation, however, was extremely difficult. The elite favored Serbia, which was siding with the Entente, but despite it being quite comprehensible to the average Slovenian nationalist, this inclination was hard to express. When Italy joined the Entente, those same Slovenian nationalists were completely confused. Strategic considerations gave way to the crushed national interests that were seen as a defense against the Italian occupation of the western part of Slovenian national territory. The majority blamed Italy, whereas the minority of Entente sympathizers, who saw the alliance as a means for their national liberation, was petrified. As Italy entered the war, its outcome became increasingly dubious, and the conviction that Austria-Hungary, fighting alongside Germany, would win the war, was shaken.

48

Despite the quiet premonitions and speculations, Italy's declaration of war was not expected, and Austria-Hungary was saddled with yet another extended frontline. The declaration of war was also unexpected for Slovenians, whose attitudes to Italy were marked not only by the relations towards the country that they were part of but also by their nationality, since Italy, which had been a unifying power and a consolidated country within the Alpine Arc for decades, was ever more seen as the biggest threat to the nation. Still, the people were forced to treat Italy as an ally, at least in public, since the two countries remained allies right up until Italy declared war. As declarations of war started flying around and Italy announced its neutrality before crossing over to the Entente in the spring of 1915, all reservations held by the Slovenians vanished against publicly expressing their discontent with the moves made by Italy, the country itself, and even the Italian people.

The main reaction on the Slovenian side was captured in the oft-repeated phrase: "Hands off our land!". In the third week of the war with Italy, Carniolan Governor Dr. Šušteršič issued a call to arms against the "deceitful Italians, our hereditary foes". Although the slogan is heavily reminiscent of the official Austrian propaganda at the time, those whom it was intended for certainly perceived it on a deeper level. The expression "our land" did not merely indicate the border areas that the Italians had invaded in the early days of the war, but also the area that was promised to Italy by the Entente under the London Pact as a reward for changing sides in the war. This was extremely significant for the two western-most South Slavic nations: for the Slovenians due to Trieste and the area stretching to the divide between the Adriatic and the Black Sea, and for the Croatians due to

Lepi dol, and the Idrijska and Vipavska dolina Valleys. They did not feel to have been forced to do the work which was paid for by the military (Trošt, Benčina and Škvarč, 2008: 98, 104).

Dalmatia. It was not unknown that the great powers were making deals regarding this territory. Reports of varying integrity about the portion of the territory promised to Italy were published in the daily press, such as *Slovenec* and *Slovenski narod* (the Slovenian Nation) newspapers, as these deals unfolded.

In the new circumstances, the army became an ally in fulfilling the Slovenian national interests since it protected the Slovenian ethnic territory: “Our hope during these hard times is the army, which our blessings shall follow into this terrible war”.⁸⁴ For the average Slovenian, it became much more important for the army to win and fight well. Although this was especially true when it came to fighting on Slovenia’s doorstep, spirits were also lifted by events along the northern front where the forces of Austria-Hungary were defeating the Russian Army following the breakthrough at Gorlice in early May 1915.

However, words of support and trust in the military were not the only reaction coming from the Slovenian political elite. They soon realized that these events had opened the door to independent initiatives. Carniolan Governor Dr. Šušteršič thus initiated activities to establish volunteer units to help defend the country. With the support of its political party and the approval of the military authorities, the Voluntary Gunmen of Carniola were established, made up of men who had thus far not been conscripted. Inspired by Piłsudski, Dr. Šušteršič campaigned for the volunteers to be commanded in the Slovenian language and to possess the right to carry the national flag, yet he was rebuffed by the military authorities.⁸⁵

With Italy’s declaration of war, Slovenian lands became the western half of the sub-front and the eastern half of the greater combat zone. The “sub-front” consisted of Tyrol, Carinthia, Carniola, Istria, Gorizia-Gradisca, and Trieste, as well as Rijeka and Lika in Hungary. The “greater combat zone”, in contrast, included, as far as Slovenian counties went, the entire Styria.⁸⁶ The army had a much greater influence on the administration of the greater combat zone, i.e., it held the right

84 *Slovenski narod*, May 24, 1915.

85 Lukan, 2014: 34, 48; Pleterski, 1998: 332–333.

86 *Slovenski narod*, December 29, 2015, The “combat zones” comprise. The south-western “sub-front” consists of: a) in Austria: Tyrol, with the exception of the judicial districts of Landeck and Ried, and the political districts of Reutte, Imst, Innsbruck, Schwaz, Kufstein and Kitzbühel. Furthermore, the entire Carinthia, Carniola, Istria, Gorizia and Gradisca and the city of Trieste with its surrounding area; b) in Hungary: the city of Rijeka with its surrounding area; c) in Croatia and Slavonia: the Lika-Krbava and Modruš-Rijeka counties. 2. The south-western “greater combat area” consists of: a) in Cisleithania: the Tyrol judicial districts of Landeck and Ried and political districts of Reutte, Imst, Innsbruck, Schwaz, Kufstein in

to issue orders and instructions regarding all matters under the authority of the imperial civilian authorities or regional presidencies, which virtually meant general authority over the country.⁸⁷

Mobilization

50

The monarchy, faced with enormous losses in the summer and autumn of 1914, backed up the recruitment to include increasingly younger men. As early as May 1, 1915, the Emperor issued an Order pursuant to paragraph 14, amending the Landsturm Act in a way that made all men up to the age of 42 became liable for the draft, regardless of whether they had completed their military training or not. By late May 1915, a general draft for Landsturm was declared, calling in those born in as many as 12 different years, i.e., from 1865 to 1872 (the amendment of the act also led to those older than 42 again becoming eligible for the draft), and between 1878 (36-year-olds) and 1897 (18-year-olds), except for already drafted men born in 1891 or between 1895 and 1896.⁸⁸ In Carniola, men had to report to the conscription authorities in late May and early June 1915. At the same time, in late May men born between 1878 and 1894 were also being drafted.⁸⁹ The Landsturm soldiers, who only had a few weeks of basic military training, became an important part of the army, albeit they were still being deployed to rear areas.⁹⁰

Volunteers were scarce. Yet, there were some young zealots who had no families and whose youthful enthusiasm led them to want to help their Emperor and

Kitzbühel; also the entire Vorarlberg, Salzburg and Styria; b) in Croatia and Slavonia: the Zagreb, Varaždin and Bjelovar-Križevci districts and the city of Zagreb.

87 Slovenski narod, May 25, 1915, Cesarska naredba o vojaški oblasti.

88 Slovenski narod, May 26, 1915, Vpoklic črnovojniških letnikov 1878 do 1890, 1892 do 1894, 1897 in 1865–1879.

89 Slovenski narod, May 22, 1915, Maribor-Nabori; Slovenski narod, May 25, 1915, Podaljšanje črnovojne dolžnosti in črnovojno pregledovanje.

90 Vid Erhatic was barely 18 when he was drafted together with his brother. In his own words, this was not due to him being *“large and strong. It was because Austria needed huge amounts of cannon fodder. And because Italy had also declared war against Austria.”* Vid Erhatic and his brother were both assigned to the 27th Home Guard Regiment (Mesesnel, 1968: 28–29).

the fatherland and thus sending volunteer applications to join the military to the offices of their local governors.⁹¹

Slovenian soldiers and their perception of the war

A 17-year-old draftee, whose conscription was included in the Radovljica draft on May 5, 1915, wrote the following in his memoirs about the events before, during, and after Italy's declaration of war: "Youth knows no hypocrisy, deception or dishonesty. Who could imagine all the true horrors of war!"⁹² The 17-year-old served as a telephone operator at the Bela peč station along the Tarvisio–Jesenice railway line.

Initially, what struck everybody the most was the new attitude to life and death. "The closer we came to the enemy, the more terrible was the struggle of young lives against death. In such cases, one thinks of nothing but death that must come sooner or later."⁹³ In fact, the author of these candid thoughts had been fighting on for a long time on the Doberdò plateau, becoming familiar with death all around and to all the horrors (including unbearable thirst), and kept fighting, distinguishing himself before being promoted to First Sergeant. He had not received the decoration he had been put up for because his superiors considered his company to have "not been successful enough in the past few days".⁹⁴ After 2 months of fighting on the first lines of defense, he became sick with typhus and his wartime fate took a different path.⁹⁵

Such was the fate of many mobilized Slovenian soldiers. It was not too different from the general situation in the Austro-Hungarian Army. In the "Soča slaughterhouse"⁹⁶, ammunition, food, and water were lacking, but never a

91 Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, AS 88, Okrajno glavarstvo Logatec, Nos. 423–427, Prošnja F. U. iz Unca pri Rakeku 9. 9. 1914.

92 Mesesnel, 1968: 28.

93 Malgaj, 2009: 99.

94 Ibid.

95 Ibid., 101–106.

96 Zlobec, 2008: 59.

shortage of men, wrote the soldier Ivan Matičič. New men kept coming, and were younger and younger. Hospitals and dressing posts were full of wounded and dying people.⁹⁷

The conditions on the battlefield pushed many Slovenian defenders to the brink of madness, with them blaming both Austria and Italy, the former for sending them to their deaths, and the latter for killing them.⁹⁸ Slovenian defenders despised the Italian desire for the land. In Ivan Matičič's book, one comes across such outpourings of outrage: "Where is the Italian devil pushing towards? One cannot but feel sick to the stomach at the sight of such gluttony. Their people were already all saved on the first day. But why are they pushing further into our land? Do they want to save us as well?"⁹⁹

Despite the terrible conditions, the danger Italy presented to the Slovenian lands led the Slovenian defenders along the Soča to fight and resist them. There was no room for thinking about surrender or, in the extreme case, even defecting to the Italian side.

Due to personal involvement in the events, memoirs of the participants in the battles on the Italian front are often marked by collective epithets and hate for the enemy. Italians are thus frequently called "Lahi" and described as "*polenta eaters*" and "*cowards*". Such epithets are also a reflection of propaganda. As war broke out, the war machinery managed to make numerous young men across Europe excited enough for the war that they, in a wave of collective psychosis, joined the military voluntarily and genuinely hated the enemy.¹⁰⁰

Yet, as war progressed, Austria-Hungary as a homeland became ever more distant in the minds of the people. Some were already wispering rumors about a new fatherland – Yugoslavia. However, at this time was extremely dangerous, even punishable by death, to utter the word Yugoslavia.¹⁰¹

97 Matičič, 1922.

98 Mesesnel, 1968, 88.

99 Matičič, 1922. The establishment of the Isonzo Front must be understood in light of the long-standing dissatisfaction of the Kingdom of Italy with the border in the Adriatic area. According to Italian politicians at the time, the territories occupied by the Italian Army were "within the natural borders of Italy". The "saved areas" were the fundamental objective of the Italian policy and their reason for entering the war (Svoljšak, 2003).

100 Zlobec, 2008: 69.

101 Ibid., 17. As they met in the spring of 1915, Andrej Zlobec's teacher from Ponikve na Krasu indicated to the young man that the word on the street in Gorizia was that Italy would be leaving the Triple Alliance and declaring war against Austria-Hungary. The old yellow-black monarchy would disintegrate and Slovenians would get Yugoslavia, or perhaps

Arrival of the Italian Army in Slovenian territory and attitude of the local population to the occupying forces

The Italian Army entered the Slovenian ethnic territory from just behind the Italian–Austrian border, convinced they were “saving their unsaved brothers” and expecting a warm welcome. After all, that was what the commanding officers had told the Italian soldiers. The reality was nonetheless completely different as Slovenians were cautious and uncertain of their future fate: “In the territory, the people greeted us neither with open arms nor open hostility. They remained silent, somewhat grim and distant,”¹⁰² as the Italian soldier Mario Mariani described the mood among the Slovenian population.¹⁰³

The rural people from the Soča River basin were frightened. Women and children were usually the only ones to be left in the occupied towns and villages given that men had been conscripted into the Emperor’s army. Women suddenly found themselves playing the roles of mother, father, and leader of the household. They worked in the fields and at home, and in most cases were the ones who found the enemy on their doorstep.¹⁰⁴

national countries would be formed. Of Austria-Hungary, only Austria would remain. The young Zlobec was trembling with excitement at everything that was about to happen in the following days, but was also frightened by the thought of what would happen should anyone overhear their conversation. The teacher would be sentenced to death, while Zlobec’s punishment would not be as severe since he was only 16 at the time.

102 Svoljšak, 2010: 233.

103 Let us look at a local example: Upon Italy’s declaration of war on May 23, 1915, everything in the Breginj municipality was in the hands of Landsturm troops commanded by Constable Sergeant Štih from Staro Sedlo. He was the last remainder of the Emperor’s authority in the municipality, for the government’s orders were that everything important to the empire should be removed to the opposite bank of the Soča River, including the Breginj Mayor Ambrož. This was because the defense of Breginjski kot would have required too many men and arms. It was decided that the empire was to be defended on the Soča River. Constable Sergeant Štih convened the men and clergy of the municipality and provided them with the necessary instructions for the civilian population in case the Italians arrived. The people of Breginj were left on their own, with only a small number of Landsturm troops standing between them and the enemy at the border, whose arrival was anxiously awaited. Šimac, 2002: 50–51.

104 *Ibid.*, 50–53, 79, 95.

The population's first contact of the advancing army is primarily characterized by the attitude held by the military, i.e., the occupying forces, to the locals. On all European battlefields, the time of the invasion was marked by similar factors, namely, aggression against the civilian population, followed by voluntary migrations away from the area, forced deportations of civilians and military occupation, which usually reflected the military and political plans of the occupying power with respect to the occupied territories. The initial phase was thus chiefly marked by the army's violence against the population and attempts to justify it¹⁰⁵, following instructions given by General Cadorna that guided the Italian Army's actions with regard to civilians in the occupied territory. Cadorna stated that punishments should be severe and consistent, including those for violations committed by civilians.¹⁰⁶ Such a strict order could not have left the civilian population unaffected, with the Italian occupation authorities immediately proving themselves to be consistent and cruel enforcer of the General's instructions. The Italian Army arrived in the occupied territory full of suspicion, while many commanding officers were obsessed by an 'espionage paranoia'.¹⁰⁷ Nobody was allowed to leave their homestead without the military authorities' permission. Authorization was needed even to leave the house to go and work in the fields. The military seized cloth, cauldrons, clothes, and foodstuffs, and bought livestock at half the actual price or even less. Reprisals were accompanied by the moving of civilians away from the immediate vicinity of the front lines. In 1915, between 10,000 and 12,000 people migrated into the interior of Italy, while Austria-Hungary decided to relocate 70,000 people to refugee holding centers in Styria and Hungary.¹⁰⁸

105 This can be confirmed by the events that followed the advancement of the German army into Belgium, France, and Poland, by the Russian offensives into eastern Prussia, Galicia, Poland, and the Carpathian Mountains, by the joint Austro-Hungarian, Bulgarian, and German invasion of Serbia, and by the mentioned Italian advances on the Isonzo Front. When quantifying the mentioned acts of violence, it can be stated that in 1914 the Russian army caused the deaths of 6,000 civilians and the destruction of 42,000 homes in eastern Prussia, while the German army burned down 15,000 houses and killed as many as 6,000 civilians in mass executions in Belgium and France between August 5 and October 21, 1914. Svoljšak, 2010: 231.

106 Klavora, 1994: 76.

107 According to a farmer from Kozana, who fled to Ljubljana, the people of Kozana were threatened that they would be deported to Italy as spies. Charges of espionage were also the reason that the Kozana priest was taken away, while the Kozana postmaster was sentenced to 6 months in prison for "spying". Slovenec, October 7, 1915.

108 Svoljšak, 2010: 237–238; Svoljšak, 2005: 11.

Civilians at the Austro-Hungarian rear of the Isonzo Front

With Italy's declaration of war on May 23, 1915, the suspicions and rumors circulating among the people for some time became a reality. As the Isonzo Front opened up, the war unfolded in front of the Slovenian population in all its brutality. The people behind the Austrian–Italian border initially reacted with fear, panic, and uncertainty, faced with the reality of war that was about to affect them not only through relatives killed or wounded in faraway Galicia, Serbia, or Russia, but in their very homes. This uncertainty was mostly associated with the question of whether Austria-Hungary would be able to defend its positions along the border and protect the civilian population. Panic at the beginning of the hostilities was connected with the fact that Italian soldiers would soon be coming to the Slovenian territory.¹⁰⁹

These sentiments were mixed with a spirit of rebellion that emerged when it was realized that Italy wanted to annex the Slovenian territory. People started to take the war much more personally. In many respects, the propaganda machine and popular perception leaned on old sentiments from the times of Austro-Italian fights in the 19th century.¹¹⁰ The outbreak of hostilities with Italy further bolstered people's faith in God, with prayers for a favorable end to the war becoming widespread.¹¹¹

109 Guštin, 2005a, 65. The people's instinct for self-preservation kicked in. The civilian population started preparing for the coming war. Some moved away from the border even before the hostilities broke out. Immediately after the war was declared, the authorities initiated the evacuation of the majority of the population of the areas along and behind the defense lines. People were only able to take the bare necessities with them. Leaving in a hurry, they loaded their carts with everything that would fit, not just foodstuffs and clothes, but also furniture and mattresses. The evacuation was particularly distressing for the peasant population as they (especially older people) were aware that their return was improbable, and that even if they returned, their homestead was likely to be gone. They became refugees.

110 Ibid., 66.

111 The *Slovenec* newspaper pointed out the power of public prayer and people coming together in the city of Ljubljana (men and women of all classes and ages) in a procession of supplication, stating that everybody is equal in times of strife. In Ljubljana, prayers for victory and soldiers on the front lines were very common, but the procession on June 13, 1915 was also one for repentance, i.e., a public confession of all past disloyalties to God and reassertion of loyalty to faith and God. Ljubljana came together in a prayer for Austria's victory. It was a mass

Residents of towns and villages further away from the Isonzo Front were faced by new circumstances due to the arrival of military detachments from right across the monarchy. They were so numerous that the population of the area counted one soldier for every three residents. The civilian population accepted the arrival of soldiers of different nationalities and their superiors as a necessary nuisance. The soldiers were assigned to private homes. The people were happiest if they hosted Slovenian soldiers with whom they could communicate.

The cohabitation of the military and civilian population led to various forms of contact (small-scale trade in food, social and sexual contacts, with the latter attracting condemnation by various moral authorities, as well as being the cause of diseases and prostitution). The field kitchens attracted hungry children.¹¹² The relationship between the local population and the military took a strong turn for the worse once food became scarce. The memories of Slovenian civilians, those in the immediate vicinity of the front together with those in the rear, reveal a common element – memories of hunger, shortage, and uncertain existence.¹¹³ Civilians were being worn out by the constant requisitions, while the state and lower-level authorities demanded they show solidarity for the soldiers. The daily press reminded readers that Slovenian men and sons had departed to defend their homes and that many were coming back wounded. The civilians would therefore be obliged to ensure their well-being. According to the press, it was virtually impossible to donate too much.¹¹⁴ Still, the population was increasingly suffering

gathering of children, young people, teachers from various schools, people of different social classes, the County Committee, city advisers headed by the mayor, military authorities, and the highest nobility and clergy of the county. The procession is believed to have been attended by almost 10,000 people. It was rounded off by soldiers in devout prayer (Slovenec, June 14, 1915).

112 Franciška Škvarč-Gerlevičeva from Podkraj gives the following recollection of the Czech soldiers in their village: “*We, the children, waited for the soldiers to take their turns, then went and stood in line. We got fed as well. They made wonderful pasta. It was sweet. We were hungry, so everything tasted good*”. (Trošt, 2008: 144). Families with many children suffered food shortages. It often happened that a child was taken to be cared for by a relative living e.g., in Croatia or Bosnia, where the shortage of food was not as severe (Zlobec, 2005: 46).

113 Verginella, 2010: 82.

114 At a Municipal Council session on May 27, 1915, Ljubljana Mayor Ivan Tavčar read a memorandum from the government calling upon the people to donate cigarettes and tobacco for the soldiers, which the latter would be very happy about (Slovenec, May 28, 1915, Seja ljubljanskega občinskega sveta).

from the scarcity and lack of purchasing power. The main way in which life in the rear areas changed was in terms of food supply.¹¹⁵

Soldiers were not the only newcomers among the population. The wave of refugees from Galicia in the summer of 1914 impacted the Slovenian lands as well, although the refugees had to return to home in late 1915. Yet, prisoners of war started to arrive in mass numbers.¹¹⁶ After June 1915, while the Slovenian territories began to accept large numbers of captured Russian soldiers, their arrival was less noticeable than the arrival of Italian prisoners of war described below; 1915 was thus the time when war-related and profound demographic changes started to occur.

Uncertainty due to the events along the western border of Austria-Hungary was hence felt right across Carniola and Styria. Fearing that war hostilities would spread, many residents of Ljubljana pondered on leaving the city. They fearfully followed the daily news of increasingly common incidents in the nationally mixed cities of Trieste and Pula.¹¹⁷ Ljubljana also felt the presence of the Soča battlefield via the ever-louder thunder of artillery and rising numbers of wounded carried by medical trains. Seriously wounded soldiers were assigned to various emergency stations organized in schools and other institutions in Ljubljana, while those with

115 In his memoirs, Ljubljana resident Franjo Robida wrote that Ljubljana only started feeling that the country was at war once Italy entered the war in 1915. Bread bought with ration cards was getting blacker and harder from one day to the next, and lines in front of food stores stretched ever longer (Robida, 2008, 115). In Ljubljana (and elsewhere – authors' notes), appeals were growing louder and louder: "*Give us bread!*". Crowds led to outbreaks during the distribution process. Further, deliveries sometimes did not contain enough bread and were made at different times, and thus it was not uncommon for people to spend all day waiting for bread. Refugee families and lower classes suffering from hunger were hit particularly hard. The daily press stressed the urgency of aid (Slovenec, August 20, 1915).

116 In his memoirs, Peter Naglič, who served in the rear echelons and also as a prison guard at the Ljubljana Castle, wrote that small groups of Italian prisoners started arriving at the Castle as early as July 1915. The prisoners were first sent to the Ljubljana Castle, which served as a quarantine station. On the way from the Ljubljana railway station and through the city, the people of Ljubljana hurled insults at the prisoners (Naglič, 2007: 82).

117 Hodnik, 2014: 74. On May 28, 1915, *Slovenec* reported on the situation in Trieste. The newspaper stated that the Italian population of Trieste was downcast as the Italians were unable to understand why they should be at war with Austria since the latter had fully guaranteed the national and cultural future of Austrian Italians. The people were supposedly aggravated by the fact that the leaders of the Trieste irredentists had left everything behind and escaped to Italy, where they would, from a safe distance, wage a war that would bring nothing but damage to property and the loss of lives. According to *Slovenec*, Italians in Trieste took to the streets to protest against the war (Slovenec, May 28, 1915).

lighter wounds were taken to other towns and cities. Many of them died. They were buried at the Žale Central Cemetery in Ljubljana.¹¹⁸

In 1915, daily life in Maribor was altered not merely due to political pressures of the Austrian authorities, but also because of the mass of recruits, soldiers being relocated, the wounded and convalescents who were stationed in the city. This completely changed the town's everyday pulse as the command of the entire south-western front had recently moved to the city.¹¹⁹ Soldiers were housed in public buildings, including the theatre, which was forced to stop operating following outbreaks of infectious diseases among the soldiers. The city of Maribor, much like Ljubljana, received numerous refugees from the littoral region. The living conditions and food supply in the city were gradually deteriorating. Food was becoming scarce, as were clothes, heating and lighting fuel. The Austrian authorities tried to limit certain purchases immediately after the war commenced.¹²⁰

At the same time, the burden of war was constant. While city residents mostly encountered food shortages, the rural population was worried about their farms and production. Compulsory sales of crops further forced them to try and lower the toll of the war burden. Further, the war had disrupted the operation of farms as they lacked manpower. Despite the very real struggles the common people faced, their appeals to the authorities did not show rage and anger. People had respect and humility towards the authorities, but most of all wished to survive and preserve their farms, which acted as the means of survival for many large families. In the spirit of the times, those who were left at home sent appeals to mayors' or governors' offices or higher state authorities for their conscripted family members to be temporarily excused from military duty due to farming activities, yet addressed the authorities with great respect and humility, while some also warned of the collective damage arising from the lack of manpower. Hence, although the common people were aware of the responsibility to the country, homeland and Emperor had placed upon their shoulders by the war, their biggest concern was to preserve their homestead (in rural environments), to survive, and pray for the war to be over soon and for their loved ones to return.¹²¹

118 Naglič, 2007: 83.

119 Godina-Golija, 2012: 50.

120 *Ibid.*, 52. In the summer of 1915, the use of wheat flour in bread and pastry making was limited in Maribor. Bakers were only allowed to use 30% of wheat flour. This resulted in foul-tasting and perishable bread (Godina-Golija, 2012: 52).

121 J. P., a landowner from Breznica, was declared fit for Landsturm duty at an early June 1915 screening in Idrija, but was then excused from duty until December 31, 1916, based on an

Seasonal farming activities were not the only reason for such appeals. The rural environment was increasingly feeling the negative aspects of the absence of people in professions important for the community (smiths, cobblers, chimney sweeps, veterinarians).¹²²

Some people apparently also tried to avoid military duty by pretending to be feeble-minded.¹²³ However, when they tried to avoid active military duty in this way to stay at home and take care of the homestead, they were prevented from

appeal stating that he was the only person capable of manual work on the farm. His wife was weak and unable to work due to numerous child deliveries, and his children were not yet old enough for manual work. In an appeal to extend the exemption from Landsturm duty until March 31, 1917, which was lodged at the district governor's office on December 14, 1916, J. P. alerted the governor's office to the fact that should he be forced to serve in the army his farm would be in danger of ruin, stating the same reasons as in the first appeal. The appeal is interesting because in it a simple peasant is warning an authority, in this case the district governor's office. The applicant pointed out that, like in his and other such cases, collective damage is caused when farms face bankruptcy due to the lack of manpower on account of all men being in the military. Although it is impossible to discern from the source whether J. P.'s appeal was granted, the applicant is an interesting case of a common man whose priorities were his land, his home, and his family, and who was trying to use any means necessary to be excused from reservist or military duty (Okrajno glavarstvo Logatec, No. 334, Prošnja, 14. 12. 1916, AS 61, ARS SI).

- 122 A concern that the Bloke municipality could be left without a chimneysweep prompted the mayor's office to address a preventive appeal to the district governor's office in late April 1915. War with Italy was only a matter of time as the conscription of new soldiers was already on the agenda, apparently making the mayor's office of the Bloke municipality realize that their indispensable master chimneysweep could be drafted in the following days. J. K., the local master chimneysweep, born in 1868 and a former soldier, could be called for Landsturm duty. At the time when the appeal was sent, this had not happened yet, but the mayor's office nevertheless asked the district governor's office to exempt the master chimneysweep from Landsturm duty, with the justification that without the master chimneysweep the municipality would be at a risk of fires as stoves and chimneys would be left unattended. The district governor's office replied to the applicant that his appeal was too early. The mayor's office was supposed to only lodge a new appeal should J. K., the master chimneysweep, actually be drafted (Okrajno glavarstvo Logatec, Nos. 428–430, Županstvo Bloke, April 23, 1915, Document No. 7842 of May 8, 1915, AS 89, ARS SI).
- 123 Okrajno glavarstvo Logatec, No. 334, Pojasnilo starešin mesta Idrija, January 13, 1915, AS 61, ARS SI. A group of elderly people from the town of Idrija addressed a referral to the district governor's office regarding a certain I. L., a furnace operator and home-owner from Idrija, who was declared unfit for duty at principal draft screenings for reasons of feeble-mindedness. The elders pointed out that although I. L. had been somewhat unwell, he had recovered and was now fit for military duty. Their notice reflects loyalty to the homeland and the Emperor, whom one must serve and do one's duty, as "*in these trying and evil times, the*

doing so by the local authorities that generally knew the situation in their territories well enough. The perspective of the authorities was that everybody should do their part for the country and homeland, at least in the rear, if not actual active duty. This, of course, does not mean that these views applied to the genuinely handicapped as well.¹²⁴

The established communication channels allowed soldiers to remain at least in occasional contact with their families and loved ones. Correspondence (about 90% of the population was literate) was common, although care had to be taken not to mention any actual places and times, and the arrival of letters and postcards was the most anticipated event among soldiers as well as their loved ones back home. On the other hand, the lack of news and letters from the soldiers added to the concern and uncertainty felt by the soldiers' relatives at home. Deaths were soon confirmed by official lists of the fallen published by the press. Although they were the cause of much sorrow to the relatives involved, they also brought an end to the uncertainty. It was possible to bring bodies buried in faraway lands back home, yet the military authorities soon issued an order that exhumations and reburials were to be carried out after the war was over.¹²⁵

homeland and the Emperor are in danger" (Okrajno glavarstvo Logatec, No. 334, Pojasnilo starešin mesta Idrija, January 13, 1915, AS 61, ARS SI).

124 Ibid., Potrdilo, April 30, 1917.

125 Slovenski narod, December 31, 2015, Novo leto.

DECAY OF THE EMPIRE

The fourth year of the war, 1918, heralded violent changes for the Slovenian ethnic space, Slovenian political elites, and population. Austria-Hungary was experiencing a severe internal crisis caused by military failures, the high cost of war, the decline in economic activity, shortages, and hunger, as well as the tense political relations within the country, mainly originating in national contradictions, but also partly social ones. The freeze on parliamentary activity, in effect for the first 3 years of the war, was lifted in the spring of 1917; the emperor had to allow the parliament to function again. With the restoration of parliamentary activity, national political programs developed a clearer profile. A symbol of the unity of the dualistic state, the ageing Emperor/King Franz Joseph, despite his efforts, was simply a figurehead, and the real question was the political and human capacity of his successor Karl, who succeeded him after his death on November 21, 1916. The succession to the throne was after his death by Franz Ferdinand in June 1914 was of course determined, although the heir to the throne and then Emperor Charles was still a pale, indistinct political figure, without an established place in the political arrangements of the central authority in Vienna and dependent on his advisers.¹²⁶

The restoration of parliamentary functioning violently accelerated the self-definition of political forces, notwithstanding the strong social democracy mainly on a national basis. The national political elites, Czechs and Slovenians as well as of the Germans and Hungarians, held a strong profile, not so much with respect to the problems of modernity, but largely on the question of which type of state legal system should apply in the future. Two camps were formed, the camp of Hungarian and Austrian politicians calling for the dualistic system to be maintained, and the camp of the disadvantaged who advocated the creation of special national units within the monarchy. Upon his installation, Emperor Karel confirmed the dualistic arrangement of the Hungarian half by swearing an oath to the Hungarian constitution, albeit he allowed some room for maneuver for the constitutional reform of the Cislaitan half, as he did not swear to that constitution.¹²⁷

South Slavic politicians first cautiously, but then ever more decisively raised the demand for trialism, the formation of a political unit in the south of the

126 Rahten, 2016: 40–45; Antoličič (ed.), 2022: 39–41 65–74, 117–142.

127 Pleterski, 1971: 87.

monarchy. For the Slovenians and the Slovenian political elite, who were living divided in five provinces, the program of unification within a single political unit was the basis of the political definition and simultaneously a demand that could hardly be imagined. The political program of trialism was at the same time one of the most explosive in the country as it concerned the mentioned dualistic arrangement – the exclusion of part of the Cislaitan lands and Translaitan Croatia, and also concerned the legal status of Bosnia, on which the two state political elites simply could not agree.¹²⁸ It was precisely with the question of how to understand the trialist program that a violent split emerged in the strongest Slovenian political party, the Slovenian People's Party. Even among Croatian politicians, trialism held a somewhat different place, and for many it was behind Croatian state law on which Croatian politicians had based their national political program.¹²⁹

The military position of the monarchy improved in the first half of 1918 for two reasons: first, in October and November 1917, its army, together with German help, broke through the 'southwestern' front with Italy in the Kobarid area, defeating the Italian Army, which led to the front shifting to the Piave River and, second, due to the better starting point for negotiations with the Entente.¹³⁰ Further relief was associated with the collapse of the Eastern Front. The Russian October Revolution of 1917 resulted in the de facto suspension of military operations in the East which, if nothing else, brought considerable relief to the Austro-Hungarian Army and an opportunity to move some of its forces to other fronts. The peace in Brest-Litovsk in early 1918 brought an additional element, the opportunity to strengthen its army by returning its soldiers from Russian captivity, which also lacked quality manpower. With the new 400,000 soldiers, it was also able to maintain the occupation of Serbia and the Balkan front far to the south of the then occupied Serbia, and also took the offensive on the Piava, with which it was supposed to achieve a decisive defeat of the Italian Army.¹³¹

128 Rahten, 2012: 69–85; Rahten, 2002a: 43–54; Ivašković, 2013: 89–119.

129 Rahten, 2002b: 1–10.

130 Simčič, 2006:196–261.

131 Schubert, 2001.

End of the War

The geopolitical situation, then also positioned around the Ljubljana Gap, the transition from the Danube to the Mediterranean area, and the transitions to the Balkans, had a decisive influence on the processes and events in the Slovenian lands. For 2 years during the war, the strategic position of the Slovenian lands was defined by the proximity of the front with Italy, the Isonzo Front. The fact the Isonzo Front lay 150 km to the west meant relief in the autumn of 1917; perhaps most so in the psychological field since there was no longer any direct threat. The army's movement to the new front eased the strict military regime in the rear, the "army area on the battlefield" that previously had placed power and control over the population almost entirely in the hands of the military authorities, which were even less favorable to Slovenian affairs than the civil authorities.¹³²

The national political elite, which was largely in the homeland (the Slovenians did not have a representative on the Yugoslav Committee who was an important political figure) and thus embedded in the possibilities and frameworks of Austrian politics, after the relaxation of political life in the monarchy obtained a little more political space. Its activity was centered around the "May Declaration" that on May 30, 1917 declared that they demanded an ethnic South Slavic unit within the framework of the monarchy. Here, biggest problem was harmonizing this demand with the Croatian political forces; the Croatian parliament made a similar request as early as March 1917. The joint Slovenian-Croatian Yugoslav Club, founded on May 29, demanded at the opening session of the parliament on May 30, 1917 that "all territories inhabited by Slovenians, Croats, and Serbs should be united under the scepter of the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty, into an independent state body".¹³³ Compromise was necessary in the justification of the common state unit, as it had two postulates: Croatian state law and the modern principle of national self-determination.

At almost the same time, on July 20, 1917, with the Corfu Declaration on the establishment of a common Yugoslav state under the scepter of the Karadjordjevićs, an alternative program was created, which the Slovenian political elite understood as a complementary program to their own since the clause on a South Slavic state within the framework of the Habsburg dynasty was for many MPs simply an item of reassurance, but no longer a sincere restriction on the

132 Guštin, 2005a: 62–74.

133 Pleterski, 1971: 116.

existing Habsburg state. This made it possible to present the Corfu Declaration, when it became known to the Slovenian public in August 1917, as being the fault of German and Hungarian nationalists, who did not understand the need for the nationalist reorganization and had thereby radicalized the South Slavic question.¹³⁴

Even more important was the political activation of the population in support of the demands contained in the May Declaration, i.e., the declaration movement. This was limited only to the Slovenian national space. It started in the first days of June, before reaching its peak between September 1917 and the spring of 1918. They collected, for example, 350,000 signatures in support of the declaration – every third Slovenian signed it.¹³⁵

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The May Declaration, along with the Ljubljana declaration supplemented on its basis, and the declaration movement were understood by the Slovenian political elite as a whole, which should lead to a South Slavic Slovenian–Croatian–Serbian state, which could perhaps be a personal third part of the empire (personal union), but also be a completely independent country.¹³⁶

The attitude of the Slovenian political elite to the Entente was strongly marked by Italy's participation in this pact. The Entente's definition of war aims, as drawn up and published at the invitation of American President W. Wilson on January 10, 1917, appeared as a poor compromise of the restoration of Serbia and Montenegro and the liberation of the Slavs from under a foreign yoke, with the term Slavs actually meaning the South Slavs, i.e., Slovenians, Croats, and Serbs in the monarchy, and Poles, as he mentioned Czechoslovakians separately. However, since the war aims also spoke of the liberation of the Italians from a foreign yoke, this formulation heralded a tough fight with Italy over the disputed ethnically mixed territories in the strip of land running from Soča Region to Dalmatia, especially since the extent of Italian demands for Austro-Hungarian territory was well known from the agreement on Italy joining the Entente in May 1915.¹³⁷ Similarly, the unity of the Croatian regions was under threat. With this, both political elites became significantly more reluctant with respect to the Entente's plans, while also being unable to do anything practically. The Entente's definition of the war objectives hence acted as a strong brake on both the Slovenian and Croatian political elites in radicalizing the path to the decision on the declaration of

134 Pleterski, 1971, 135.

135 Pleterski, 1971, 137–145

136 *Ibid.*, 151.

137 Pleterski, 1971, 87.

independence, alongside all the other reservations they held. In fact, they decided against it since realization of the Entente's war goals would mean breaking up the planned national unity on at the national level (dismemberment of the ethnic unity of Slovenians and Croats) and the level of the trialistic unity because Serbia was also supposed to receive some of the monarchy's territories.¹³⁸ This solution was considered to be the most appropriate in the first half of 1917.

On January 12, 1917, the Austrian government spoke for the first time about the issue of trialism. Although it did not accept the idea, the political ministers were aware of the explosive power held by the movement concerning the structure of the state, but resorted to the illusion that the matter could be solved within the framework of a subdualistic solution, namely, with the creation of a special "Serbo-Croatia" within the Hungarian half of the country, subject to the annexation of Serbia and Montenegro.¹³⁹ At the same time, even the idea of annexing Serbia and Montenegro came from the circles of military decision-makers (Danzer's action in May 1917).¹⁴⁰ Yet the idea did not include a solution for the Slovenian question as the German side was mainly interested in having geopolitical control of the line Graz – Maribor – Trieste and at most would be ready to accept the national autonomy of the Slovenians.¹⁴¹ Involuntarily, the Slovenian political elite was the hardest nut to crack due to its demands for a solution to the constitutional system in the south of the monarchy, and moreover due to its relative unity and agility, it was also a factor with much greater political weight than its share and previous political attitudes had acknowledged. It is no coincidence that the Slovenian political elite, with its great commitment to the difficult Slovenian situation, as a side effect, also took on a leading role among the political forces in the monarchy that were calling for a South Slavic state.

The turning point was the police ban on the declaration movement at the end of May 1918. In response to this measure, Slovenian political parties emphasized that they would not renounce national self-determination. They announced the establishment of the National Council as a national defense organization to achieve self-determination. After several months of hesitation and coordination, this was indeed established in mid-August 1918, behind similar national councils

138 Pleterski, 1971, 88–94. It should be noted that all the statements made emphasized not only this fact, but also the traditional loyalty to the monarchy or dynasty.

139 Pleterski, 1971, 94–95.

140 Ibid., 108–109.

141 Pleterski, 1971, 94–95.

of Czechs and Poles. This kind of national political homogenization in the form of a representative supreme body was not an exception in this decisive period.

In the autumn of 1918, however, the security threat to the Slovenian territory grew sharply. The Austro-Hungarian army was strongly weakened and suffered defeats along the Balkan front, while strategically the German army's losses on the western front were even more important. Still, the events on the Italian front were especially important for Slovenian territory. There, too, the Austro-Hungarian army's strength was greatly weakened and the first signs of the army's disintegration along national lines were beginning to appear. In addition, soldiers were personally tired and fed up with the war, while anti-war sentiment was becoming widespread mass dimensions. In these circumstances, the front could only hold out until the Italian Army moved. Given its bad experience in October 1917, the Italian command had prepared its army long and thoroughly for an offensive action and only launched it when sure that it had no equal opponent on the opposite side. The offensive in the 'knee' of the Piave therefore only started at the end of September and in October led to a breakthrough across the river at Vittorio Veneto.¹⁴² This military defeat triggered the accelerated disintegration of the army,¹⁴³ the retreat into the interior and, of course, put the Slovenian political elite in a completely impossible position as they had to choose between national goals and the danger that the Italian Army would occupy a large part of the national territory if they did not support the Austrian Army. Political elite swept this doubt under the carpet in the hope the matter would turn out favorably.

On September 14, 1918, Austria-Hungary sent the Entente a proposal for a peace note. The note stated the representatives of the European belligerent powers would meet and conclude a non-binding agreement about ending the war.¹⁴⁴ While waiting for an answer, the Austro-Hungarian army suffered a setback on the Balkan (Thessalonica) front, and in turn, 3 weeks later, on October 4, its leadership offered peace to the United States of America and asked for peace intervention. In anticipation of America's response, it followed the American initiative of January 8, 1918¹⁴⁵ on the autonomous development of the Austro-Hungarian nations while on October 16 proposed the federalist reorganization of the Austrian

142 Simčič, 2006: 311–313.

143 Mušič, 1958: 146–148.

144 Pleterski, 1971: 255.

145 Address of the President of the United States Delivered at a Joint Session of the Two Homes of Congress, January 8, 1918; Lipušček, 2003: 63–65.

half of the monarchy.¹⁴⁶ Still, 2 days later, the American response was negative and accordingly the Slovenian question was also completely opened up.

The Slovenian political elite, united in the National Council, was able to follow major political shifts, but not shape them. In its efforts, the key achievement was alignment with the Croatian political elite because only in this way could it reach a critical mass for action in the south of the monarchy. The most decisive joint action was the founding of the central National Council (Narodno vijeće) of Slovenians, Croats, and Serbs on October 6, 1918, which brought together all Austro-Hungarian Slavs within one national political representation.¹⁴⁷ It rejected Emperor Karl's Manifesto, an offer for federalist reorganization, on the grounds that it was already too late for such a thing.¹⁴⁸ The elite was already focused on establishing its own South Slavic state, which was understood in the sense of one South Slavic state, i.e., a connection or merger with Serbia (and Montenegro). Yet they also wished to assert their own particular national interest: to achieve a state structure that would guarantee national autonomy for Slovenians (and Croats). The religious diversity of the South Slavic nations was also a considerable source of concern and doubts about the joint project. Still, the situation in both Europe and Austria-Hungary had gained such momentum that it was necessary to deal with all the concerns and go with the flow.

Security situation at the time of the 'Coup'

On October 29, 1918, the political elite united in the National Council announced the establishment of a new South Slavic state, following the Czechs, Slovaks, and Poles with a 1-day delay. The Austro-Hungarian state disintegrated into the nation states, only the Hungarian half still persisted in its integrity, but this too was started with the proclamation of the South Slavic State of Slovenians, Croats, and Serbs, the Slovak state, and the Romanian state.¹⁴⁹ The security situation in which this occurred was not easy. Namely, the political elite proclaimed

¹⁴⁶ Rahten, 2016: 151–168.

¹⁴⁷ Krizman and Janković (eds.), I, 1964: 331–333, doc. 265, 266.

¹⁴⁸ Pleterski, 1971: 253.

¹⁴⁹ Krizman and Janković (eds.), II, 1964: 393–398, 400–401, doc. 332, 335.

the new state at a time when the Austro-Hungarian government, both civilian and military, was still operating in both halves of the country.

Along with the central state bodies in Zagreb, the National Council established the National Government of the Slovenia in Ljubljana, which was given the authority to govern the Slovenian parts of the country and, initially, Istria as well.¹⁵⁰ The civil authority, including the police, was immediately taken over by the Slovenian political elite with some measures, and no conflicts actually appeared. The hardest nut to crack was the military authority, which considered itself personally bound to the emperor, above all to its military subordination. In particular, the commander of the army in Italy, General Svetozar Boroević, had his sights set on withdrawing the main body of the army in time into the interior to avoid it being captured by the advancing Italian Army. In so doing, he already knew that the Supreme Military Command had already agreed with the central government that the army would be divided among the newly formed states or National Councils. However, the army's division could be a program for the coming weeks, but did not itself provide soldiers given that most of them were on the fronts, not in the rear. Thus, the rear and supplementary army played a bigger role than the front-line soldiers.

The newly formed civil authorities in the Slovenian part of the country were mostly helped by self-appointed military officers of Slovenian nationality. For a time, when it was more a gesture than a real military force able to militarily perform, this proved effective and successful. The officers provided basic security for the seizure of power and the establishment of a few military units, but they were not particularly strong and reliable.¹⁵¹ For the withdrawal of the main part of the Soča-based army through Slovenian territory, which was the biggest immediate security threat, the National Government organized at least minimal insurance for Slovenia and, above all, a logistics line that covered transport and food, as well as disarmament, so that within 3 weeks in November around 350,000 to 400,000 soldiers passed through the Slovenian territory of the State of Slovenians, Croats and Serbs (SHS) countries without any major incidents.¹⁵²

The Slovenian political elite, united around the executive power of the SHS National Government for Slovenia, behaved in November and December as if

150 Krizman and Janković (eds), II, 1964: 431, doc. 357; Perovšek, 2018: 120–123.

151 Švajncer, 1990: 56–67. The Government restored supplementary units of four regiments that had a supplementary area in the Slovenian ethnic territory: the Ljubljana, Celje, Maribor, Trieste, and Slovenian mountain regiments.

152 Bizjak, 2003: 25–36.

the organization of the nation state was a necessity.¹⁵³ It is telling that the nation state was understood on two levels – the level of the country, where the concepts of the Western South Slavic state (the SHS State) and the Yugoslav state (the SHS State with Serbia and Montenegro) were still mixed, and the level of the Slovenian unit. There were no special differences within the elite regarding the need for a special Slovenian unit. In this, of course, it was directed both inwardly – within the framework of the SHS State, in mid-November 1918, with the Decree on Transitional Administration, it ensured the direct execution of such powers of the central Zagreb authority, and it also exercised all the authority of the sovereign state.¹⁵⁴ Its biggest problem, however, was that it could not guarantee this sovereign power externally, in the entire ethnic area, vis-à-vis the newly formed German Austria, and even less vis-à-vis Italy.

German Austria initially agreed, at least in principle, to dividing up the lands of Styria and Carinthia along ethnic lines yet withdrew from this concept around November 1.¹⁵⁵ Thus, the SHS State was left with only the principle of power – to seize what was possible, and then hope that the principle of possession of the territory is “nineteenths of the law” would prevail. It could conduct such a policy only within the scope of possibilities because it did not have a force that would actually be a force of power. The armed forces had yet to be created.¹⁵⁶ Due to their lack of legitimacy, even these military forces were not sent to fight on the northern border, and were largely kept near their home barracks. However, they attracted units into the military occupation and even the securing of vital parts of the territory, which they were able to legitimize as an Entente army. For this purpose, units of Serbian soldiers temporarily staying in Slovenia on their way from being prisoners of war (Serbian Corps Command in Ljubljana) served exclusively for this purpose.¹⁵⁷

The problem of controlling the western part of the ethnic territory was even more difficult. The Italian Army already reached the edge of the Slovenian ethnic

153 Perovšek, 2018; 131–187.

154 Perovšek, 1998: 78–82.

155 Aussenpolitische Dokumente der Republik Österreich 1918–1938 (1993): Band 1, Dok. 15.

156 The formation of the armed forces of the SHS State in the Slovenian part took place very differently than in the Croatian part or in Bosnia. Due to several reasons, the Serbian military mission had no influence in Slovenia. The formation of the army actually took place around November 20, when the first mobilization was carried out in the mentioned 5 regiments, which had their domicile on the territory of the proclaimed country (Švajncer, 1990: 68).

157 Švajncer, 1990: 264–267.

territory near Gorica on November 2 and Trieste on November 3.¹⁵⁸ Its purpose was to seize as much territory as possible, which was allowed by the London Pact, although the Entente had already relativized this principle, especially the United States. Still, the Italian Army did not agree; at first, it even referred to having conquered this territory in battle. Accordingly, the Slovenian state elite was only left with verbal resistance since the prevailing assessment within it was that in the given conditions it was impossible to act in any way against the victorious Entente force. They relied on the fact that at the peace conference it would be possible to change the fact of the occupation.¹⁵⁹ It was limited to protest statements by representatives of local authorities during the occupation.¹⁶⁰ At the same time, the Slovenian state elite itself tried to make contact with the Entente through the Zagreb National Council, but mostly counted on Serbia, with whom the government of the National Council had established negotiations in Geneva. Yet the negotiations with the Serbian government on unification to form one country in Geneva, along with an important achievement – the agreement on the modalities of the creation of a common state – immobilized the most powerful political figure of the State of SHS, Anton Korošec, for the whole month.¹⁶¹ The National Council itself was much more concerned with the problem of Dalmatia, which was also occupied. A noteworthy achievement was stopping the Italian Army's further penetration into the interior. For this purpose, the National Government and the National Council used the legitimation of the Serbian-Entente Army when it presented the unit of Serbian prisoners of war as the occupying force of the other Entente Allies.¹⁶² Requests and invitations for the Serbian army to station its at least symbolic forces on the territory of the SHS State were a constant in November. The concept of state independence therefore, under the pressure of the difficult conditions, gave way to the desire to accommodate the friendly Entente armies (Serbian, French, American) on the territory of the newly formed state.¹⁶³

158 Kacin-Wohinz, 1972: 46–116; Žorž, 2016: 364–380.

159 Jenuš, 2011 : 177–182 ; Janković and Krizman (eds), 1964: doc. 355, 430.

160 Guštin, 2005b: 78–79.

161 Rahten, 2016: 182–199; Rahten, 2019, 87–103.

162 Guštin, 2005b: 73–88.

163 Ibid.

Seen in accordance with the realist theory of international relations,¹⁶⁴ the SHS State correctly tried to compensate for its lack of real power by creating its own armed forces, which could influence the way and concrete forms of the SHS State's operation. The authorities, however, paid varying degrees of attention to this issue as the army was needed differently due to the distinct geopolitical conditions of each of the constituent parts. The military was most consistently organized by the Slovenian part of the country, which greatly needed the army due to the possibility of using it in the north. The SHS national government in Ljubljana already concluded on November 1 that the use of military force in the north to obtain ethnic territories from German Austria was legitimate.¹⁶⁵ Despite the need, it took 3 weeks to begin properly organizing the army on the basis of conscription. Only the commander of the Styrian Border Command, General Rudolf Maister, took the mobilization extremely seriously. The result of the mobilization was limited – they were able to establish 5 regiments, but it nevertheless enabled the National Government in Ljubljana to occupy Carinthia, after a few skirmishes on the demarcation line had reached a reasonably favorable solution to the demarcation line in Styria.¹⁶⁶ In the conflict with the German Carinthian army in December 1918 and January 1919, it was shown that the Slovenian army, already part of the army of the Kingdom of SHS (Drava Divisional Command), was too weak to successfully enforce national interests. The military defeat at the end of April and in early May 1919 was severe and reflected in the retreat and thus the loss of a large part of the ethnic territory north of the Karavanke mountains.¹⁶⁷

Thus, the only option left for the Slovenian political elite was to agree with the dominant Serbian elite on help in asserting their national interests, which could lead to the construction of a centralist, yet therefore internally unstable, state in the 1920s. The price of the Serbian/Yugoslav state political elite was the withdrawal from the strategic alliance with Croatian politics, with which they came to the common state.¹⁶⁸ Because of threats from the outside, the fight for the northern state border and diplomatic efforts for the western border, the Slovenian political elite could only support the formation of the central state authority.

164 Morgenthau, 1995.

165 Janković and Krizman (eds.), 1964: doc. 372, 442–443.

166 Ude, 1977: 71–95, 142–163.

167 Ude, 1977: 163–168, 170–222; Guštin, 2019: 169–194.

168 Prunk, 2023: 164–178.

With the creation of a unitary state, the Slovenian political elite sacrificed one of the basic demands that led it to enter the Yugoslav orientation in the first place, and it is no coincidence that around 1923 Slovenian politics found itself in a complete crisis, following a drop in confidence and the installation of a reserve political elite in state structures. although the simultaneous economic progress and penetration of Slovenian industry into a protected and goods-hungry market somewhat mitigated this disappointment with the Yugoslav political space.¹⁶⁹

169 Fischer et al (eds.), 2005: 246–249.

THE DEATH OF ONE ARMY GIVES BIRTH TO NEW ONE

The leadership of the State of SHS established on October 29, 1918 in the south of the collapsed monarchy immediately faced the problem of the security and defense of the new state. The armed forces, which the state leadership understood to be a self-evident and necessary attribute of the new state, soon began to be formed from the top. Yet, based on the initial possibilities, they had to retain the existing organizational forms – the regiments. In any event, the actual formation of the army was not easy. While recruiting the team, they had to overcome fatigue from the long war and the new country's low legitimacy, and they did not trust the work of the officers too much. At the same time, the instability of the wider area required operationally capable armed forces. In the process of creating a common state army following the merger with Serbia, the military question seemed to be most easily solved by converting the Serbian army into a common Yugoslav army.

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Armed Forces of the SHS State

On October 29, 1918, a day after the proclamation of independence of the Czech Republic and Poland, the State of Slovenians, Croats, and Serbs was declared in Zagreb. It included what was then Banovina Croatia and Slavonia, ethnically Slovenian parts of Carniola, Styria, Gorizia-Gradisca, Trieste and Carinthia, Istria, and Dalmatia, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁷⁰

On the day of its solemn proclamation, the SHS State did not have its own armed forces. The plans, let alone the measures, of the political forces that guided the independence of the South Slavic nations within the Austria-Hungary framework in terms of the military aspect of national independence did not lead to their own armed forces, if we disregard the paramilitary local units of the National Defense that were intended to merely maintain order and peace. They were limited by the conditions in which the state was born. The population and

170 Janković and Krizman (eds.), 1964, II: doc. 335, 400-401; Krizman, 1977: 80-83.

territory of the new country were part of Austria-Hungary at the time of independence on October 29, 1918, with the latter still exercising full sovereign power. Moreover, it was still at war, even though it had already negotiated an armistice. Military units with a predominantly South Slavic team, which the new state elite were counting on, were still at the fronts or stationed outside the national territory, the Slovenian and Bosnian ones mostly on the 'southwestern' Italian front, the Croatian one also on the eastern.¹⁷¹ Rather naively, they could only demand that the government attract the "Slovenian regiments" from the front, just as the Czech political elite demanded. The Austrian government rejected such requests from several national representative offices. It was only on October 31 that the Government allowed officers to submit their oath to the National Council at their own request.¹⁷² Nevertheless, the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian army along national lines was unstoppable; Czech regiments were the first to withdraw from the front against Italy.

But at the same time, their own armed forces did not even seem so important to the South Slavic political elites, in the face of the confidence in the principle of national self-determination proclaimed by American President Wilson. The independence movement of the southern Slavs was also under the influence of anti-war, peace propaganda, and this had a devastating effect together with the general weariness of the soldiers in the fifth year of the war.¹⁷³

Nevertheless, the establishment of a state army seemed so self-evident and necessary to the political elite that they immediately rushed at least to establish an army. The National Council, which assumed temporary executive and legislative power in the country, expressly considered the military forces of the SHS State to be unified; to lead the army, the Commissioner for National Defense, Dr. Mate Drinković.¹⁷⁴ Already on the day of the new state was declared (October 29, 1918), the National Council appointed the highest military commands of the new state; the cadre for them was chosen from among generals who had expressed their loyalty to him the day before and publicly supported the formation of the armed forces of the SHS State. Vice Marshal Mihaljević became the head of the operational section of the Commission for National Defense and thus the commander of the army. Each constituent part of the country was given its

171 Andrejka, 1928: 269; Švajncer, 1988: 130–133.

172 Krizman, 1989: 315.

173 Pleterski, 1971: 211–241.

174 Janković and Krizman (eds.), 1964, II: doc. 335.

own operational military command, a military district; Croatia comprised the 1st district, the territory of Slovenia and Istria was initially under the jurisdiction of the 2nd military district, Bosnia was the 3rd, Herzegovina the 4th, while the 5th military district is said to be naval.¹⁷⁵ However, the political desire did not yet mean the actual formation of the army, even less of a unified organism. The differences between the constituent parts of the country were simply too great – also in the military field, not only in a political sense. Paradoxically, they were united by a common basis of having belonged to the former Austro-Hungarian army, which allowed at least a similar level of military knowledge and doctrinal starting points, although it is true that the Austro-Hungarian army also had three fundamental components. This means it is unsurprising that the formation of the army was left to each of the provincial political authorities rather than to the uniform guidelines and energetic command of the General Staff in Zagreb.

The main issue with organizing the military was the acquisition of squads for the units. The Commissioner for Defense of the National Council immediately issued a decree on mobilization which, without the authority of the state authorities, only saw a small response. Calls to the soldiers to join “at a decisive moment” the units that would be the guarantor of national independence also found little resonance.¹⁷⁶

In Croatia, while many high-ranking military commanders were willing to participate in the command and organization of the army, because until then Croatia was the only one of the SHS provinces to have a partially autonomous military unit – Hrvatsko domobranstvo (Croatian Homeguard), there was less willingness on the part of the team to join the army at all. Since the autumn of 1917, Croatia has been experiencing mass anti-war protests by soldiers, reflected in mass desertions from the army, the “green staff”.¹⁷⁷ All this led to the slow and difficult completion of the preserved cores of the regiments, which had their previous recruitment areas in the territory of the country.

In Slovenia, on the contrary, the feeling of the nation being under threat led to a series of self-initiated appearances by reserve officers who took overpower in individual cities and actually secured the formation of the new country’s political bodies. The most famous of those is Major Rudolf Maister, who on November 1, 1918, upon his own initiative, and later with the support of the local Slovenian authorities, established military control in Maribor, a city with a predominantly

175 Krizman, 1989: 315.

176 Janković and Krizman (eds.), II, 1964: doc. 338, 402-403.

177 Hrabak, 1990: 93-144, 186-217.

German-oriented city government close to the Slovenian–German ethnic border. The same was true in Ljubljana and Celje which, however, lay in the middle of the national territory and were not nationally disputed like Maribor was.¹⁷⁸ This sense of threat also led to the greater responsiveness of the soldiers who joined the new units, which were traditionally built on the same territorial principle as the Austrian one. Thus, these units were built on the Croatian highest command staff, Slovenian officers, and traditional military units, i.e., the ‘Slovenian regiments’ from the Austro-Hungarian military organization, which were completed already on November 8 with the first mobilization or conscription.¹⁷⁹ In fact, the new mobilization gained only the cores of four regiments; Maribor, Celje, Ljubljana, and Slovenian mountain regiments. From the recruitment area of the Trieste Regiment, which was also the Slovenian-Italian area, they managed to create only one battalion in a dislocated manner. This included the core of the Maribor Cavalry Regiment. On the other hand, there was a lot of artillery equipment available together with a lot of heavy artillery that had been withdrawn from the Piavia Front. Accordingly, it was possible to establish three battalion-strength artillery units; the supply of ammunition was a challenge because the new army could only be supplied from preserved Austrian warehouses in the hinterland. They managed to supplement all these units in a few days with officers of Slovenian nationality who were returning from the Austro-Hungarian army to such a degree that the units could already carry out their first combat operations at the end of November. In four regiments, the Defense Commission of the National Government for Slovenia managed to gather around 7,200 soldiers by the end of November.¹⁸⁰

Even before the end of November 1918, the central command of the army in the SHS state remained only on paper, which was the result of the reorganization of the state system of authority. Namely, the Slovenian part of the country received confederation status or even the status of a real union on November 19, 1918 with the Transitional Administration Decree.¹⁸¹ The consequences of this reorganization of the country immediately reached the military as well. In the second half of November 1918, the military district almost became independent, or better put, the Slovenian National Government had an ever-increasing direct influence on it which, according to the national legal system, from November

178 Švajncer, 1990: 184–186; Ude, 1977: 41–49.

179 Švajncer, 1990: 35.

180 Švajncer, 1990: 62.

181 Perovšek, 1998: 78–81.

19 directly, through the National Defense Commissioner in the National Government, executed the SHS for Slovenia military authority as well.¹⁸²

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the formation of the army was the weakest. There were not so many officer staff, there was not even a response from the population, which still felt the Austro-Hungarian power as a new coercion and, in addition, the proximity of the Serbian army crippled efforts to establish military units themselves. Another important inhibiting factor was that the local army was not needed since there was no immediate threat of war. The result was that the army existed more on paper than in barracks. The same applied to the naval military force, which suffered a severe blow at the very beginning of its formation when the Entente demanded the SHS State to hand over all the warships it had inherited from Austria-Hungary.¹⁸³

When we ask ourselves how big the army in November 1918 was, we historians remain at a loss. While the sources do not allow us to define its size precisely, it is possible to assume from the partial and unequal data that the army consisted of fewer than 20,000 soldiers, distributed into 15 infantry, cavalry, and artillery regiments, which indicates that it was a weak unit, mostly for the core of the most nationally conscious soldiers who remained in uniform more on their own initiative than as an obligation to the new nation state.¹⁸⁴ In Slovenia, where the regiments were established through mobilization, each of the four infantry regiments numbered around 1,000 to a maximum of 2,000 soldiers. Up to half of the soldiers (around 9,100) were in the units of the 2nd military district, i.e., in Slovenia.¹⁸⁵

The security situation and use of the military

The new nation state of the State of Slovenians, Croats, and Serbs was an unconsolidated state built on the spur of the moment. Building an army takes time. At first, many views on the army were opportunistic – it was seen as necessary to have an army, and the nationally conscious officers in particular were perceived as a normal component of the state elite.

182 *Ibid.*, 83–100.

183 Krizman, 1977: 92–120.

184 Švajncer, 1990: 27–31.

185 Švajncer, 1990: 62–63.

At the same time, the issue of the army was linked to the security dimension. The disintegration of Austria-Hungary opened a big Pandora's box because, despite the declaration of the state, the area remained unstable. The Entente countries did not recognize the SHS countries, the Italian Army had penetrated to occupy the territories it had been promised since 1915 by the London Pact, and some of the political elite and population, especially of the Serbian nationality in Bosnia, Dalmatia, and Croatia, invited the Serbian army to enter the country as a provider of help and a guarantor for the new South Slavic state.¹⁸⁶ The Serbian population in some parts of Bosnia and Slavonia expected direct integration into the Serbian state in any case. The borders of the new state were unclear in many areas and even disputed after 2 weeks as the SHS State clashed with German Austria and Hungary over the territories in the midst of two arguments, ethnic and administrative/political. In addition, the state-political elite looked anxiously at the internal political situation because, like other elites, they were afraid of the internal situation becoming worse and revolutionizing the population, as had happened in Germany, Vienna and a little later in Hungary.¹⁸⁷

Already in the second half of November 1918, alongside the argument of defining borders based on the ethnic principle the argument of military security of the disputed territory prevailed, from the temporary demarcation after a few low-intensity skirmishes along the Styrian border between Maribor and Graz, the struggle for southern Carinthia, which developed into one of the small border wars in the Central European area in the first 2 years following the Great War, until the conquest of Medimurje – the triangle between the Drava and the Mura.¹⁸⁸ This was the realistic range of the new armies since here the army met with similarly built and powerful military units of German Austria and Hungary, with equal, if not less, legitimacy. Still, at no time during this period did the political or military elite think of militarily opposing any member of the Entente, not even the Italian Army, even though at the same time the authorities were protesting with all their might against its advance and presence in western Slovenia and Dalmatia. There were even several violent demonstrations in Dalmatia.¹⁸⁹ The second Entente army, the Serbian one, was considered friendly, given the prospect that a common South Slavic state would be created. After all, during

186 Guštin, 2005b: 74–76.

187 Krizman, 1977: 84–85, 96–97; Krizman, 1989: 314, 319, 320; Hrabak, 1999: 232–319.

188 Ude, 1977: 81–119, 141–185.

189 Krizman, 1977: 195–200.

the negotiations in Geneva, where the Serbian government was still lingering, they also reached an agreement in principle on the unification on November 9, yet the Serbian government rejected it immediately after returning to Belgrade. Therefore, in anticipation of the Serbian army entering the territory of the SHS State and the negotiations on the unification of the two countries, those military units that were created from Serbian prisoners of war were presented as the allied Entente army. With them, as representatives of the Entente army, they even tried to stop the Italian Army from penetrating into Ljubljana on November 20. These efforts seemed to be successful since the Italian Army moved back a few kilometers closer to the Adriatic–Black Sea watershed, which was considered the limit line of the London Agreement from 1915.¹⁹⁰ However, the Serbian army, as an Entente army, could only send minimal forces to the SHS State in the important port of Rijeka/Fiume and the eastern part of the country, and it sent a military delegation that was supposed to prepare the new military organization of the SHS State as an organization compatible with the Serbian army. Hence, the Serbian army entered the Republic of Serbia only after December 1, 1918, when the immediate merger of the Republic of Serbia with the Kingdom of Serbia into the single Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians had already been signed, i.e., not as an entente, but as the army of a common state. This happened gradually, which means in the face of the pressing security conditions and military tightening along the northern border with German Austria, units of the former State SHS were operating independently, even in combat operations, in the battle area in Carinthia even until April 1919.¹⁹¹

Military and political power in the State of Slovenians, Croats and Serbs

Still, the question of the army was also the question of a new army that would be more in line with the “national sense”, as they described the new political reality in contrast to the army in Austria-Hungary which the affected South Slavic nations considered to be alienated and a tool of the emperor, as well as of the ruling

190 Guštin, 2005b: 81–86; Krizman, 1989: 332–334.

191 Švajncer, 1990: 195–196, 203–204, 212, 219.

Germans and Hungarians. The army they managed to create in the first weeks following independence had an ambiguous position in the public and among the political elite. On one hand, it was considered a national army, an expression of the new state sovereignty and, on the other, due to the Austrian roots of the military organization as well as the officers who led it, it was considered Austrian-oriented. Especially since among its officers it had suddenly become clear that a good number of them had become nationally and linguistically alienated from their nationality during their military service in Austria-Hungary.¹⁹² Despite this, the army was considered a reliable part of the nation state, at least among the Slovenian population of the country.

However, in principle, the Serbian side showed mistrust towards the officers and also the team during the unification negotiations. For them, these were Austro-Hungarian officers and soldiers who not long ago were the hard occupying power in Serbia. Of course, in such a position we can also see a purely pragmatic interest, namely, that the Serbian army would automatically become the army of the united state, which would significantly improve the Serbian positions. According to the agreement between the National Council, the Government of Serbia and the Supreme Command of the Serbian Army, a “new young national army instead of the former Austrian one, which will be disbanded, will be established”¹⁹³ on the territory of the SHS State. On November 29, 1918, a Serbian military mission arrived in Zagreb that, in cooperation with the National Council’s defense commission, was supposed to help with the formation of six regiments (five in Croatia and one in Slovenia).¹⁹⁴ The formation of these new units was stopped by the disbanding of the units of the 1st military district, which followed the revolt of the Croatian 25th and 53rd regiments in Zagreb on December 5, 1918, the opposition of the Commissioner for Defense Dr. Drinković, especially the lack of military material and the Entente’s warning not to allow mobilization in the former Austro-Hungarian territory.¹⁹⁵

Some members of the political elite who were more sympathetic to Serbia saw Serbia’s help in creating a new army as a factor that would not only strengthen the country, but also create an important bridge for the South Slavic nation state. Nonetheless, this very plan became a political stumbling block at the same time

192 Švajncer, 1990: 35–45; Ude, 1977: 55.

193 Janković and Krizman, 1964: doc. 545, 626.

194 Bjelajac, 1988: 47–49.

195 Švajncer, 1990: 117–118.

as it began to divide the political elite in Croatia, whereas the Slovenian part of the country self-organized anyway since it was forced to if it wanted to set its border demands on a national/ethnic basis against German Austria. The plan for the new organization of the army in the territory of the SHS State was realized only half year later, as well as the establishment of new regiments of the Yugoslav army in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians.¹⁹⁶

Shortly after independence, the State of Slovenians, Croats, and Serbs began to show weaknesses and, above all, the feeling of being threatened. The political elite was still unconsolidated and one of its biggest rivals was the army. Of course, with few exceptions, the military commanders were not national loyalists, but expressed more or less sincere loyalty to the new country. Yet the political elite soon began to doubt this loyalty. Was this justified? A few facts spoke for it. The generals held the real power, even though they had quite a unruly and weak military force at their disposal. The Slovenian government even suspected General Maister, who showed no political pretensions except for his persistent conviction that it was necessary to occupy Slovenian ethnic territory up to the northern ethnic border.¹⁹⁷ The atmosphere in Zagreb was much tenser. Namely, Zagreb was the most radical messenger of two demands, for a federal unit in the case of unification with Serbia, and for a republican state system against the Serbian monarchy. The uprising of Croatian soldiers on December 5, 1918 depressed the political elite. The 15 dead and 20 wounded in the shooting on the streets was only an external reason for this disappointment.¹⁹⁸ Croatia turned away from the army and from then on no longer opposed the principle that it was necessary to create a new army, which meant creating it on the Serbian model. On top of this, it must be said that it was the simultaneous integration into the new state of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians that was formally created by the political declaration on December 1, 1918.¹⁹⁹

This was the end of independent military development, although it was realized until the spring of 1919.

196 Bjelajac, 1988: 50–70.

197 Ude, 1977: 85–88; Janković and Krizman (eds.), 1964, II: doc. 584, 667–668; doc.592, 680.

198 Janković and Krizman (eds.), 1964, II, doc. 604, 605: 690–692; Krizman, 1989: 364–365.

199 Krizman, 1989: 364; Bjelajac, 1988: 64–69.

STRATEGIC MILITARY (MIS) PLANNING

The end of the First World War also brought about the disintegration of the largest multiethnic empire in Central Europe – Habsburg Austria-Hungary. Already during the war, however, the Slovenian, Croatian, and Serbian nationalist movements were striving for a federal rearrangement of the empire and, eventually, their own states. Their objective was to unite the Kingdom of Serbia and other southern Slavic lands into a Yugoslav (meaning Southern Slav) state.²⁰⁰

In their plans for the post-war rearrangement of Central Europe, in the autumn of 1918 the Entente and, especially, American President Woodrow Wilson relinquished the idea of Austria-Hungary, instead embracing that of nation states, such as Poland and Czechoslovakia. On 29 October 1918, the Southern Slavs from the (former) Habsburg Empire announced the foundation of their nation state – the State of Slovenians, Croats, and Serbs – together with the intention of uniting with Serbia. Unlike in the cases of Czechoslovakia and Poland, the Entente refused to recognize the new state because of Italian opposition. The unification was postponed until December to suit the Serbian political elite which saw the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians as an extended Serbia with Serbian dominance. Such a concept of the state, also reflected in its 1921 Constitution (*Vidovdanska*), naturally met with the opposition of the Croatian and, partly, Slovenian political leaders, rendering it internally weak from the outset. The political confrontation, especially between the Serbs and the Croats, caused instability and led to extremes such as the killing of the Croatian leader Stjepan Radić in the Parliament. In order to save the state, King Alexander abolished the Constitution in 1929, assumed personal dictatorship and, after 2 years, imposed his own constitution which centralized the country even more. His assassination in Marseilles was the work of extreme nationalists. In 1939, after many years of struggle, the political leaders finally reached an agreement, securing the Croats wide autonomy in the framework of the Province of Croatia. The institution of an equally autonomous Slovenian province was, however, abandoned due to the war.²⁰¹

200 Pirjevec, 1995: 11–25; Krizman, 1977; Perovšek, 1998: 13–61.

201 Fischer et al (eds.), 2005: 237–250, 321–327.

Serbian dominance was even more obvious in the military sphere. The new Yugoslav army was modelled on the old Serbian one,²⁰² assuming its documentation and rules, and using its language and the Cyrillic alphabet in commanding. The officers' corps, comprising Serbian and former Austro-Hungarian officers, was internally divided and full of frictions during the first decade.²⁰³ In the face of the dissatisfaction of both nations, the army was commissioned with the task of demonstrating its role in maintaining peace in the country and exercising repression against its own citizens.

The geopolitical environment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians

To understand the strategic military planning in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, three essential aspects must be taken into account.

The first was the ethnic structure of Yugoslavia. While composed of many nationalities, only three – Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian – were acknowledged as constituent. There was, however, inequality even between these three constituent peoples, with the Serbs dominating the other two. Serbia defended its status as a victor nation and member of the Entente, attempting to capitalize on it.²⁰⁴

The second aspect influencing the strategic planning was the economic situation of the country, which was predominantly agrarian. Due to the highly fragmented land and lack of mechanization and farming expertise, it was unable to produce a sufficient food surplus. Industry was limited to a few industrial centers, mainly in its north-western part that before 1918 belonged to Austria-Hungary. Infrastructure was better developed in its northern and western areas. The state budget was correspondingly low.²⁰⁵ The lack of financial resources in

202 Bjelajac, 1988: 55–76; Švajncer, 1990: 288–307.

The army of the State of SCS was considerably weaker in comparison, only counting some 15,000 soldiers of low combat morale and outdated formation copying the traditional division into military districts and infantry regiments (Švajncer, 1990).

203 Bjelajac, 1988: 55–137; Bjelajac, 1999: 17–46.

204 Pirjevec, 1995: 26–50.

205 Fischer et al (eds.), 2005: 441–473.

the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, one of the economically least developed countries in Europe, was the biggest restrictive factor in the strategic planning of its armed forces and the preparation of the basic doctrinal documentation regarding their organization, operation, and tasks in both peace and wartime.

The third decisive aspect was the geopolitical situation in the Balkans and Europe. Since being founded, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians was faced with hostile external opposition in the region which, due to its territorial and strategic interests, sought the first opportunity to eliminate it.

Yugoslavia's main adversary was Italy with which it had an unresolved border issue. In October 1918, Italy occupied the territories it had been promised under the Treaty of London of April 1915. The Paris Peace Conference in 1919, rather than proposing a solution that would have been unacceptable to one of the parties, left the matter to their mutual agreement. In 1920, the countries indeed reached an agreement which, to the detriment of the weaker Yugoslavia, ratified the situation as stipulated in the Treaty, with the exception of Dalmatia. The mutual tensions, however, continued. Unable to exert its influence over the entire Danube region, Italy attempted to do so against Yugoslavia instead. All this resulted in endless frictions (in only 2 of the 23 interwar years did the countries enjoy fair relations).²⁰⁶ Yugoslavia's second external problem was Hungary. Its political elite had never truly accepted the radical reduction of the former Hungarian half of the empire, i.e., the loss of Slovakia and Romania, which became independent, and Vojvodina, which was annexed to Serbia/Yugoslavia. Hungary was thus considered the most likely threat to the revision of the existing borders.²⁰⁷ The third opponent was Bulgaria, Serbia's traditional adversary and even enemy since the Balkan wars and the First World War, as well as its rival for dominance in the region.

In view of all this, Yugoslavia made many diplomatic efforts to find allies among the superpowers. Without being able to count on Russia, Serbia's traditional ally, because of the October Revolution, only France remained. France had been the biggest ally and supporter of the Kingdom of SCS and Yugoslavia, and, in 1927, had even concluded a treaty with it on mutual assistance. Now, however, it held reservations. With only conditional French support, Yugoslavia's prospects seemed bleaker than those of pre-war Serbia.²⁰⁸

206 Pirjevec, 1995: 51–56.

207 Vinaver, 1971; Vinaver, 1976.

208 Vinaver, 1985; Krizman, 1975.

Strategic planning of the armed forces

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As well as the above factors that directly influenced strategic planning in the Kingdom of SCS, the planners of the strategic and doctrinal documents of the Yugoslav armed forces should be mentioned. The supreme commander of the Yugoslav Army was the King who, in the event of the declaration of a state of war, commanded the armed forces with the assistance of the Army's Supreme Command. King Alexander Karadjordjević, a successful supreme commander of the Serbian army in the First World War, saw himself as an indispensable link in the strategic planning of the armed forces and defense. He exerted a huge influence on the military elite, which held him in high esteem.²⁰⁹ Military training and education were considerably restricted due to a chronic shortage of means, with outdated methods and a curriculum borrowed from the pre-First World War Serbian military schooling system. Consequently, the Royal Army lacked an elaborated career and education system for middle rank and senior officers whose knowledge, despite their high rank and standing in the military hierarchy, was often limited to the tactical level and experience gained during past armed conflicts. In many cases, the military promotion of an officer depended on his political suitability which, in turn, depended on his nationality.²¹⁰ In having Serbs as the highest-ranking officers, the King saw a guarantee of Serbian dominance in the country's most powerful institution – the army. In these narrow military elite circles, strategic documents were drawn, often without previous military and intelligence analyses and distanced from the actual situation in the military system.

The 1918–1921 period

The initial period of the state's existence was ridden with burning and unresolved issues demanding an immediate, if only temporary, solution regarding defense

209 He had an exceptional confidence in generals, such as Radomir Putnik, Stepa Stepanović, Živojin Mišić and Petar Bojović, with whom he had successfully fought side by side in the Serbian battles in 1914.

210 Since the very formation of the army of the Kingdom of SCS, subsequently renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, a large part of the officers' corps was Serbian (13 out of 23 generals were Serbs). Besides, most of the commanding posts above regiment level were entrusted to Serbian officers who had fought in the First World War (Vojna enciklopedija, 4, 1972: 115).

tactics as well as the size and equipment of the army. Strategic planning thereby remained merely a secondary, less important activity of military planners.

The first priority was the creation of a joint army in the new state. Regardless of its new political arrangement (the Constitution was not adopted until 1929), the stance that the army should be uniform and joint prevailed. Hence, the individual armies were united and, thereby, the Serbian model was extended throughout the entire country. At the end of the First World War, the Serbian army counted some 135,000 members, among whom there was a significant proportion of volunteers, especially the Serbs from Bosnia who had entered the army as Russian prisoners of war. In this way, the existing military system and recruitment was retained in the Serbian part of the country, whereas in its formerly Austro-Hungarian part the military organization had yet to be applied. To start with, two Serbian military missions were sent to Zagreb and Ljubljana with the task of forming the first six peacetime regiments. The existing four regiments, formed during the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, remained in formation in Slovenia, which was engaged in the 'small war' with Austria over the bordering province of Carinthia. The new military organization was supposed to count 35 infantry regiments, as opposed to the 25 regiments of the Serbian army. Still, this also depended on demobilization. Although this was executed between May and November 1919, the Yugoslav army still counted almost 200,000 soldiers. Due to the crisis on the Austro-Yugoslav border and in Albania, the army kept the numbers high, also by summoning some military conscripts for 2-month exercises. The drafting of recruits began as late as spring 1919 so as to allow time for the demobilization of soldiers who had been serving in the war for longer. The recruitment produced very uneven results, especially in Croatia where it met with considerable resistance. The demobilization of operational units was thus completed only as late as the autumn of 1920.²¹¹

One aspect of the planning was the issue of the officers' corps. The Yugoslav army automatically accepted into its ranks all officers from the Serbian and Montenegrin army, but not those from the Austro-Hungarian one, even if they had joined the army of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs. These individuals had to apply for acceptance. In total, in 1920 there were 3,500 officers from the Serbian army, 2,600 from the Austro-Hungarian one, and less than 500 from the Montenegrin one. Strikingly uneven was the ethnic ratio among the highest-ranking officers and generals, 80%–90% of whom were Serbs. The functioning of the officers' corps was quite conflictual due to the differences in qualification, manner of

211 Bjelajac, 1988: 64, 68–70.

service, military milieu and, last but not least, the discriminatory appointment of former Austro-Hungarian officers to higher commanding posts.²¹²

In January 1919, a decree on the new military territorial division of Yugoslavia was issued. In the territory previously belonging to Austria, two army and six divisional commands were founded, each of which had four regimental districts. On March 1, 1919, the “New Peacetime Formation” project for the creation of a peacetime army of the Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs was completed. Each of the army headquarters had 16 divisions (1 for each divisional area). Each division was divided into four or five regiments, one of which was the artillery. Further, equestrian, howitzer, and heavy artillery regiments were prescribed for each army, as well as railway, air force, and motorized unit headquarters. Among special land forces there were border units commissioned with the defense of the Yugoslav border, a royal guard responsible for guarding central political institutions in Belgrade and the Gendarmerie which normally carried out policing.²¹³

Another question was the formation of the Yugoslav navy. Here, the military authorities could not rely on the Serbian tradition and an existing formation. Their development plan mostly concerned the acquisition of vessels and preparation of an operational doctrine in the narrow Adriatic Sea. The plan devised in mid-1919 envisaged dividing up the sea into three naval commands. However, due to the presence of other naval forces in Yugoslav waters, only one command was eventually formed. Yugoslavia secured a few vessels through the distribution of the former Austro-Hungarian fleet but was compelled to seek permission to enlarge the fleet, which only consisted of 12 torpedo boats.²¹⁴

The situation was totally different in the planning of the air force, a modern military branch also experiencing rapid development in other countries. A decision was made to set up a special air force headquarters within the Yugoslav Supreme Command. Four squadrons with as many air force commands and a pilot school were planned. The purchase of additional aircrafts was delayed, despite the fact that the existing fleet, consisting of aircrafts acquired at the end of the war and the two former Serbian army squadrons, was clearly insufficient.²¹⁵

In 1920, the army’s arsenal comprised 330,000 guns, 4,000 machine guns, as well as 2,100 canons, howitzers, and mortars. Its first eight tanks were supplied

212 Bjelajac, 1988: 91–105.

213 Bjelajac, 1988: 71–74.

214 Vasiljević, 1970: 174; Ikica, 1962: 68; Bjelajac, 1988: 77–83.

215 Bjelajac, 1988: 83–85.

by the French Army. In December 1918, in view of such an unenviable military situation, the Yugoslav government petitioned the Entente coalition to modify the 1916 and 1918 conventions on assistance to the Serbian army referring to 140,000 soldiers and 30,000 horses. The petition was rejected, first by Great Britain and then France.²¹⁶

The 1921–1935 period

For Yugoslavia, the peacetime period, more suitable for military strategic planning, only began in 1921. Military operations on the border with Italy were completed as was the demobilization and the endeavors to settle the borders with Italy and Austria. The army status was constitutionally confirmed, with King Alexander officially becoming its supreme commander.

A peacetime formation was supposed to have around 6,000 officers and 130,000 soldiers. In order to secure a steady influx of fresh officers, the former military academy of the Serbian army was restored. However, the number of new officers was too small to improve the situation. In particular, there was a shortage of highly qualified officers. Supplying the new army with material goods was very problematic in the initial years, as the supplies contributed by the Entente were hard to deliver. The weapons dropped by the former Austro-Hungarian army in Serbia and during its withdrawal from the Italian battlefields proved useful for the Yugoslav army, although they differed from the Serbian ones. The only plant of the military industry in Kragujevac had been destroyed in the war, and there was just one in the country. In the autumn of 1919, the French occupying forces withdrew from Hungary and ceded their weapons to the Yugoslav Army.

Domestic private producers were compelled to participate in supplying the army with clothing. The prices of items made for this purpose were set by the War Industrial Committee made up of soldiers, senior officials from other ministries, and even university professors. The 140,000 uniforms donated by France in 1919 and the purchase of 100,000 civilian clothes for the demobilized soldiers, provisionally covered the needs of the Yugoslav army.²¹⁷

216 Bjelajac, 1988: 110, 120–126.

217 Bjelajac, 1988: 117–118.

Any military planning naturally depended on sufficient financial backing. The military budget, which amounted to as much as 41% of the state budget, only sufficed for current expenses. In 1922, the Parliament approved an extraordinary 800 million dinar loan for the purchase of arms. This purchase was, however, not based on any long-term plan, but dictated by the urgent need for guns, artillery ammunition, and aircraft. Planned, long term purchases were enabled with another loan extended by France in the same year in the amount of 100 million French francs. Czechoslovakia, in turn, extended a loan for the purchase of arms in its Škoda factories. The arming of the Yugoslav Army was thus more a matter of using the military assistance than strategic planning and proper selection procedures.

The period required to put the army on its feet was assessed at 5 years by Chief-of-Staff Field Marshal Živojin Mišić.²¹⁸ The Army Act of July 1923 enacted the conscript system in the Yugoslav army, introducing general obligatory military service. Some members of parliament strove for a smaller (up to 100,000 men), yet better equipped and qualified army, while others favored a militia system. All this reveals there was no fundamental consensus regarding either the army's structure or its role in the Sivaji country's defense. In view of this, the Act contained a clause conferring the power to decide on the military budget to the Army and Navy Minister, rather than the parliament.²¹⁹ The changed political situation in 1924 was reflected in the Yugoslav Army's strategic planning.

Military plans

In a largely unfavorable geopolitical environment surrounded by hostile or adverse neighbors: Italy, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Albania, the issue of alliances was essential for the newly established Kingdom of SCS. Since 1919, the Little Entente, as the French influencing and controlling the alliance of the Kingdom of SCS, Czechoslovakia, and Romania was called, was set against the expanding Hungarian revolution. Yet, the Little Entente, formed by the abovementioned countries in 1920, continued to assert its geostrategic role in the intervention against the Habsburgs (Charles) in October 1921. Once the immediate threat of restoration had passed, the Little Entente became a reliable instrument by means

218 Bjelajac, 1988: 124.

219 Bjelajac, 1994: 16–17.

of which its three members controlled Hungary and Bulgaria.²²⁰ A strategic alliance with France in the event of war with Italy required the planning of routes for the delivery of assistance. Given the condition of the roads, railways, and port capacities, the first transports were expected only on the thirtieth day of the French (and Czech) mobilization.²²¹

In 1927, the three members started harmonizing their war plans. With a joint convention signed in 1931 and effective for 3 years, each member undertook to extend to the other two 112 infantry battalions, 150 batteries, 32 squadrons of cavalry, and 12 air-force squadrons in the event of them being attacked. They also agreed that the other two would come to the aid of the attacked member no later than 17 days after the beginning of mobilization. The further protocols of 1934 envisaged the Czech aid to the other two less developed countries would be in the form of transportation means (most importantly, 650 locomotives).²²² The planned standardization of arms and mutual supply of weapons, however, remained mostly on paper since in the Yugoslav case it was subject to the ability to obtain external loans.

The 'No1M plan' envisaged the Yugoslav Army would intervene in the event of Hungary attempting to take advantage of the Soviet Union's attack on Romania. In that scenario, the Yugoslav Army, after being summoned by Czechoslovakia, would enter Hungary in the direction of Veszprem in Szekesfeharvar, until coming into contact with the Czechoslovak army.²²³ Another version of the plan envisaged helping the Yugoslav Army in the event of being attacked by Hungary and having to rely primarily on its own forces for defense.

The second target of war planning was Bulgaria. In the event of Bulgaria launching an attack, Yugoslavia devised plans that were both defensive and offensive in character. By 1935, up to seven of these plans has been prepared. In 1934, the "Balkan pact" between Yugoslavia, Romania, Turkey, and Greece was signed; the membership was expected to be enlarged with Albania and Bulgaria.²²⁴ A peculiarity of Yugoslav military planning was the many variables, i.e., countries that each combined war plan needed to take into account. This meant such plans were very complicated and heavily modified according to the frequent changes in

220 Vanku, 1969: 15–125; Sladek, 2000.

221 Bjelajac, 1988: 286.

222 Bjelajac, 1994: 214, 217.

223 Bjelajac, 1994: 212–213.

224 Avramovski, 1986: 63–135; Bjelajac, 1994: 207–210.

political and strategic relations.²²⁵ The most important Yugoslav plan concerned Italy. In this matter, the strategic alliance with France was of greater use than that with the Little Entente.

The Yugoslav military chiefs continually warned of the Italian intention to attack the country. This assessment was also made based on Italy's decennial plan to develop its armed forces that was supposed to be completed in 1935. The Italian Army would thus be capable of agglomerating significant military forces along the border much faster than Yugoslavia. According to Yugoslav assessments, the Italian Army was capable of employing two-thirds of its mobilized forces within 6 days, or 60 divisions with 1.5 million soldiers within 12 days. Italy was, in fact, at least twice (in 1926/27 and 1932/34) preparing an attack on Yugoslavia, albeit more under the influence of its political leadership than its generals. The Yugoslav planning of an effective military response had two main objectives: to strengthen the Yugoslav forces in the west of the country and block the penetration of the Italian Army via southern Austria.²²⁶

The swift response to this Italian threat included the construction of a fortified line right behind the border, opposite the line of Valle Alpino, which was also encouraged by France. However, a long time elapsed between the conception and development of the idea (1926–1928), the completed project (1935), and its realization (after 1937), exceeding the frame of the time period considered in this book. In the mid-1930s, negotiations began between Yugoslavia and France on the details of a five-billion-dinar loan for constructing the line. Modelled on the French projects and the Czechoslovak line in the Sudeten mountains, the plan envisaged the construction of a defense line of a total length of around 140 km. The plans were made by a permanent commission for fortifications.²²⁷

The 1936–1941 period

The Yugoslav Army entered the final peacetime period with 5 armies, 22 infantry divisions and 2 cavalries. Its air force boasted 7 squadrons with 630 aircraft.

225 Bjelajac, 1994: 210–211.

226 Bjelajac, 1994: 229–236.

227 Habrnal et al., 2005: 13–25; Bjelajac, 1994: 235–236; Potočnik Jankovič, 2004; Markovič, 1995.

Its divisional formation was nevertheless very outdated, still counting 42,000 men. The Navy had four submarines and one destroyer along with several minor torpedo units. The efforts made by the King and top military to accelerate the army's modernization by engaging French advisors succeeded only in part – with the introduction and enhancement of military training and formation of two alpine regiments on the western border. Yet, in general, the Yugoslav Army was lagging behind other armies in the region.²²⁸ The geopolitical changes had almost no effect on the preparation of its basic doctrinal documents that were based on the experience and, especially, military success of the Serbian army in the First World War. The documents were thus outdated and inadequate. The military doctrine remained largely unchanged even after the German Army's exceptional success early in the Second World War with victories over Poland in 1939 and France in 1940. The Yugoslav strategic plans were dominated by concepts of strategic defense and the organization of a counteroffensive, defining the Yugoslav Army as distinctively defensive. Its final doctrinal document adopted in 1937 defined counterattack as the only form of combat engagement for all military units. Hence, military training and education focused especially on attack tactics. Based on a realistic perception of the material, numerical, and motivational situation in the armies of the neighboring countries, the documents envisaged a conflict with a numerically superior, better armed, and well-motivated adversary. The aforementioned disadvantages had to be compensated with the coordinated engagement of all military branches which, in turn, called for great mobility, flexibility, and mutual coordination. The defense strategy was based on the passage from the defensive to an offensive configuration and the organization of a counterattack. Yet, this doctrine ignored or failed to take account of the actual situation within the Yugoslav Army.²²⁹

The ambitiously set doctrinal tasks could not be translated into the military structures. Combat morale was never up to the levels foreseen in the doctrinal documents, nor were the infantry divisions capable of rapid maneuvering on the battlefield. The biggest shortcoming was, however, the shortage of motorized, mechanized, and armored units in the structure of the Yugoslav Army. The additional lack of sufficient anti-armor and anti-aircraft units enabled the enemy to dominate the airspace and, in turn, exert greater pressure on the transportation infrastructure and logistic system of the Yugoslav Army. The implementation of the vast fortification project, which swallowed up a disproportionate amount of

228 Bjelajac, 1994: 286.

229 Tešić, 1991: 231.

financial resources, caused the modernization of the army to remain in the planning stage.²³⁰

As a result of an overambitious conceptual platform and operational plans, training, operation and strategic planning were left to the devices of individual commanders who most often were insufficiently qualified to execute such procedures. Hence, mid-term military planning, let alone long-term, was out of the question.

In the absence of its own military industry, the Yugoslav army almost entirely depended on the importation and purchase of arms from other countries. Yugoslavia was only capable of producing light infantry arms (machine guns in Kragujevac, explosives in Lazarevac, ammunition in Slavonski Brod). The entire Yugoslav production of weaponry could not even cover half of the army's needs. Besides, its licensed production of weapons was mostly based on older models. In response, in 1940 the Yugoslav Army decided to buy modern weaponry and ammunition, especially from Germany (500 anti-aircraft machine guns, 400 anti-armor cannons, 20 self-propelled gun carriages along with 60 M-109 and Do-19 aircraft). Further, 20 SM-79 aircraft were bought from Italy and 1,000 Chevrolet trucks from the United States.²³¹

Also connected with the immediate military threat was the rearrangement of the Yugoslav military formation. In May 1940, a decree on a provisional army was issued. This army would be mobilized in wartime with the aim of supporting the military and civilian industries. If so required, this army could enlist all men between 16 and 70 years of age provided they had not previously been drafted in the regular army or relieved of military service for various reasons. In February 1941, additional pioneer units were founded in individual territorial commands for the demolition of bridges, construction of various fortifications, and production of road blocks. Special headquarters for commando units were founded, comprising seven battalions, with each assigned to an individual army command. In March 1941, the military made plans for additional equestrian and mechanized units which, however, never came to fruition. Reorganization was also carried out in the air force and anti-aircraft forces, which allowed for the grouping of like aircraft and enhanced the operational capability and responsiveness of the outdated fleet. As late as 1940, a military aviation academy was opened to train pilots to use the new German planes. In the field of air defense, appropriate, yet insufficient, weaponry was acquired in the autumn of 1940. In

230 Terzić, 1980: 247.

231 Terzić, 1980: 248.

May 1940, the first specialized units of battalion size commenced anti-parachute training during which mobility proved the greatest obstacle to the execution of their assignments.²³²

Special attention in the strategic planning of defense was paid to the fortification of borders and prevention of movement along several roads and railways. The construction of the western fortified line had only just begun in 1937 when a new plan to fortify the northern border was devised in response to an assessment showing the greater likelihood of a German attack. The planners joined both sections into one. At the sections along the borders with Germany and Hungary, lighter defense buildings were envisaged, which would close the main invasion routes. After the German annexation of Austria, the priority shifted to the construction of fortifications in the Dravograd and Maribor areas and along the Drava River. Notwithstanding this priority, construction only went ahead at certain resistance points.²³³

Additional fortification began on the border with Albania and, in 1940, on the borders with Romania and Bulgaria, since they had all joined a triple pact. At the end of 1939, some 30,000 people worked on fortifying the borders. In 1940, the figure doubled, amounting to 52 battalions with over 60,000 workers.

By the time Yugoslavia was attacked on April 6, 1941, the fortification against Italy, the “Rupnik Line”, was partly completed. The best fortified were the sections between Blegoš and Ljubljana, as well as those on Črni vrh and Plase above Rijeka (Fiume), blocking an advance in the directions of Ljubljana and Rijeka. Along these routes, special fortified points – bunkers – were built, together with additional facilities to accommodate soldiers and to organize the defense. On the remaining sections of the Rupnik Line, only several other points of resistance were established. Similar constructions were raised in Styria in order to prevent the crossing of the Drava River. In Vojvodina, a number of bridgeheads were built on the Sava and Danube Rivers as well as a few fortified bunkers. Fortifications were also built along the Yugoslav coast, such as those in Šibenik and Boka Kotorska.²³⁴

Despite the mentioned interventions by the military engineers, the arsenal intended for defending the fortifications was completely inadequate – outdated and lacking. The best weaponry was in the hands of the army units and was not to be used to halt an enemy advance. The fortification headquarters had 12,000 mines

232 Terzić, 1980: 251.

233 Habrnal et al., 2005: 282–283.

234 Terzić, 1980: 252.

at their disposal as well as demolition explosives. With both the headquarters and the units of pioneers and engineers remaining under the supreme military command in Belgrade, their response after the attack on Yugoslavia on April 6, 1941, was wholly inadequate. The supreme command was unable to issue orders for the demolition of bridges, the placing of roadblocks, and similar. At the time of the attack, many of the above units had not even been formed yet. The units for the firearm support of the fortifications and bunkers were only manned and armed (with machine guns and field canons) on April 5, 1941, i.e., 12 hours before the attack on Kingdom of Yugoslavia.²³⁵

Realization of the strategic plans – the 1941 mobilization

With the bulk of the Yugoslav Army composed of reservists, permanent training was required. This, however, was not carried out due to financial and material (weapons and other military equipment) restrictions. The extensive military exercises for reservists in September 1939 revealed numerous shortcomings. The mobilization period (lasting over 2 weeks) was too long and the responsiveness poor. There was discontent among the reservists because of the inadequate food supplies and accommodation during the exercises. On top of that, the reserve army commands proved to be dysfunctional.²³⁶ The last military exercises took place in May 1940, yet once again without any essential analyses being made.

When in March 1941 German units marched into Bulgaria, the Yugoslav military leaders decided to mobilize one part of the reserve units. By March 27, 1941, when a coup d'état was executed, around 60% of the reserve infantry units and 40% of the artillery units were mobilized. After the coup, an order was issued for the immediate mobilization of all remaining units to protect the Yugoslav borders and fill in the ranks of the gendarmerie. The government decided to ignore calls

235 Terzić, 1980: 253.

236 In the autumn of 1940, the reserve officers were even deleted from the military records and removed from the military structures. The reserve officers were perceived by the military authorities as a source of nationalistic ideas and a threat that could destabilize the entire military system in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

by its military chiefs for immediate and full mobilization of the Yugoslav armed forces. What was issued on March 30, 1941, was, officially, simply an order to activate the armed forces as the government did not wish to provoke Germany by proclaiming mobilization. This activation had very poor results.²³⁷ The greatest problem was the inadequate response of both reservists and the owners of the pack animals to logistically support the army.²³⁸ In some places, mobilization was not even executed due to the lack of organization and a dysfunctional network. Full mobilization of the armed forces, therefore, began as late as April 7 with practically no result during wartime conditions.²³⁹

Fighting on the territory of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia progressed at lightning speed. The war that commenced with an aerial bombardment of Belgrade at 6:30 a.m. on April 6, 1941, was over in 10 days. The reasons for this are many and it would have been unrealistic to expect the Yugoslav Army to stand up successfully against the overpowering aggressors. The attack on Yugoslavia had been carefully prepared by and coordinated between the countries involved: Germany, Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania.²⁴⁰ Yugoslavia was surrounded by enemies, except for Greece, and invaded from all directions. Still, this and their subsequent occupation was not only due to their obvious military superiority.

237 The activation was carried out by sending mobilization notifications by regular post to conscripts throughout the country. According to the estimates by military historians, at least 7 days had been lost in this way. A general mobilization through the mass media (radio, telegraph, daily newspapers, fliers) would have been much more effective (Terzić, 1980: 251).

238 The reason for the poor response of the reservists lay in their negative experience with the hitherto organized military exercises. Most were also unaware of the seriousness of the situation.

239 After Yugoslavia had been invaded by foreign coalition forces, the execution of the mobilization became impossible. The enemy, with its total aerial superiority, mainly targeted communication lines. Its rapidly advancing motorized units occupied the Yugoslav military commands before these had even been mobilized and activated (Terzić, 1980: 255).

240 The basis for the attack on Yugoslavia was 'Directive 25', Hitler's strategic document, envisaging the military engagement of two German armies: the 12th Army commanded by Field Marshall General List and the 2nd Army under the command of Colonel General Weichs. A reserve of five divisions was employed in the vicinity of Vienna, with the aerial supremacy being entrusted to the 4th Air Force Fleet of Luftwaffe consisting of 1,500 aircraft: 849 bombers, 480 fighters, and 180 reconnaissance planes (Terzić, 1980: 247–248).

“ANYTHING TO FIGHT THE OCCUPIERS”

In the spring of 1941, the war also engulfed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Germany had acquired three allies; Italy and Bulgaria promised to participate in the attack, while Hungary refrained from that, but had offered its territory as a starting point for the invasion, interested in occupying the former Hungarian countries that had gone to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians in 1918. On April 6, 1941 Germany, Italy, and Bulgaria invaded the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Under attack by the armies of Germany, Italy, and Bulgaria, on April 17 the Yugoslav Army capitulated.²⁴¹ The four occupiers divided the country into several territories, which they divided among them, while in the central part of Croatia and Bosnia a new Independent State of Croatia was established with their support.²⁴²

In the extreme north-western part of the country – the Slovenian territories – the war quickly turned into Yugoslav defeat since already by April 11 the majority of the Yugoslav Army had retreated to the interior of the state. Accordingly, on April 14 Slovenia was already occupied by German and Italian forces, the majority of which moved to the south-east, towards the center of the country. The Slovenian territory was first spiritually and then also physically separated from the Yugoslav center following the self-proclamation of the Independent State of Croatia on April 10, 1941. The authorities of this state were effectively set up by the end of April.²⁴³

Slovenia during the Second World War is an example of how the population decided to resort to different survival strategies during the occupation and annexations, which led to a national catastrophe for this small nation that had already been divided before, and during the resistance movement, which also meant the possibility of a communist revolution. Namely, the population not only became the object, but also the subject of deciding its own fate. Thus, regarding the still valid 19th century doctrines of war, it surpassed its role of a passive element, an element not contributing to military operations.

241 Terzić, 1980, II: 277–465.

242 Terzić, 1980, II: 545–604.

243 Matković, 1994: 374.

After the successful invasion of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in April 1941, its capitulation, and division, the northwest of the country – the region with the Slovenian population – ended up in three occupation zones: German, Italian, and Hungarian. The Slovenian ethnic territory was ruled by the occupying forces, which were very different from each other. In the German-occupied territory, they consisted of several kinds of police and almost no military forces, the Italian forces were made up of two infantry divisions, while on April 17 the Hungarian Army and their civil management occupied the easternmost part of the Slovenian territory, the Prekmurje region.²⁴⁴

Occupation Systems

The population's attitude to the occupation was defined by their national awareness, but even more so by the actions of the occupying forces. At the moment of defeat and also before the war, a significant part of the population felt that Yugoslavia was its homeland and refuge and saw its military defeat and capitulation as a national loss. This was especially since the invading forces had already before then been thought of as enemies of the nation – the Slovenian nation as well as Yugoslavia. In the eyes of Slovenians, Germany equaled the German pressure and dominance within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where the national struggle was hard and lengthy. Italy was seen as the country most hostile to Yugoslavia, and also as the country which had taken one-third of the ethnic territory from Slovenia after the First World War. The prevalent knowledge about the nationalist oppression of Slovenians in Italy, which was intensified during the fascist rule, must also be taken into account. Hungary was also deemed to be hostile to Yugoslavia as it had never come to terms with the reduction of its territory after the Treaty of Trianon and the loss of its lands, some of which also went to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

The actions of all three occupiers had an even greater impact on the attitude of the population. The people did not know much about the plans of these three invaders, which went far beyond temporary occupation, even though the press warned about territorial aspirations as well as the actions of the German minority strongly influenced by Nazism and even abused as a fifth column. The decisive

²⁴⁴ Ferenc, 2006: 19–21; Cuzzi, 1998, 18–40.

moment was the immediate realization of the German program – the annexation of the occupied territories in Slovenia and the violent forced Germanization of approximately 860,000 people.²⁴⁵

As early as in May 1941, around 32,000 nationally conscious Slovenians were arrested, their property confiscated, and exiled to Serbia and the Independent State of Croatia, whereas 25,000 people were also deported to Germany in October 1941. Public use of Slovenian language was forbidden, names, surnames, public inscriptions, and even tombstones were Germanized, mass courses in the German language were introduced, and the propaganda tried to persuade the population that they were Germans. The people reacted with fear; the majority gave in and outwardly accepted the occupiers’ demands. Around 17,000 of them fled to the Italian occupation zone and to Croatia.²⁴⁶

The fear was reflected most obviously in the ‘voluntary’ applications for membership in the only legal political organizations, Steirische Heimatbund and Kärntner Volksbund. Around 90% of the population applied for membership in both organizations, and the occupation authorities refused membership to the rest of them due to their political or racial inappropriateness, albeit still treated them as protégés of the German Reich. The legal consequences of this process, which took place in May and June 1941, followed in October 1941 and June 1942 when members of both organizations were forced to accept German citizenship provisionally for a duration of 10 years. Germany did not complete the annexation of the Slovenian territories because it planned to carry that out as the final conclusion after thorough and comprehensive adaptations. However, at the end of 1941, due to the phenomenon of the armed resistance the central authorities in Berlin decided not to carry out the annexation during the war, and that only the necessary legislation would be introduced.²⁴⁷

The Hungarian occupation authorities introduced similar measures, though perhaps less violent, and annexed the whole of the “Southern Territories” in December 1941.²⁴⁸

Italy, however, resorted to different tactics. Due to being uncertain about whether it would be able to keep the occupied territories in central Slovenia and Dalmatia, it annexed these territories as early as on May 3 and 17, 1941. The

245 Ferenc, 1968, 138–151.

246 Ferenc, 1968: 174–225; Ferenc, 2006, 29–32.

247 Ferenc, 2006, 21–29, 32–40.

248 Ferenc 1963: 47–133.

fascist leadership tried to ensure the people's consent to the merger with the Italian state by treating the population and its political elite carefully. It wanted to gain the trust of some members of the political elite at the time so that it would welcome the Italian takeover of power and the population would therefore more easily assent to the Italian authorities. The Ljubljana province was given a special status, bilingualism was permitted, and the fascist leadership presented the people with a particular advantage – that the men would not be obliged to serve in the Italian Army. Namely, the population was not given Italian citizenship. This measure had been in preparation for such a long time that September 9, 1942, and the complete retreat of the Italian Army and Italian authorities from the province came earlier. A program of public works and food supply was also developed, and prices were maximized, all of which was intended to assure better living conditions.²⁴⁹

We may conclude that the Slovenian population experienced the occupation in different countries or occupation zones, under occupation regimes of varying strictness.

Beginning of the Resistance in the Summer of 1941

A month after the German, Italian, and Hungarian occupations of Slovenia – the northwesternmost part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (the Drava Banate) – the Communist Party of Slovenia, an organizational unit within the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, started to prepare the resistance against the occupation and division of the state. Ideologically, the resistance was based on anti-Fascism and anti-Nazism as well as criticism aimed against the Western democracies, which were supposedly also imperialistic.²⁵⁰

The Communist Party envisioned resistance throughout the territory it operated in. This involved a single plan for the whole Communist Party of Yugoslavia, at that time led by Secretary-General Josip Broz Tito. The decision on the uprising and resistance against the occupiers as well as the collaborating Independent

249 Cuzzi, 1998: 17–59; Ferenc, 1987: 11–74.

250 Mally, 2011: 25–45; Godeša, 1995: 121–132.

State of Croatia, where mass persecutions and executions of Serbians and Jews had begun, was that much easier because the Communist Party leadership had a plan for the realization of the communist revolution as a people's uprising. The plan was drawn up in the spring of 1940 but, naturally, it was highly confidential, even among the Yugoslav communist leadership.²⁵¹

The architects within the Yugoslav communist leadership devised the resistance movement with respect to the geostrategic situation in Europe as understood in the spring of 1941, and their political preferences. The most important of these was the conviction of the communists that Germany would soon invade the Soviet Union, in which case the Nazi-fascist bloc would suffer a swift defeat and breakdown, meaning that even before the end of 1941 the Yugoslav communists would have an opportunity to participate in the communist revolution in Europe.

That is why quick and immediate resistance against the occupiers was envisioned, especially the armed struggle against the occupying forces.²⁵² The preparations were short, involving two elements in particular: finding political allies among left-wing parties (socialist, left liberals, democrats), and preparing immediately for the armed resistance (collecting weapons, selecting the people within the communist ranks who were to initially lead the uprising, discussing the tactics and goals of the resistance). A lot of searching, guesswork, and improvisation was involved since not many communists were military experts, and their material capabilities were severely limited.²⁵³

Due to the division of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia among the four occupying states and the Independent State of Croatia, the uprising had to be organized partially and locally, despite the single leadership. The occupied Slovenia was also not a single-occupation territory. It was divided into the German part (70%) and the Italian part (around 25%, annexed to Italy as early as on May 5, 1941), while the Prekmurje region, representing around 5% of the Slovenian territory, which had formed part of the Hungarian half of Austro-Hungary, was annexed by Hungary in December 1941.²⁵⁴ The Communist Party of Slovenia and the organizers nevertheless insisted that the resistance should be established and managed in the whole of the Slovenian national territory, regardless of the different circumstances

251 Guštin, 2001: 123–141.

252 Pirjevec: 2020: 48–86.

253 Deželak Barič, 1992: 93–108.

254 Čepič, Guštin, Troha, 2017: 51–57.

in each occupation zone, which resulted in considerable differences in terms of power, organizational forms, and resistance movement successes.

Moreover, apart from liberation, one of the most important goals of the Slovenian resistance movement was national integration – the unification of Slovenian ethnic territories in Yugoslavia, Italy, and Austria. Therefore, after the autumn of 1941 efforts were invested in introducing the resistance movement to the coastal regions of Primorska/Venezia Giulia, which was part of the Italian state, and Southern Carinthia, which had belonged to the German Reich as part of Austria since the Anschluss of 1938. Slovenian minorities lived in both of these provinces, notably in Venezia Giulia with some 280,000 Slovenian inhabitants. The plan was especially successful in Venezia Giulia where due to the anti-Italian sentiment the population actively participated in the uprising against the Italian authorities. The ultimate goal of these people was to unite with Slovenia, their homeland, which they often proclaimed already during the war.²⁵⁵

In Slovenia, the communists managed to secure the cooperation of their political allies with the resistance. In cooperation with two political groups of bourgeois origins (the left-wing liberal group and the Christian socialists) as well as a group of cultural workers, the resistance organization called the Liberation Front of the Slovenian Nation was established as early as on April 26, 1941 – one week after Yugoslavia had capitulated. By the end of 1941, this organization had been joined by 18 different political and professional groups.²⁵⁶

Political and Armed Organization

Simultaneously, in June and July 1941 the Communist Party started forming and arming resistance units. Due to the Yugoslav Army's disintegration, enough weapons were available for several hundred fighters. The concept of armed resistance against the occupiers was based on the idea that particularly members of the Communist Party and the communist youth, who were bound to join the rebels due to internal discipline, would initially be involved in the resistance. In

255 Ibid., 160–163, 388–397.

256 Repe, 2008: 36–47.

the second stage, the ‘stage of the people’s uprising’ – masses of the population encouraged by the successful example would follow suit.²⁵⁷

The resistance was to be twofold: political/civilian and military – armed, immediate, and simultaneous. Each branch of the resistance organization was responsible for specific tasks.

The political branch built the Liberation Front organization on the regional and local levels, inviting representatives of all the “founding” parties into the secret committees, depending, of course, on the presence of individual political groups in the local environment. Initially, a significant share of the population joined the resistance.²⁵⁸ The political preferences of these people were not as important in this sense as the indignation felt over the swift destruction of Yugoslavia, which had represented an important value for the vast majority of the Slovenian population. This sentiment was further fueled by the fury felt following the German relocation of over 12,000 people to Serbia and Croatia, and even more so by the fear of a similar fate.²⁵⁹ The outcome was the quick expansion of the resistance movement in terms of organization and numbers. In Ljubljana alone, the Slovenian capital where the police and military departments of the Italian occupation authorities were located, already as soon as in 1941 around 600 committees of the Liberation Front had been formed, bringing together streets, companies, districts, quarters, the city, and even individual professional groups.²⁶⁰

The rebels established the Liberation Front as a single hierarchically organized entity, even though it included 18 different political groups. The associate groups preserved their internal organization until the end of 1942, when under the persuasion of the Communist Party of Slovenia they agreed to abandon it in favor of the joint Liberation Front organization.²⁶¹ Only the Communist Party as the strongest group preserved its parallel political party organization within the partisan units as well as in the field.

Despite heavy losses due to the counter-guerrilla activities of the occupiers’ security forces (arrests, executions during “cleansing operations”), the hierarchically-organized illegal committee network covered much of Slovenia and represented the foundation of the resistance movement’s power. The main form of the

257 Guštin, 2001: 123–141; Čepič, Guštin, Troha, 2017: 91–101.

258 Čepič, Guštin, Troha, 2017: 91–101.

259 Ferenc, 1968: 239–332

260 Čepič, Guštin, Troha, 2017: 91–101; Mally, 2011: 205–246

261 Mally, 2011: 135–163.

political organization's activities was versatile propaganda among the population based on national, personal, and political aspects, which even reached the city centers isolated from the surroundings with barbed wire, for example the capital of Ljubljana. The goal of these actions and political activities was to mobilize as many people as possible into an intensive resistance. However, people were far more successfully mobilized by the conviction that they were contributing to the resistance themselves by writing rebel slogans, paying the "national tax", collecting food, weapons, and equipment for illegal rebels and partisans.²⁶² Namely, despite the violence of the occupation authorities a large percentage of the population stayed with the basic decision to take part in the resistance until the very end of the war, seeing it as a national or ideological duty. The resistance movement issued numerous illegal publications with the aim of ensuring the political orientation, propaganda, and information. Among them, in the last 9 months of the war the daily newspaper *Partizanski dnevnik* (Partisan Daily) was also published, secretly distributed by the resistance movement every day within a radius of 60 km from the secret place of printing, also in the city of Trieste.²⁶³

Mobilization and Tactical Activity

When establishing the organizational scheme, the Slovenian resistance movement saw the ethnic territory as a single entity irrespective of the three occupiers. Its organizational principles had to ensure immediate responsiveness while taking account of the effective surveillance of the occupiers' security and military forces.

From the outset, the principle of integrated propaganda and mobilization activities of the civil organization as well as actions by armed partisan formations was implemented. Thus, the first partisan units were established in July 1941, distributed all over the national territory (in 1941, this involved 30 groups with 15–40 members each). These units operated in the hills or forests no more than 10–15 kilometers away from cities and densely populated areas.²⁶⁴

In 1942 and 1943, a swift yet locally unequal growth of partisan units took place. Despite the accessibility of the territory, these units managed to preserve

262 Ferenc, 1985: 7–48.

263 Čampa, 1975.

264 Čepič, Guštin, Troha, 2017: 118–120.

their cores and carry out increasingly demanding military actions that were already transcending the usual guerrilla activities. From July 1941 until the beginning of winter in December, Slovenian partisan groups, the ‘companies and battalions’, used the tactics of sudden strikes against the exposed elements of the occupation authorities: individual soldiers, patrols, members of the occupation administration. They raided the communications infrastructure several times, and already in the autumn attacks had been launched against police stations and small army garrisons stationed in the rural areas. Due to the lack of training, too much time was often wasted in the preparation of these attacks and thus the occupiers’ forces, which soon established a functional intelligence service focused on the movements of the partisan units, discovered them and typically attempted to destroy them immediately.²⁶⁵ Such tactics of the opponents were effective until the partisan units became too numerous, and the monitoring and intelligence network was forced to retreat into the centers due to the continuous attacks.

At the beginning of winter in 1941/1942, the leadership of the resistance movement organized an extensive uprising in the German occupation zone, in the Gorenjska region. A more prominent influx of volunteers into the partisan units was ensured with the assistance of the political branch of the Liberation Front. Around 1,100 new fighters joined the partisan units. The partisans managed to oppose the German occupation forces, strengthened by the police battalions, for 3 weeks, but after a battle in the village of Dražgoše they were forced to retreat into the woods and disband most of the units. However, as soon as the resistance movement strengthened, it upgraded its classic guerrilla tactics.²⁶⁶

This ‘partisan warfare’ developed by the partisan commanders in Yugoslavia entailed a combination of guerrilla elements of attacking from an ambush with swift maneuvering and avoidance as well as relocating the centers of conflict to remote areas. Until as late as 1944, the partisan units were still poorly armed, only carrying light infantry weapons and equipment, and thus were extremely mobile despite the fact that they moved around on foot. Partisan warfare represented the core of the successful operations of the partisan units, usually operating as infantry companies or battalions at most (the partisans referred to these army elements as battalions and brigades, consisting of 150 and 500 soldiers, respectively).²⁶⁷

265 Ibid., 117–126.

266 Ferenc, 1971: 741–783.

267 Teropšič, 2012: 62–82, 359–414.

An important strategic goal of the partisan units was to establish "liberated territories" – areas where through fighting they were able to remove the occupiers' military and police forces such that the political branch of the resistance organization together with the military headquarters could manage the controlled territory and the population of this territory without restrictions. In the spring and summer of 1942, the Liberation Front was able to establish a large liberated territory of around 3,000 km² in the Ljubljana province. The area controlled by the partisans started 10 km from occupied Ljubljana.²⁶⁸

Resistance

This was the situation that the forces of the immediate armed resistance started interfering with after 2 months of the occupation. It was organized by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, where a separate part was also the Communist Party of Slovenia. This party was highly appropriate for the core of the resistance because it had already been clandestine before the war due to its illegal status, and because of the communist organizational principles. In Slovenia, it also managed to bring the opposing liberal and Catholic groups into its ranks by including them in the Liberation Front of the Slovenian Nation organization. The core of the resistance was small and did not have more than 1,000 to 2,000 active members at the beginning. But gradually and with oral and written propaganda, the resistance was able to gain the support and even active participation of a significant share of the population.²⁶⁹

Already before July 1941, the organizers of the resistance had established 14 partisan squads, namely, relatively small guerrilla groups. Part of the civil resistance organization was involved in supplying these squads in unpopulated areas, and a few members of the population were in contact with the armed rebels, especially in more remote regions. Armed conflicts with the occupation forces commenced as early as in July 1941. By the end of the year, 2,100 people had joined the armed units – the partisan army, while in the next year as many as 6,000 people joined.²⁷⁰ More recent researchers agree that national

268 Ferenc, 1985: 49–208.

269 Fischer et al (eds.), 2005: 621–624; Mally 2011: 53–99, 195–246.

270 Deželak-Barič, 1992: 93–108; Guštin, 2001: 123–141.

awareness and the impression of a national catastrophe for the nation within a Nazi ‘new Europe’, which was far stronger than social- or class-related motives, was decisive for this mass response of the population. A careful analysis of resistance movement propaganda demonstrates the clear dominance of national motives, even though these ideas were occasionally conveyed through characteristic communist terminology. The resistance movement declared itself the national liberation movement, and the members of the resistance as the beginning of a national army. Already in September 1941, the resistance movement declared itself a temporary national representative (Slovenian National Liberation Committee), which showed the efforts of the communists to establish themselves as the national political force.²⁷¹

Counter-Guerrilla Warfare and Violence

The first decline of the resistance movement was seen when the occupation authorities implemented strict repressive measures against people suspected of taking part in the movement, especially in the German-occupied territory. The earliest arrests of suspects began in July 1941, and in the same month the first executions of rebels were also carried out, which were announced publicly in order to turn people away from the rebels. In August 1941, the first members of the resistance movement were taken to concentration camps.²⁷²

The Italian repression commenced in September 1941 with mass arrests, confinement, and drastic sentences issued by the military court, which condemned the first rebels to death in December 1941. In April 1942, the first hostages, chosen among the people suspected of taking part in the resistance, were shot.²⁷³

The occupiers executed all the captured partisans – members of armed resistance units either immediately after being captured or at publicly announced executions once the police had interrogated them. After the autumn of 1941, military operations against the partisans were carried out (German forces with the armed security police, SIPO), culminating in large-scale cleansing operations like that in the summer and autumn of 1942 in the Ljubljana province or in

271 Ferenc, 1985: 20–48

272 Filipič, 2004.

273 Cuzzi, 1998: 135–202.

September and October 1943 in the western half of the Slovenian ethnic territory. The occupiers at no stage came to terms with the existence of the resistance movement in the territory of Slovenia. They tried to eradicate it by any means, often regardless of the personal involvement of the people concerned in the resistance movement.²⁷⁴ However, on the other hand, the disproportionate violence of the occupiers reinforced the resistance since it encouraged the effect of vengeance for the death of families as well as leaving just two stark choices – for or against the resistance movement.²⁷⁵

Counter-guerrilla tactics

The occupation authorities soon became aware that the population had changed its attitude to them. Already in June 1941, they detected widespread defiance, which resulted in isolated incidents involving Italian soldiers, and conflicts became more frequent already in the middle of July, including planned subversive activities – diversions and propaganda actions. In early July, General Robotti in the Ljubljana province informed his superiors that population's attitude to the occupying forces was changing gradually but firmly: the increasing coldness became obvious; numerous and explicit outbursts of impatience with the soldiers were observed; and people started showing their despising and defiance. Already in mid-July 1941, the Italian intelligence services warned that a revolt might break out on July 14, upon the anniversary of the fall of Bastille, even though they were unable to locate the centers of the emerging resistance.²⁷⁶ The formation of resistance centers was also observed by the German security service and the Gestapo. We may conclude that the population overcame the psychological barrier of active resistance against the Italian Army sooner because the stereotype about Italians as bad soldiers and consequent underestimating attitude to them helped the people to intensify their opposition more easily. Yet, as far as the German authorities were concerned, fear remained the most prominent element of the Slovenian attitude to them – fear due to the brutality with which the German occupiers had carried out their demographic relocation program,

274 Ferenc, 1999: 5–27.

275 Guštin, 2023: 250–262.

276 Cuzzi, 1998: 136–139; Ferenc, 1998: 203–243.

and even greater fear due to the harsh German reaction to the formation and actions of the rebels: they immediately started killing the civilian population by doing executions on the spot for any subversive actions in the ratio of 10 people executed for every member of the German occupation force killed. The outcome of this was the resistance did not turn into a mass phenomenon. However, in the region occupied by the German Army, the highest number of actions by resistance groups took place in the second half of 1941, although they did not have wider spontaneous support in the countryside where they were active, nor were they supported in the cities where the resistance organization operated. Now the population, part of which welcomed the German occupation, started to show hostility to the German authorities and only fear prevented many people from joining the resistance.²⁷⁷ Yet, in December 1941 around 1,000 men from the more remote parts of the Gorenjska region joined the rebel partisans; this was the first distinctive people's uprising in Slovenia. While this uprising was quickly stifled, in the spring of 1942 continued resistance activities were initiated and remained uninterrupted until the end.²⁷⁸

We should also draw attention to something else. The violence the occupying forces had resorted to so as to suppress the resistance was severe, although not as extreme as in the east of Europe. Nevertheless, the German occupiers managed to shoot 2,700 rebels and members of the resistance movement, and sent around 16,000 people to the concentration camps. In terms of percentages, around 2% of the population suffered in this manner under the German occupation.²⁷⁹ The Italian violence reached its peak in 1942 in the form of numerous war crimes against the civilian population in operations of the cleansing and internment of around 25,000 people, also a couple of thousand women and children, which means that some 8% of the population in the occupation zone suffered directly.²⁸⁰

277 Deželak Barič, 1992: 93–108; Guštin, 2001: 123–141.

278 Ferenc, 1985: 20–48.

279 Čepič, Guštin, Troha, 2017: 201–206; Guštin, 2006: 217–234.

280 Jezernik, 1997: 57.

Forming Collaborating Counter-Guerrilla Units

The second decline of the resistance movement came in the second half of 1942 and was related to the conflict among the Slovenian political elites and population. Namely, after December 1941 the very strong opponents of communism and communist resistance movement started to form their own resistance organization, in connection with the political leadership of the Yugoslav government-in-exile in London. The Yugoslav government-in-exile had joined the anti-Nazi coalition of the United Nations and established a resistance military organization, named the Royal Yugoslav Army of the Homeland.²⁸¹ This resistance movement, the strongest in Serbia but the weakest and most fragmented in Slovenia, was led by Colonel Draža Mihailović. The Yugoslav government in London even promoted Mihailović to General and the Minister of the Military and Navy and demanded that all other resistance movements in Yugoslavia should accept his command. Armed conflicts took place between both movements already in November 1941, especially in Serbia and later also in Montenegro. In the spring of 1942, the establishment of the first non-communist resistance units was attempted. The reaction of the resistance movement was violent as it proclaimed itself as the representative of the nation, forbade the formation of any other units save for those under its own command, and attempted to annihilate the first new units established in the field.²⁸²

Due to the strength of the communist resistance movement and its decisive reactions to the formation of a competitive resistance movement, the core of this new resistance was able to start negotiating with the Italian occupation authorities, offering to fight against the partisans. The Italian occupiers accepted this offer and established the Volunteer Anti-Communist Militia (just like in Dalmatia and Herzegovina), which in particular controlled the rural areas, impeding the rebels' access to the villages and the population in these areas as well as hindering the partisan units' military operations.²⁸³ By the spring of 1943, twice as many members had joined this militia as the partisans – around 6,500: either voluntarily

281 Tomashevich, 1975: 83.

282 Pirjevec, 2020: 55–86.

283 Griesser-Pečar, 2004: 253–262; Cuzzi, 1998: 75–87.

for ideological reasons, under the influence of anti-communist propaganda, or due to the pressure of the occupying authorities.²⁸⁴

In the territory taken over following the Italian capitulation on September 8, 1943 (Operational Zone of the Adriatic Littoral, Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland), the German occupier encouraged the operations of three anti-rebel formations: the Slovenian Home Guard, the Slovenian National Security Corps, and Upper Carniola Self-protection.²⁸⁵ Naturally, the collaboration forces never represented the majority of forces that were fighting against the partisan units: they only cooperated with the Italian and German occupation forces. They were also under the strict supervision of the German command. The occupiers mostly used the collaboration forces for territorial control and as sentry units at the railway communications. Only as late as in 1944 did the German occupiers train around 3,500 men in anti-guerrilla warfare (the “strike battalions”), and they thus represented a tough opponent for the partisan units as they also possessed a greater knowledge of the terrain, situation, language, and mentality of the population.²⁸⁶

With such a distribution of political forces, a permanent civil war, while of changing intensity, broke out in individual areas, especially to the south of Ljubljana, and ended only as late as May 1945 when the majority of the collaboration forces fled to Austria.²⁸⁷ What was already a cruel ‘small-scale war’ further intensified due to mutual executions of (suspected or actual) members of opposing formations and the violence against the population, which followed on both sides. The resistance movement’s rudimentary understanding of natural and military law also led to the execution of over 4,000 people, whose betrayal of information about the rebels to the occupation military and police organizations or participation in the collaboration formations were difficult to prove.²⁸⁸

284 Cuzzi, 1998: 87–112.

285 Mlakar, 2003: 83–145; Mlakar, 1982: 61–85.

286 Mlakar, 2003: 163–185; Kladnik, 2006b: 22–44.

287 Mlakar, 2003: 466–526.

288 Mlakar, 2005: 22–29.

Partisan Army – practicing a guerrilla warfare?

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After the Italian capitulation in September 1943, the partisan army in Slovenia (officially called the People's Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments of Slovenia) expanded considerably as the liberation movement started to implement the elements of a government organization. In the military sense that meant along the partisan-controlled territories the mass mobilization of men aged between 17 and 45 years into the partisan units. With the growth of the partisan army in Slovenia (in the autumn of 1944 it boasted as many as 36,000 troops), the character of the resistance army also changed.²⁸⁹ The elements of the traditional military organization became increasingly prominent in the partisan army, especially following the agreement between Josip Broz Tito and the Yugoslav government-in-exile when the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia was established as an internal and international legal successor of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Army was established as the state army of this new federation in March 1945.²⁹⁰

In these circumstances, the tactics of the partisan army became more similar to the usual infantry tactics. In order to limit the effect of the constant attacks, the occupation forces controlled the territory from the fortified or at least protected (bunkers, barbed wire obstacles) strongholds in the cities, places close to important communications, and partly in the rural areas. The attacks against these strongholds were the main preoccupation of the partisan army, which was focusing less and less on maneuver warfare. However, it was too poorly equipped to bring significant effects, also due to the elaborate network of strongholds that supported each other. Thus, the partisan forces as a rule used three times as many troops for securing the offensive operations than for the direct attacks themselves.²⁹¹ Nevertheless, these operations caused significant losses for the partisan army since it attacked the strongholds from the immediate vicinity, and only

289 Čepič, Guštin, Troha, 2017: 318–329.

290 Vodušek Starič, 1992: 197–208.

291 Klanjšček et al, 1978: 699–797.

occasionally managed to ensure the support of some artillery fire, mortars, and mine throwers.²⁹²

Yet, in Slovenia, which remained occupied until the end of the war, the partisan army kept operating in difficult circumstances, encountering an opponent three times as numerous (around 123,000 men). In the winter of 1944/1945, it suffered considerable losses – around 20% of troops – due to the enemy’s offensive operations. Despite that, in April and early May 1945 the partisan army took part in the struggle to liberate the whole country, together with the majority of the Yugoslav Army which was advancing from the southeast to the northwest of the country as part of the allied forces.²⁹³

In its most developed formation, the partisan army in Slovenia included 2.5% of the population in its ranks, or some 5% of the total male population of Slovenia. They were divided into two corps and a single operation zone, consisting of 22 partisan brigades and 10 detachments altogether. In 4 years, around 75,000 people fought in the Slovenian partisan army, including 2.5% of female volunteers.²⁹⁴ The organizational model was an implementation of the characteristic military organization: brigades as the basic operational units, consisting of battalions and companies, and making up divisions and corps. However, such organizational units were not equally significant formations – they were much weaker. The corps contained between 8,000 and 12,000 troops, divisions around 3,000, and brigades between 500 and 800.

Civil population

The division of the population, the formation of collaboration units, and their use in the struggle against the resistance movement caused a further deterioration of the situation for the people. Namely, the resistance movement triggered the reaction of the political forces in authority before the occupation, especially the Slovenian People’s Party, a Catholic and corporative party that enjoyed the

292 Smrtne žrtve med prebivalstvom na območju Republike Slovenije med drugo svetovno vojno in neposredno po njej. *Zgodovina Slovenije — SIstory*, <http://www.sistory.si/zrtve>. Available on 20. 8. 2023; Čepič, Guštin and Troha, 2017: 425–436.

293 Klanjšček et al, 1978: 941–1005; Pirjevec, 2020: 640–657.

294 Bernik, 2002: 106–126.

support of around two-thirds of the electorate. These forces started to stress the adverse effects of the resistance and equating the resistance movement with communists in their propaganda. The violence of the resistance movement also contributed to the polarization as the resistance started to physically remove imaginary or actual informants and collaborators with little sensitivity to the response of the population. Especially in the Italian occupation zone, the initial division into participants in the resistance movement and the passive population disintegrated and a new division emerged – between the supporters and opponents of the resistance movement.²⁹⁵ The opponents also started organizing themselves in the military sense, while in August 1942 the Italian occupation authorities legitimized the detachments of opponents to the resistance movement, called “village guards”, as their supporting forces known as *Milizia volontaria anticomunista*. These forces soon equaled and even exceeded the number of the partisans, amounting to some 6,000 troops.²⁹⁶

The population then started to divide itself according to its political – personal – ideological – genealogical definitions. The people who continued to be loyal to the resistance movement were not in an equal position. Above all, they were exposed to much greater pressure given that the people around them knew about their orientation, thereby adding to the possibility of violence being perpetrated by the Italian Army, which also aimed to sever contacts with the partisan units and prevent the people from supplying them. Therefore, informing the Italian authorities, which would generally arrest such families and intern them in Italian concentration camps, was quite proactive, yet life threatening on the other hand, and the resistance movement intended to eradicate it with violence, usually the death penalty and the confiscation of food. All of this led to the war having an effect on villages and neighbors, while mutual control and denunciation became a constant of wartime life. This situation also continued after the Italian ceasefire since the German authorities also allowed and even promoted the activities of the collaborators' formations in the Operation Zone of the Adriatic Littoral – the Slovenian Home Guard and the Slovenian National Security Corps – with obligatory military service.

Finally, in 1943 the resistance movement became so strong that it was able to establish itself on an equal basis with the occupying forces. The occupying forces had become weakened by their war efforts and therefore resorted to using the Slovenian collaboration forces for the fight against the partisans and their

295 Griesser-Pečar, 2004: 58–143.

296 Cuzzi, 1998: 75–112; Griesser-Pečar, 2004: 253–262.

supporters. Both of them set up their protection zones, which they controlled and defended most of the time. Of course, this balance was dynamic since the forces and resources of the occupiers were much stronger than those of the partisans – the ratio ranging between 1:2 and 1:3. The fate and situation of the civilian population depended strongly on the geographical location. In principle, both of them held similar aspirations: to control the people, use them in their war efforts, and unify them politically.²⁹⁷

Following the beginning of the occupation, the occupying authorities introduced the police system of supervising the population, supplemented by army activities against the armed rebellion. To this end, a dense network of police institutions and stations in the field was established, encompassing a total of 450 stations or approximately 1 per 3,000 inhabitants. The participation of the collaboration forces provided a new dimension as they were able to penetrate the population more thoroughly and influence it through propaganda.²⁹⁸

After the autumn of 1943, the resistance movement succeeded in establishing a system of monitoring the civilian population. In essence, the purpose was to protect the areas under their control against the influences from the occupation zone as thoroughly as possible. The primary means to this end was the prohibition on free movement of the population between the zones and limited movement within zones. Similar to the occupiers' measures, they introduced a system of passes. They did not release passes for the occupied zone at all. However, the still rudimentary police forces could not prevent all movement between the two zones. People needed to pass due to family ties, trade and sale of agricultural surpluses, the black market and, of course, intelligence activities, which was what the partisans feared the most.²⁹⁹

The inclusion of the population in the war efforts by the occupying authorities as well as resistance movement had been going on since the beginning of the war. Germany and Hungary considered the people in the occupied zones to be their own citizens and introduced obligatory military service for them. Until the autumn of 1942, the servicemen – provisional citizens – had to serve in the German Army (Wehrmacht). Around 39,000 young men accepted their fate and served in the German Army, even though they mostly felt like strangers there. Still, their concern for their families, exposed to serious repressions in the case

297 Ferenc, 1972: 37–68; Pirjevec, 2008: 24–35.

298 Čepič, Guštin, Troha, 2017: 177–184.

299 Ferenc, 1972: 37–68.

of desertion, kept them in the army.³⁰⁰ About 7,000 men from the Prekmurje region, serving in the Hungarian Army, felt the same way. In the other half of the Slovenian territory, belonging to the Operation Zone of the Adriatic Littoral, the German occupying authorities introduced obligatory military service, and allowed the men to serve in the collaborating formations. In this way, these formations acquired around 18,000 troops.

On the other hand, in the autumn of 1943 the resistance movement introduced the obligation for all Slovenians to join the rebel partisan army, which had been an army of volunteers until then. The mobilization was also extended to the territory of the Primorska region where it established strong resistance units in the autumn of 1943, also consisting of Italians. Due to the mobilization, the Slovenian partisan army strengthened its numbers considerably, to even more than 35,000 soldiers. The efforts to mobilize the rest of the men up to 45 years of age became an important goal of the military operations, political and propaganda actions of the resistance movement, as well as of the occupying authorities.

The monitoring of the population also served as a form of repression since until the last week of the war the occupying authorities kept seeking, arresting, interrogating, and generally deporting into concentration and work camps anyone suspected of having cooperated with the resistance movement. Just one example: the last person of the 17,000 arrested due to suspicion of engaging in resistance activities was brought to the remand prison on May 5, 1945. The partisan provisional authorities, organized in the relatively stable 'liberated territories', translated this monitoring into repression of the supporters of collaboration, imprisoning and also executing some of them judicially or extrajudicially. The political unification was carried out either by the German occupying authorities themselves, even though burdened by serious military defeats in the east and west, which did not go unnoticed by the Slovenian population. Mass anti-communist gatherings, which the Slovenian collaboration authorities organized in the Operation Zone of the Adriatic Littoral and were obligatory for the people, were a little more effective. In contrast, the people in the partisan-controlled territories were encouraged to take part in the local authorities (national liberation committees), elect their representatives, attend mass gatherings (perhaps introducing the first English word "meetings" into the Slovenian language), and contribute material goods to the partisan army. The people living in the areas where the influences of both of these forces could be felt (the borderline, transitional areas) were the most exposed to this.

300 Kokalj Kočevar, 2017; Guštin, 2016b: 87–98; Žnidarič, Dežman, Puklavec, 2001.

Losses and the “Bloody End”

The losses also demonstrate the intensity of the resistance movement’s struggle in Slovenia. According to credible data, established by historians only a few years ago after all of the victims had been listed, around 28,000 members of the partisan army in Slovenia lost their lives.³⁰¹ This also illustrates the asymmetric nature of the struggle in multiple directions since the inferiorly armed and poorly trained fighters often only invested their very lives into this fight.³⁰² The extensive losses were also the consequence of the intense, offensively oriented way of fighting and also the insufficient training of the commanding staff given that the partisan officers gained most of their experience in the field, during battles. The system of basic military training for the troops and the commanding cadre, lasting a few weeks, was only introduced as late as in 1944.³⁰³

This does not mean that the civil population did not also suffer greatly because of the occupation system and the struggle of the resistance movement. Among 1.5 million Slovenians, 85,000 people lost their lives in the war (6.2%), and a further 15,000 lives were lost immediately after the end of the war. Namely, during the executions in May and June 1945 the victorious side killed most of the members of the collaborating formations captured or extradited by the Allies.³⁰⁴

301 Čepič, Guštin, Troha, 2017: 425–436.

302 Svete and Guštin, 2008: 375–392.

303 Kladnik, 2006b: 142–152, 168–180.

304 Mlakar, 2002: 489–526, Ferenc M., 2005; Ferenc M., 2008: 155–160.

SEPARATION FROM THE "MOTHER"

In Yugoslavia, the end of the Second World War brought victory to one of the strongest resistance movements in Europe, which had fought the occupying forces of Axis for 4 years, offering constant military and political resistance at a very high human toll. In a simultaneous civil war, the resistance movement, thanks to the successful policy of its leadership, the favorable international geo-strategic constellation, and support of Great Britain and, especially, the Soviet Union, was able to reach an agreement with the emigrant Yugoslav government, which had resided in Cairo and London throughout the occupation and over which it eventually prevailed politically. Its supremacy was confirmed at the elections in November 1945 at which the opposition refused to participate. The new Yugoslav government, headed by Tito, proclaimed Yugoslavia a state of people's democracy, similar to the regimes set up by the Soviet Union in Eastern and Southeast Europe. This implied the dominant influence of communists in politics and state affairs, with the cooperation of some other docile political forces. In foreign politics, Yugoslavia tied itself strongly to the Soviet Union with which it had concluded a substantial friendship treaty. From the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia received military aid and political support for its dispute with Italy over the Julian March. Yugoslav relations with the Western allies, on the other hand, had cooled down and were all but broken as a result of its meddling in the Greek civil war. The relations became strained to breaking point in the summer of 1946 when two American planes were shot down in Yugoslav air space.³⁰⁵

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Yugoslavia in the Soviet camp

Wherever in its area of influence the Soviet Union succeeded in establishing the rule of people's democracy, it then sought to secure its gains by asserting direct control through a military presence and the support of national communist parties. These became the key elements in the political spectrum of the "people's

305 Pirjevec, 1995: 155–170; Vodušek Starič, 1992: 308–426; Lees, 1997: 13–18.

democracy". Yugoslavia also belonged to this area, although according to its own ideological determination. In 1946, Stalin had the idea of forming a new, inter-party body to deal with the coordination, cooperation and, above all, the exchange of information and views between individual communist parties. Its founding convention was held in September 1947 in Warsaw where the leaders of nine communist parties (Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Poland, France, Czechoslovakia, Italy and the Soviet Union – the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks) met. The consultations led to the adoption of a declaration on political views and a resolution on the organization and operation of the newly founded Information Bureau of the Communist Parties (Cominform). The primary task of this organization was to exchange experience and, only when such a need arose, to coordinate activities between individual communist parties on a mutually agreed basis. Cominform, whose headquarters were in Belgrade, also undertook to publish a weekly bulletin.³⁰⁶

Stalin's policy on Yugoslavia resembled that for other Eastern European countries in which pro-Soviet governments had been installed through a military occupation. He praised the politically naïve Yugoslav communists as a raw model for others, while trying to subdue Yugoslavia in a similar way as other Eastern bloc countries by controlling their economy (through joint venture companies, for example), as well as their foreign and interior politics. Occasionally, he would become infuriated with the overzealous and autonomous politics of the Yugoslav government. In the winter of 1947/48, Stalin tried to put an end to this by resurrecting the idea from 1944 of a federation of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria (the Balkan Federation), whereby the submissive Bulgarian CP would undo the influence of the Yugoslav leadership. The latter rejected his initiative. On March 18, the Soviet Union decided to withdraw its military and civilian advisers from Yugoslavia, quoting as a reason the hostility of the Yugoslav authorities. Ten days later, Stalin added to the pressure by sending a letter to Tito. In it, he accused the CPY leadership of being perfidious, double-faced, and unfoundedly critical of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). At the same time, Stalin warned Tito that his behavior was only accepted by a narrow circle of the communist elite and that his people would disapprove of it. He was deeply convinced that Tito was on his own and that the Yugoslavs considered the CPSU more important than him or the CPY. Stalin also relied on the support of a large number of the CPY officials who had been indoctrinated by the Soviet Union and for whom he was an idol and a model.

306 Gibianskii, 2004: 49–70; Pirjevec, 1995: 171–180; Režek, 2005: 9–20.

His assessment proved mistaken. Immediately after receiving Stalin's letter, Tito called a meeting of the CPY Central Committee at which he succeeded in securing total support and eliminating those committee members on whom Stalin had relied (Sreten Žujović and Andrija Hebrang). At the same time, central committees in all the republics were convened, as were other communist organizations in Yugoslavia, all of which equally condemned Stalin's actions and the accusations made by the CPSU. An extensive letter to Stalin, in which Tito sharply refuted all the charges against the CPY, was also approved by the CPY Central Committee. Failing to realize that Tito and the CPY were not like other communist leaders and their parties, Stalin decided to ratchet up the pressure even more. In another letter of May 1948, Stalin and his Communist Party accused Tito and the CPY leadership of being illegal and illegitimate, of departing from the Marxist model of organizing and directing the Party, and approaching the ideas of Trotsky, a personification of everything forbidden. Stalin forwarded these condemnations to all the Cominform members as the official Soviet position. This act became some kind of a precedent given that an internal conflict between the two ruling parties and confidential correspondence had suddenly become public. Other Cominform members backed the Soviet position. One after the other, they sent letters to Belgrade, condemning the CPY and defending the absolute authority of Stalin and the Soviet CP. The CPY was not even given an opportunity to present its own position and counterarguments.³⁰⁷

On June 20, 1948, the Second Session of Cominform began in Bucharest with a debate on the situation in the CPY on its agenda. At the end of the 7-day session, the eight parties adopted a comprehensive resolution on the situation of the CP of Yugoslavia. In it, the CPY was condemned for departing from Marxism and Leninism in its interior politics, conducting policies hostile to the Soviet Union and its Party, the rapprochement with the capitalist West, discrediting the Soviet civilian and military advisers, as well as a Trotskyist attitude to its own party colleagues. Cominform unanimously denounced such behavior by the CPY leadership, calling upon the "healthy forces" within the CPY to harness the support of the fraternal parties and the Soviet CP and force its leaders to change policy or, if necessary, remove them and elect new ones. By calling for a *coup d'état* against a lawful and legitimate government, Cominform totally abused its purpose. This rude interference with Yugoslav internal affairs was an indicator of its future steps and the course of subsequent events in other socialist states.

307 Pirjevec, 1995: 181–186; Dedijer, 1979: 299–306; Biber, 1998: 597–604.

Although Stalin was firmly convinced the CPY leadership would be disciplined or forced to resign, this never happened. Tito enjoyed the firm support of the entire CPY as became clear at the Fifth Congress of the CPY on June 21, 1948, when the main item on the agenda was the Cominform resolution. The widest and highest body of the Party was behind the actions of Tito and the CPY leadership. The Congress concluded that the equality, mutual respect, and consideration of each communist party formed the basis of any cooperation. Any interference with a country's sovereignty or its communist party was defined as intolerable and the principle of freedom to choose their own road to socialism was adopted.³⁰⁸

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As the tensions grew, Cominform continued its political campaign. In November 1949, it adopted a resolution entitled *The Yugoslav Communist Party in the Hands of Murderers and Spies*, claiming that Tito and his inner circle had betrayed Yugoslav interests by abandoning democracy and socialism and openly approaching the Western imperialist and capitalist principles. Consequently, Tito and his inner circle were branded as a group of spies for the West, secretly infiltrating imperialist ideas and deceiving the Yugoslav peoples.³⁰⁹ Cominform considered it an international obligation for other communist parties to help restore democracy in the CPY. It therefore called upon all the communists in Yugoslavia to openly challenge Tito's reactionist camp by appealing to their loyalty to Marxism and Leninism and openly offering help in this matter.

The danger of military intervention

The ruling Yugoslav communists interpreted the Soviet ideological assault as a military threat against Yugoslavia and, as such, an international relations affair. Having just prevented an internal conflict, the ruling party was soon pervaded by the fear that the Soviet Union might use military force to remove the defiant Tito's team, had the Yugoslav communists loyal to Stalin failed to do so through a putsch. There were quite a few arguments confirming this, such as the psychological war, clandestine operations of the Soviet intelligence service, an economic

308 Peti kongres Komunistične partije Jugoslavije. 1948.

309 "Jugoslovenska Kompartija u rukama ubica i špijuna", 29. 11. 1949, in Vojvodić (ed.), 1989: 493–496.

blockade against Yugoslavia, and incidents on its borders with Hungary, Bulgaria, and Albania. The first border incidents were recorded as early as 1948, only to intensify by the end of the year. Usually, these entailed shallow incursions and firing at soldiers guarding the border. According to Yugoslav statistics, there were 896 border incidents in 2 years, resulting in several dozens of military fatalities. Inundated by notes from the neighboring states, the Yugoslav government launched a diplomatic counteroffensive. Thirty notes were sent to Albania, 25 to Bulgaria, 27 to Hungary, and 13 to Romania.³¹⁰ In general, each side rejected any responsibility for the current situation, blaming the other side.³¹¹

Ensuring internal security

Fearing that the Soviet Union might become too influential in the Yugoslav ruling party, in turn causing a division in the country, after ensuring its own unity Tito's inner circle took steps in the following directions:

Contrary to the established practice of the CPY, which operated secretly, it thoroughly explained the new situation to the citizens of Yugoslavia. The leading newspapers printed extensive excerpts from the documents issued by both parties. Mass gatherings, also of non-CPY members, were held, expressing support for its leadership and rejecting the Soviet behavior. With this, they successfully counteracted a very intensive propaganda campaign launched by the Soviet Union and its satellites (which, according to Yugoslav records, broadcast around 6,000 programs, mostly on the radio). None of the means used by the Cominform members succeeded in dividing the CPY or forming within it a faction that would ask the Soviet CP for protection and thereby make a military intervention justifiable, feasible, and successful.

Each party meeting had yet another purpose – to detect sources of opposition. Due to the intense propaganda, CPY members were compelled to declare their allegiance. Those failing to show open support for the CPY were considered to be opponents of the regime. The state security services and the police arrested some 55,000 people. Around 16,200 of these were interned in purpose-built concentration camps on the Northern Adriatic islands of Goli and Sveti Grgur

310 Bela knjiga, 1951: 371.

311 Bela knjiga, 1951: 373–374, 375.

and in Bileća in Herzegovina. Two-thirds were imprisoned solely on the basis of a police order, while the rest were judicially sentenced to several year terms. A similar differentiation was also made in the armed forces, among officers and even ordinary soldiers. The Cominform resolution found greater support among officers of Serbian and Montenegrin nationality. Many officers who had trained at the Soviet military schools after the war were among the first to be suspected.³¹²

At the same time, the Yugoslav government was striving to prove its Stalinist orthodoxy in domestic politics. In agriculture, it started to introduce total collectivization as a replacement for private production and, in interior politics, to strengthen the role of the CPY rather than that of the People's Front as a political organization.³¹³

The defense plan

Yugoslavia's security situation deteriorated seriously as a result of the threat from the East. After a period of being close and open towards the countries with a people's democracy, all of its eastern border, from the Austrian occupation zone to the Greek border and as far as the Skadar Lake, turned into a potential battlefield. Anticipating an intervention by Soviet and other Eastern European forces, the Yugoslav army was hastily preparing for defense. The main attack was expected from the direction of the vast Pannonian plains. Albania, where the Soviet Union had accumulated great quantities of military material, was also considered a very dangerous launching point.³¹⁴

The Yugoslav defense forces, in turn, inspired respect for their sheer number, if nothing else. An army with a victorious tradition of resistance during the Second World War was in the middle of the first peace-time reorganization (the second one came in 1947). Given the tense situation to its west, even after the conclusion of the peace treaty with Italy (the Trieste problem), and to its south (the civil war in Greece, in which Yugoslavia was also involved), only a small portion of the Yugoslav army had been demobilized, making it one of the largest armed forces in Europe. Its 32 divisions represented a force capable of halting the first

312 Kalodera, 2001: 230–233; Matović, 2001.

313 Pirjevce, 1995: 203–205; Fischer et al (eds.), 2005: 937–939.

314 Bekić, 1988: 23–27.

onslaught. However, the army had been weakened by insufficient heavy weaponry and technical equipment following delays in the Soviet supplies and the fact that its domestic military industry was almost nonexistent. Further, the new government channeled a large share of the already low national income into the post-war reconstruction of infrastructure and huge investments in heavy industry. Nevertheless, around 12% of the national income was earmarked for defense and, during the crisis, almost 23% of the national income.³¹⁵

Yugoslavia first reinforced its border units, which secured the border areas and, in the years to come, intercepted most provocations and incidents. There were 1,450 border incidents in which firearms were used. The government extended the compulsory military service to 3 years, thereby increasing the number of soldiers to 390,000. Due to a change in defense requirements, another reorganization was carried out in the army, reinforcing the units that were defending areas in Serbia, Vojvodina, and Slavonia.³¹⁶

Since the Yugoslav army had expected the main onslaught to come from Hungarian, Romanian, and Bulgarian territory, its military plan envisaged a withdrawal to the strategically important central parts of the country, south of the Sava and west of the Morava Rivers. There, production capacities were built, including those that had been transferred from the most endangered areas in Serbia, Vojvodina, and Slavonia. Evacuation plans for people, livestock, and grain were drawn.³¹⁷ In addition, radical plans existed to mine the Đerdap Gorge, which would have caused the Danube River to flood vast areas of Vojvodina and thereby stop the Soviet divisions from advancing.

The Yugoslav army made the greatest changes in its defense doctrine, returning to the popular partisan warfare tactics that had proved so successful in the Second World War. In mid-1949, it started organizing territorial units for the defense of smaller areas and the operations in occupied areas. A large number of partisan units was formed and by 1953 there were 195 detachments in 30 groups, with a total of 80,000 soldiers. The High Command of the Partisan Detachments of Yugoslavia was founded with headquarters in each republic. Personal liaison between commanders was established at the republic level through the coordination committees for national defense.³¹⁸

315 Miljanić, 1988: 57–67.

316 *Ibid.*, 57–67; *Bela knjiga*, 1951: 40–45, 423–435.

317 Vukmanović, 1971: 104–105; Bekić, 1988: 37.

318 Vukmanović, 1971: 105–109; Živković, 1986: 21–79.

It seems that the Soviet Union was expecting Tito's regime to collapse under its multilateral pressure within a year. It was prepared to attack Yugoslavia, but only after its election as a member of the UN Security Council. At the time, Yugoslavia only had 7 to 9 divisions, while at least 15 were needed. Large movements of the Soviet units began, and the armies of Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria were strongly reinforced.³¹⁹ According to some western analysts, the Soviet Union could have launched a military intervention in the spring of 1950. Several options were foreseen: from an attack by the Soviet Union itself to an independent attack by its satellites, the launching of guerrilla warfare or the continuation of psychological war with the intention to assassinate Tito. A guerrilla war was considered to be the most likely option.³²⁰ In any event, the Korean crisis which broke out in spring 1950 most probably influenced the Soviet decision to maintain pressure on Yugoslavia only on the level of psychological and economic war for that year. Even so, the plan of military intervention in Yugoslavia was very much alive in 1951. Testimony by General Bela Kiraly, the Commander-in-chief of the Infantry of the Hungarian army, supports the existence of a plan which was allegedly tried out in military exercises (the map wargames) in January 1951. It represented the Hungarian part of the general attack on Yugoslavia in which the Bulgarian, Romanian, and Albanian armies were to participate alongside the Soviet one, together with some Polish and Czechoslovak contingents.³²¹ According to this plan, the Hungarian forces were to form the first echelon that would break through the Yugoslav defense line between the Danube and the Tisa Rivers and, parallel to that, advance across the Drava River into Slavonia towards Zagreb. The Romanian forces would do the same at the Banat, east of the Tisa River. A second echelon would be composed of Soviet armored divisions which would advance to Belgrade on the heels of the Hungarian and Romanian forces. It seems that a large-scale parachute drop on the Bosnian plateau was also envisaged in order to create a military base in the center of the Yugoslav defenses. The roles of the Albanian Army and the Soviet Navy remain unclear.³²²

319 Bekić, 1988: 86–88.

320 Ibid., 98.

321 Kiraly, 1982: 277, 284–285, 288; Bekić, 1988: 238. The question remains as to how much this plan was connected with the presumed Soviet planning of a general attack on Western Europe in 1954 or 1955 (Bekić, 1988: 238).

322 Kiraly, 1995: 290–293, 366; Bekić, 1988: 238–239.

The economic war

Stalin expected that the economic blockade and other forms of economic pressure would politically destabilize Yugoslavia. Following the Soviet Union, all Cominform members gradually cut economic,³²³ cultural, and diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia. Over 50 treaties and agreements with Yugoslavia were cancelled, causing huge economic damage. Yugoslavia's trade with Eastern European countries in 1947 and 1948 amounted to more than 52% of its total foreign trade. Within a year of the Cominform resolution, trade between Yugoslavia and Eastern European countries dropped by 14% and by 1950 it had died away altogether. This caused enormous economic damage in the area of US\$ 430 million. All this, coupled with very poor harvests in 1950 and 1952, created great problems with Yugoslavia's balance of payments with other countries. The country faced the threat of famine.³²⁴

It was the economic blockade that compelled Yugoslavia to seek economic relations with the West. Nevertheless, the Western forces observed the crisis between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union and the possibility of an intervention with reservation.³²⁵ It took several months for them to become aware of the gravity of the conflict. When they realized just how serious the situation was, they saw in it an opportunity to discredit the Soviet Union and thereby deepen the conflict in the opposite camp. The three western countries (Great Britain, France, U.S.A.) responded with a reserved policy of ‘keeping Tito afloat’, i.e., just sufficient support to allow Tito to stay on. Initially, they were also prepared to help with weapons, but only after the outbreak of armed conflict.

323 On October 1, 1949, the Bulgarian government unilaterally cancelled the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, signed by the two countries on November 27, 1947 for a period of 20 years (see the Note by the Government of the FNRY to the Government of the NR of Bulgaria concerning the unilateral cancellation of the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance by the Government of the NR of Bulgaria, Belgrade, October 13, 1949; cf. Vojvodić, 1989: 234–240). Romania followed suit on the same day, while Czechoslovakia had already done so on June 12, 1949.

324 Kržavac and Marković, 1976: 186.

325 As the news of the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict split surfaced, Moscow's Cold War antagonists saw significant opportunities. The Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade described the situation as “brilliantly fluid”. For example, the National Security Council in Washington began speculating about the potential benefits of encouraging the spread of what it called the “Tito virus” (Gibianskii, 2004: 49).

Among the first to actively intervene in this political and ideological conflict was the U.S.A. The relationship between the U.S.A. and Yugoslavia had already visibly improved by the second half of 1949. America had decided to grant economic aid, which decisively alleviated the impacts of the aforementioned droughts. Brushing aside any second thoughts about awarding a communist country such as Yugoslavia,³²⁶ the aid was, at least initially, granted without attaching any major political conditions to it.

Seeking aid and support, Yugoslavia found 'allies' in the U.S.A., France, and Great Britain. The negotiations peaked in April 1951 when the Conference of Experts on Economic Issues from the U.S.A., France, and Great Britain was held. It was agreed that these countries should provide aid to Yugoslavia, not on an individual but a tripartite basis. Between July 1, 1951 and July 1, 1952, Yugoslavia received a total of US\$ 120 million³²⁷ of this aid to help alleviate and remove Yugoslavia's economic difficulties and increase its combat ability. However, the diplomatic pressure on Tito and the whole of Yugoslavia became increasingly apparent. The main goal of the aid provided was to bring Yugoslavia into the 'embrace of the West'. Despite some disputes, the financial aid kept coming. By August 1953, when a great deterioration between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union was expected, almost all of the aid had been delivered. In 1954, new negotiations commenced between the U.S.A. and Yugoslavia for special aid after a disastrous harvest caused by drought. The U.S.A. agreed to deliver 1,300,000 metric tons of grain, and the economic aid also continued into 1950 when Yugoslavia was granted an additional 920,000 metric tons of grain, 477,000 metric tons of corn, and 18,000 tons of cotton. Further, in 1955 a new Tripartite Aid agreement was signed, and Yugoslavia received US\$ 151 million. The total Tripartite Aid between 1951 and 1955 amounted to approximately US\$ 600 million, not counting extra grain shipments worth around US\$ 150 million. When also

326 At that time, the Assistant to the US Secretary of State made a very important statement. In front of the Foreign Policy Committee of the U.S. Congress, he affirmed that economic, diplomatic, and financial aid to Yugoslavia did not mean approval of its state policy and the communist regime (Kržavac and Marković, 1976: 186).

327 The U.S.A.'s share in the aid was 65%, Britain's 23%, and France's 12%. Presented in figures, the U.S.A. agreed to give Yugoslavia a grant of US\$ 78 million, Great Britain US\$ 27.6 million, and France US\$ 14.4 million (Bogetic, 2000: 296).

adding US\$ 1.2 billion in various types of military aid, the Western aid reached a total of at least US\$ 3.5 billion.³²⁸

Whether to join Western defense structures?

As the rift between Yugoslavia and the Soviet camp deepened, the Western countries saw an opportunity to apply more pressure on Yugoslavia to abolish the communist regime. They especially hoped that Yugoslavia's successful rebellion would serve as an example for other satellites, leading to a weakening of the communist bloc. Nevertheless, the U.S.A. only partially denounced the Soviet Union's interference with the Yugoslav internal affairs as being rude and intolerable. This became apparent in the U.S.A.'s support for Yugoslavia's UN membership, in the second round of the fourth regular session of the UN General Assembly on October 20, 1949, when Yugoslavia was elected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, despite opposition from all Eastern European countries that were supporting the candidacy of Czechoslovakia.³²⁹ Yugoslavia's non-permanent membership in the Security Council, after informing the General Assembly about its conflict with the Soviet Union and its satellites, was seen as a significant political victory in its struggle against total isolation.³³⁰

In the absence of other alternatives and after long hesitation, the Yugoslav government decided to request arms from the Western powers. Although secretly

328 How huge this aid was can be determined through a comparison with the Marshall Plan in the period 1948–1951. Under this plan, Great Britain received US\$ 2.8 billion, France US\$ 2.4, and Italy and Germany US\$ 1.3 billion each. Other Western countries (Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Norway, Denmark, Austria, Greece) together received the remaining US\$ 3 billion. No Western country, therefore, received greater aid than Yugoslavia under the Tripartite Agreement, and the seven countries mentioned last received in total an amount approximately equal to what was given to Yugoslavia alone (Bogetić, 2000: 318).

329 Izjava A. J. Višinskog, ministra vanjskih poslova SSSR i šefa delegacije SSSR na IV. Redovnom zasjedanju Generalne skupštine Ujedinjenih nacija, na konferenciji za štampu protiv kandidature FNRJ za nestalnog člana Saveta bezbednosti UN, 18. 10. 1949; In: Vojvodić (ed.), 1989: 477–478.

330 Govor dr. Aleša Beblerja, člana delegacije FNRJ, na 308. zasjedanju Prvog komiteta (za politična pitanja) IV. Redovnog zasjedanja Generalne skupštine Ujedinjenih nacija o antijugoslavenskoj kampaniji albanske vlade, povodom razmatranja grčkog pitanja, Njujork, 2. 11. 1949, In: Vojvodić (ed.), 1989: 477–478.

at first, they informed the U.S.A. about their willingness to accept arms. After considerable discussions in the American Administration – with opposing views regarding aid for Yugoslavia – it was decided to grant the military aid, yet subject to the foundation of a tripartite committee (U.S.A. U.K., France) in order to avoid political problems and coordinate the supplies.³³¹

In the midst of a possible armed intervention in Yugoslavia, the Western powers attached great importance to this issue. In October 1950, after being officially briefed about the security situation from the Yugoslav perspective, the Western powers were ready to offer Yugoslavia military support. This action was based on a peripheral defense strategy created by NATO, which envisioned Europe as “an elongated bottleneck”. The broad part of the bottle represented the Soviet Union, with Western Europe at the neck, and ending with Spain. The seas on both sides were envisaged to be dominated by the Allied forces. In the event of a Soviet penetration through Europe, the Allies would have an ideal position to launch an attack from the flank. The East Mediterranean and the Balkans were particularly important in this concept. All negotiations between the Western powers and Yugoslavia were top secret.³³² On these grounds, the Tripartite Military Committee for aid to Yugoslavia was formed in October 1950. It consisted of general staff officers from the American, British, and French armies. The Committee soon drafted a paper allowing for the provision of military cooperation and the delivery of the first shipment of arms. Yet, this military cooperation soon became a cause of “misperception” with respect to any further diplomatic cooperation. The U.S.A. saw the military aid solely as a way of binding Yugoslavia to NATO’s defense strategy. Consequently, it considered it very important to start military and strategic negotiations on Yugoslavia’s participation in the Western defense preparations. The Yugoslav leaders, in turn, sought to obtain more in return for their military cooperation. They wanted to be given the firmest possible guarantees of support in the event of Soviet aggression against Yugoslavia. Notwithstanding the disputes, considerable quantities of military material started arriving in Yugoslavia in the following few years. In November 1952, additional

331 Bogetić, 2000: 302; Bekić, 1988: 278–280.

332 This was for two main reasons: the first was the fear of a possible reaction among the Party’s ranks and among their general following to a military alliance with bourgeois countries, especially an alliance opposed to their former ideological partners. In case of the public announcement of this alignment, the military intervention of the USSR might be provoked. Second, Western governments were not keen to publicize this kind of cooperation with Yugoslavia since it was still just another communist country and a possible enemy in the eyes of Western citizens.

military negotiations between Yugoslavia and U.S.A., France, and Britain commenced. Their chief purpose was to convince the Yugoslav leaders in the direction of greater commitment to the NATO structures. With the two sides failing to find a mutually acceptable compromise, Yugoslavia began forming a military alignment with two Balkan states: Greece and Turkey. In this way, Yugoslavia successfully overcame the announced cutbacks of military aid from the West.³³³

The problem of joining NATO

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Although having lost its former political and strategic support, Yugoslavia's alliance with the opposite bloc was hindered by the Western countries' hardline, anti-communist ideology, which prevailed among both its leaders and at the political grassroots, as well as the consideration of not provoking the Soviet Union. With the Bled Agreement, the Yugoslav side only undertook to respect Western economic standards in using the received aid and not to use it for the investment cycle of its heavy industry. The central objective of the U.S.A. and the other two members of the Tripartite Committee was Yugoslavia's close alliance with NATO and, possibly, its integration into the organization's defense plans, whereas Yugoslavia wanted to secure defense in the event of being attacked.³³⁴

The U.S.A. thereby used military aid as a carrot, which also happened to be a stick. The Yugoslav army was ever more dependent on the military material it had been receiving from the three Western powers. In 1952, the three NATO members assessed that the moment for convincing the Yugoslav leadership to join NATO had arrived. Their request for military cooperation was accompanied by information that a large shipment of strategically important weaponry (200 armored vehicles, heavy artillery and, in the future, supersonic fighter jets) was on its way. On July 19, 1952, Tito himself expressed his willingness to enter negotiations on the use of this vast military aid. Koča Popović, the Yugoslav Army Chief of Staff, and his American counterpart, Omar Bradley, had already discussed the possibility of establishing a defense alliance in May and June 1951. The talks began in November 1952, initially without success. But afterwards, defying Western expectations, Yugoslavia undertook the obligation to enter a

333 Bogetić, 2000: 304–305.

334 Bekić, 2000: 129–136; Bogetić, 2000: 303–304.

military alliance with two NATO members, Turkey and Greece (the Friendship and Cooperation Treaty between Greece, Turkey, and Yugoslavia, also known as the Balkan Pact, was concluded on February 28, 1953).³³⁵ Indirectly incorporated in NATO like this, Yugoslavia could have become an important pillar of the Western defense constellation on the southern wing. Still, that would have created new problems, especially in the relations with Italy which, until then, had played the most important role there. Great Britain accepted the Yugoslav argument that there could be no local war (limited to Yugoslavia) without the outbreak of a general war in Europe. This gave a firmer reassurance to Yugoslavia that the NATO countries would participate in its defense if it were attacked.³³⁶

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Stalin's death was a turning point, above all psychologically. Two years later, the Soviet Union was prepared to present its conflict with Yugoslavia as a Stalinist deviation which had been publicly rejected. This gave rise to Western fears that their own military aid might turn against them should Yugoslavia conclude agreements with the Soviet Union.³³⁷ The Yugoslav foreign politics, having resolved the Trieste question with an agreement on the division of the disputed territory, refused to be militarily and economically bound to either the Soviet or the Western bloc. At the same time, it was not prepared to relinquish the American economic and military aid, which was subject to a strategic association with the Western defense structures. A gradual cooling of the military aspect of the Balkan Pact was within this context. This was not hard to achieve due to the ever-growing rifts in the strategic orientations of its members, notably Turkey, which sought an association of Middle East countries in the context of a pact between Iraq and Turkey. As a result of all this, by 1955 the Balkan Pact existed only on paper.³³⁸ Yugoslavia adopted a strategy of equidistance from both blocs and started to seek another path in alignment with the new third-world countries.

335 Bogetić, 2000: 304–305.

336 Dragan Bogetić, 2000a: 112.

337 Pirjevec, 1995: 220–222.

338 Bogetić, 2000a: 235–236.

NEITHER TO THE EAST NOR TO THE WEST!

Yugoslavia entered the Cold War as an important and unique member of the victorious United Nations' military coalition. In the autumn of 1944, the Yugoslav resistance movement, in agreement with the exiled government, assumed power in half of the liberated country while simultaneously establishing close links with the ideologically similar Soviet Union. At the same time, relations with its main western allies, Great Britain and the United States, became increasingly strained. On April 12, 1945, the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia concluded a vitally important and far-reaching military agreement with the Soviet Union. This included the rearmament of the Yugoslav Army and acquisition of heavy weaponry with the goal of transforming its guerrilla army into a well-armed national fighting force. With this agreement, Yugoslavia became the Soviet Union's most important regional ally, one with a substantial army of 800,000 men that needed to be equipped with both basic infantry arms and sophisticated weaponry – from artillery through to armored vehicles and aircraft – in order to meet modern military standards. Yugoslavia's involvement in the Greek civil war, its unresolved border issues with Italy, and its contiguity with the Iron Curtain further aggravated its relations with the U.S.A. and Great Britain, effectively 'pushing' it into the Soviet bloc.³³⁹

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1948–1953: Yugoslavia's dispute with the Soviet Union and the new orientation of its military alliances

In April 1948, a dispute broke out between the Soviet and Yugoslav Communist Parties over questions concerning the latter's internal socialist system. The struggle for political domination in the Balkans escalated to the level of international

339 Dimitrijević, 2006: 313–342.

relations and ultimately caused the considerable deterioration of Yugoslavia's geostrategic situation. A hostile propaganda campaign and various intelligence activities carried out by the Soviet Union along Yugoslavia's north-eastern and eastern borders eventually developed into a secret war that carried the serious threat of force. These eastern regions, containing some 60% of Yugoslavia's territorial borders, were particularly vulnerable due to the open and flat terrain that presented an easy target for military attacks with armored vehicles. The Yugoslav armed forces were placed on high alert and deployed at defense posts throughout the country and along its borders. New defense plans envisaging a possible occupation were drawn up. Many of these plans were based on the partisan tactics successfully applied by the Yugoslav leadership during the Second World War. Even so, the successful defense of Yugoslavia remained in doubt given that the areas under threat were the most difficult to defend. Yugoslavia's best protection from an attack would have been to use the logic of the Cold War whereby every local confrontation could be escalated to a global event. One possible route of a Soviet attack (from Lake Balaton through the Ljubljana Gate to Northern Italy) would cut straight across Yugoslavia into NATO's southern wing. Yet, the actual Soviet plan for an attack on Yugoslavia that was never carried out, in part because of Stalin's death, has never been fully known.

In 1950, Yugoslavia asked its former Second World War allies, the U.S.A. and Great Britain, for military and economic assistance to help strengthen its defense capabilities.³⁴⁰ At the time, the relations of the Western powers with Yugoslavia were anything but good. Aligned with the Soviet Union and its propaganda as well as international organizations attacking the West as "imperial powers", Yugoslavia was perceived as being a satellite of the Soviets. For this reason, the Americans in particular were keen on extending the requested assistance, which they saw as a strategic opportunity to advance the disintegration of the Soviet bloc, among which Yugoslavia was seen as an important member. Nevertheless, the Americans worried that the Soviet–Yugoslav dispute had been staged and so at first limited their policy to 'keeping Tito afloat'.³⁴¹ Eventually – first from America independently and then from the 'tripartite commission' including France and Great Britain – Yugoslavia began to receive international aid comprising food, industrial products, and crucially the heavy weaponry that the army needed most. Between 1951 and 1956, Yugoslavia received 899 tanks and armored vehicles, a fleet of supersonic aircraft (43 state-of-the-art jets and 360 older models), heavy

³⁴⁰ Pirjevec, 1995: 196–197.

³⁴¹ Lees, 1997; Gibianskii, 2004: 49–70;

artillery, and various vehicles, including some 10,000 trucks. The arms and armament systems given by the U.S.A. to Yugoslavia during those 5 years were worth a total of USD 717 million.³⁴²

In return for this level of aid, the Western powers expected certain political favors from Yugoslavia. They were no longer satisfied with Yugoslavia's withdrawal from the Soviet bloc, its positioning in international bodies as an opponent of the Soviets, and the enhancement of its relations with other socialist countries that sought the objective diminishment of Soviet influence. They wanted to see Yugoslavia incorporated into the Euro-American military alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which had been founded in 1949. On one hand, Yugoslavia's entry would have represented an important strengthening of NATO's southern wing, which began with the entry of Greece and Turkey in 1952. On the other hand, Yugoslavia would have been the only member state with a communist system, which would have meant the dilution of NATO's ideological exclusivity as the defender of the "free world". On the Yugoslav side, the communist leadership was well aware that NATO membership and inclusion in the community of democratic countries would bring with it the danger of being compromised in the domestic political scene. Just as importantly, the leader of Yugoslavia, President Josip Broz Tito, harbored a strong desire to keep his country unaligned with either of the two global blocs. As a result, he decided to spurn NATO's direct and oft-repeated invitation to join the organization, while also allowing that it would be necessary to support his Western military suppliers in the form of some regional defense alliance.³⁴³ For that matter, Tito realized that Yugoslavia also had a vested interest in such an alliance, at least until the worst danger of Soviet military intervention in the region had passed.

For these reasons, Tito signed the Ankara Pact in 1953 and the Balkan Pact in 1953, agreements on regional military cooperation and joint defense.³⁴⁴ His signature went alongside those of NATO members Turkey and Greece, and the agreements allowed for the potential inclusion of other countries in the region. The Yugoslav leadership continued to maintain interest in the agreement and a

342 Bogetić, 2000: 296; Pezo, 1989: 49–51; Pirjevec, 1995: 228.

343 Pirjevec, 1995: 198.

344 Terzić et al (eds.), 2005: doc. 17, Ugovor o prijateljstvu i saradnji izmedju Federativne narodne republike Jugoslavije, Kraljevine Grčke i Republike Turske od 28. februara 1953 (The Treaty of Ankara, February 28, 1953), 311–313; doc. 95, Ugovor o savezu, političkoj saradnji i uzajamnoj pomoći izmedju FNRJ, Kraljevine Grčke i Republike Turčije, 9. 8. 1954 (The Treaty of Bled, August 9, 1954), 722–726.

willingness to participate in joint defenses for as long as the threat of Soviet intervention existed. The Greek and the Yugoslav army headquarters also prepared joint defense plans for the scenario in which the states of the Soviet 'camp' really attacked.³⁴⁵

In 1953, Joseph Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union, died. Following a period of consolidation, the new Soviet leadership extended an offer to Yugoslavia to normalize relations. The improved relations between the two countries were symbolized by the visit of the new Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, to Yugoslavia in May 1955. From this point onward, Yugoslavia refrained from any further consolidation of the Balkan Pact, albeit the agreement remained formally binding.³⁴⁶ The following year, the U.S.A. (in the form of a mutual resolution) officially cancelled all military aid to Yugoslavia, although at that point the cancellation largely had a political impact since most material transfers had already been made.³⁴⁷ It should be noted that the massive crisis in the Soviet bloc in 1956 (involving Hungary, Poland, and East Germany) was not without repercussions and new dangers for Yugoslavia's security policy.

Thanks to the experience gained in the first post-war decade and its important geostrategic position between the two blocs in Europe, Yugoslavia developed a policy of regional *détente*. It established relations with neighboring Italy and Austria and normalized relations with the three neighboring members of the Warsaw Pact, an organization established in 1955 that Yugoslavia was never actually invited to join. The establishment of relations with Warsaw Pact members allowed Yugoslavia to confidently reject any alliance or alignment that might have caused further tension in its relations with the Soviet bloc.³⁴⁸

In 1949, the Yugoslav leadership developed a new idea for a global political association. Specifically, Yugoslavia decided to gradually retreat from its European neighbors (to which it would always be economically subordinate) and began to establish closer relations with two emerging regional powers: Egypt under its new leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and India led by the charismatic Jawaharlal Nehru. Between 1954 and 1956, President Tito established diplomatic relations at the highest level with a number of African and Asian countries that had recently

345 Terzić et al (eds.), 2005: doc. 88, Plan koordinacije dejstva I grčke, I., III., jugoslovenske armije, (Plan of Coordination of Operations of the First Greek Army and the First and Third Yugoslav Army in the joint Greek-Yugoslav tactical zone, July–August 1954), 682–700.

346 Terzić et al (eds.), 2005: 112–133; Pirjevec, 1995: 235.

347 Bogetić, 2006: 107–111.

348 Bogetić, 2006: 55–59.

attained independence. The perspectives of these various countries on the possibility of becoming a 'third factor' in the global polarization of the Cold War were not yet unified and this called for various diplomatic compromises on the part of the three principal countries mentioned above.³⁴⁹ With the creation of this emerging movement, Yugoslavia contributed to a new orientation of 'peaceful coexistence' that represented a shift away from regional pacts and toward the notion of 'collective security' as a global counterbalance to the bipolar division of the world into two blocs.³⁵⁰ Thanks to its previous dispute with the Soviet communist leadership, Yugoslavia was recognized as an important international actor. Not least, it was chosen (first from 1949–1952 and then again in December 1955) to be one of the elected members of the United Nations Security Council.³⁵¹ In the event, Yugoslavia presided over the Security Council during a period of extremely strained relations between the two blocs and the eruption of the Korean War.³⁵² This kind of experience added to Yugoslavia's reputation as a country capable of playing a diplomatic role and one not willing to subordinate itself to the pressures of either the East or West. These qualifications were necessary for the initiator of

349 Bogetić, 2006: 156–168.

350 Bogetić, 2006: 11, 168–180.

351 The first election of Yugoslavia as a member of the UN Security Council was opposed by all the countries of Eastern Europe which campaigned instead for Czechoslovakia. During his UN appearance, Andrei Vyshinsky, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Relations, accused the West of plotting and disrespectful dealing. The election of Yugoslavia to the UN Security Council was characterized as an effort to humiliate the Soviet Union in the court of public opinion and to involve the West in the interests of the Soviet sphere of influence. (Izjava A.S. Višinskog, ministra vanjskih poslova SSSR i šefa delegacije SSSR na IV. Redovnom zasjedanju Generalne skupštine Ujedinjenih nacija, na konferenciji za štampu protiv kandidature FNRJ za nestalnog člana Saveta bezbednosti UN, 18. 10. 1949; Vojvodić (ed.), 1989: 477–478).

352 On June 27, 1950, the United States put a resolution before the UN Security Council that would permit the active mediation of UN members in events on the Korean peninsula prior to the North Korean attack. The resolution called for the organization of a military intervention as articulated by UN Charter in the chapter 7. American diplomats fully expected a veto from Jakov Malik, the Soviet ambassador to the UN, and with it the failure of the American resolution. Yet Malik, for unexplained reasons, did not attend the meeting. After the presentation of the American resolution, the vote was deferred two times because the ambassadors needed to consult their governments for such an important measure. Just before midnight, the members of the Security Council finally voted to support the resolution. The voting was as follows: Great Britain, France, Taiwan, Cuba, Ecuador, and Norway voted for, India and Egypt abstained, and only Yugoslavia voted against, the Soviet ambassador being absent. The acceptance of Resolution 83 allowed the active intervention of American forces in Korea (Stoessinger, 1998: 53–79).

a political movement intending to unify a number of small countries that were former colonies. The Western powers quietly supported Yugoslavia in these efforts as they reckoned that the organization would weaken the influence of the Soviet Union in Asia and Africa.³⁵³

The basic starting point of the Non-Aligned Movement was precisely the preservation of these smaller countries' specific political orientation and with it a perspective directly linked to the process of decolonization. At the time, several new states were emerging that were still untried in the international environment and which, because of the negative experience from colonial times, were reluctant to join forces with one or the other global bloc. These new countries wanted above all to establish themselves in the political arena and to actively participate in the global decision-making process that hitherto had been the exclusive privilege of larger international powers. All of the members of the new movement had achieved independence and the recognition of the international community either after the First or Second World War. Most were in the regional strategic interests of one or global power bloc or the other. They were at relatively low levels of economic development, exporters of raw materials that suffered persistent difficulties with liquidity and the ability to make international payments. Because of the demographics of high population growth and the inability to produce enough food to meet their needs, most of these countries had high levels of debt, internal instability, and questionable democratic legitimacy of the ruling governments.³⁵⁴ These were the issues the new Non-Aligned Movement had to confront during the initial period of its existence, which reached its peak at the 1955 Bandung Conference in Indonesia that brought together the leaders of 29 states from Africa and Asia with a wide variety of social and political systems. Ten principles were adopted at the Bandung Conference that formed the foundation for a stronger alliance in the future.³⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the Bandung Conference of Asian and African countries was not a direct part of the Non-Aligned Movement, more an important step in the cooperation of new Asian and African countries. This specific ongoing collaboration ended in 1964 when Algerian President Ben Bela lost power in the country that was supposed to be hosting the next conference.³⁵⁶

353 Pirjevec, 1995: 236.

354 Tadić, 1987: 30.

355 Jayaprakash, 2005.

356 Mates, 1976: 133–144; Mates, 1982.

During the same period, Yugoslavia, or more precisely President Tito, began to create links between the countries that had come to be known as “the third world”. Taking advantage of its role as a member of the Security Council, and with the support of India and several Latin American countries, Yugoslavia put the issue of the underdeveloped economic status of emerging nations on the global agenda. In 1956, Tito invited Nehru and Nasser, the leaders of India and Egypt, to a trilateral conference. When the three met again in New York at a meeting of the UN General Assembly, they were joined by President Nkrumah of Ghana and President Sukarno of Indonesia. In Cairo, after the end of Tito’s African tour, in 1961 he formally called a summit for the new movement, offering Yugoslavia as the host country.

The Non-Aligned Movement was officially established in 1961, at the first summit conference in the Yugoslav capital of Belgrade. The conference was attended by 25 member states, 3 observers, and 40 representatives of liberation movements. The following fundamental principles, some concerning security policy, were adopted at the summit:³⁵⁷

- The member states would adopt an independent foreign policy based on the principles of coexistence, world peace, and national security.
- They would support policies and movements that promote national liberation while rejecting all forms of hegemony and domination.
- They would remain unattached to any multilateral pacts of the global powers or military defense agreements made in the geopolitical context of these powers.
- They would not cede territory to global powers for use as military bases.³⁵⁸

The movement born at the Belgrade Conference entailed a community of nations united by similar economic and social/political circumstances and crucially by their positioning vis-à-vis the international community.³⁵⁹ The term “Non-Aligned” started to be used by member states as a clear sign of their

357 The session which included on its agenda issues such as world peace, disarmament, decolonization and economic development, concluded with a joint declaration and a statement that was forwarded to both U.S. President John Kennedy and the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev.

358 Mates, 1976: 144–147.

359 It should be noted that the Non-Aligned Movement cannot be strictly defined as an international organization because it lacked certain fundamental constitutive elements. It had no founding documents or international contract, no statutes or other legal documents that clearly outlined the rights and duties of the members, no clearly defined decision-making organs or division of competences. Even entry into the movement, conditions of membership, and potential cessation of membership were not clearly defined (Tadić, 20–21).

opposition to being included in bipolar global tensions. At the same time, it indicated a determination to play an active role in international events. An increasingly important focus of the movement was the desire to improve the economic situation of member states since it was believed that the poor economic situation of the less developed world represented its most fundamental problem.

As a result of this thinking, an economic conference was called in Cairo in 1964. The conference, which would take place on the ministerial level, resulted from ongoing calls for a conference focused on markets and development in the context of the UN. The conference was strongly opposed by the developed nations. The Cairo Conference of Non-Aligned Countries was the starting point for all future meetings of the community of nations that became known as The Group of 77.³⁶⁰

The second half of the 1960s saw a decline in the actions of the Non-Aligned Movement due to two factors:

- international conditions – namely, the escalation of the war in Vietnam, the Arab–Israeli War, and tensions in Europe (the intervention of the Soviet Union along with other Warsaw Pact members in Czechoslovakia); and
- organizational conditions – the Belgrade and Cairo conferences did not lead to the creation of any mechanisms that would ensure the calling of future meetings in accordance with a specified timeframe.

Yugoslavia and defense/security cooperation among the Non-Aligned States

A number of specific defense- and security-related issues formed part of the Non-Aligned Movement during its existence. From the outset, the founding states rejected the notion of a bipolar division of the world.³⁶¹ The movement also

³⁶⁰ Corea, 1994: 39–53.

³⁶¹ The Non-Aligned Movement must be understood according to two conceptual frameworks. The first is an “outside-bloc”, which means that the movement and its member states were not part of either bloc; in other words, that they rejected the bipolar reality – both content and ideology – of the world. But the Non-Aligned Movement must also be understood as a “non-bloc”. Namely, the mutual and cooperative network among member states was very loose and could not be compared to either of the two blocs where there was a clear hierarchy

promoted the active and peaceful coexistence of nations (or states) as an alternative to the politics of military and diplomatic confrontation. The Non-Aligned countries thus rejected the idea of regional and continental blocs based on regional appurtenance, instead promoting general principles and objectives similar to those of the UN, whose mission was seen as a paradigm for global and international security.³⁶² The Non-Aligned countries saw consensus on the international/global level as the best way of ensuring national and, as a consequence, individual security and drew attention to the inseparable connection between the defense and social components of security. Most of their efforts were aimed at achieving the following fundamental goals:

- a) maintaining political and economic independence; and
- b) exerting change on international political and economic currents.

The Non-Aligned countries were not attempting to create regional or continental blocs, but to promote the principles and goals of members of an international community similar to the UN. This orientation made a clear distinction between non-alignment and neutrality, the latter often being characterized by a passive attitude and neutralist policies that tacitly endorse the existing international relationships and the geopolitical status quo.

Yugoslavia's position on these issues carried particular weight. Its exceptional standing arose from its 'security defiance' and principled non-participation in defense associations. It was the first country to put into practice one of the Non-Aligned Movement's fundamental objectives, namely the stance of detachment towards both the East and West. Another important contribution to shaping the movement was Yugoslavia's active foreign policy, especially its numerous official visits to African and Asian countries between 1954 and 1956. Since being founded, the movement was in particular defined by its position on security issues,³⁶³ although its activities were not all positive. The movement's activities in this area could be divided into two categories:

- positive, i.e., those that contributed to greater security in the world; and

and one of the two superpowers obviously dominated. The Non-Aligned Movement therefore propagated no specific ideological direction.

362 The emergence of all defense alliances came first from the desire to ensure national security, which must be the basis for all regional and international security. The sum of all national security pacts ensures the stability of only the members which should exert a positive influence on wider international and global security.

363 Bogetić, 2006: 169–180.

- negative, i.e., those that were inconsistent with the movement's objectives and had a negative impact on the security situation in individual regions and globally.

Chief among the positive contributions was the improvement of the military strategic situation of the majority of the 75 member countries. To some extent, this resulted in the correspondent weakening of the two blocs and global disarmament.³⁶⁴ Another positive contribution was the movement's active participation in peacekeeping within the context of the UN's peacekeeping mission. At the first possible opportunity, Yugoslavia itself took action, sending a large contingent to Sinai during the 1956 Suez crisis. The Yugoslav force remained there until Egypt requested its withdrawal just prior to the Six Day War. Of all the Non-Aligned countries, India was most often engaged in UN missions.³⁶⁵ The Non-Aligned Movement's active participation in UN peace missions become less relevant only with the phasing out of the Cold War at the end of the 1980s, although other trends also served to weaken this positive effect. Such trends included the growing non-neutrality of certain Non-Aligned members which, despite rhetoric to the contrary, often supported one side or the other in a conflict. In addition, some of the movement's most prominent countries in terms of contributing soldiers to UN missions – India, Nigeria, Indonesia, and Yugoslavia – began to experience serious financial problems during this period. The UN itself found it increasingly difficult to fund peacekeeping missions because of budgetary problems, which in turn led to the accumulation of debts by countries contributing peacekeeping forces. As an outcome, neutral European countries (like Austria, Sweden, Finland, Ireland) and even some NATO members (like France and Canada) became more suitable participants for UN peacekeeping missions.

Apart from the efforts mentioned above, the considerable economic cooperation between the Non-Aligned member states must not be overlooked. Above all, this must be understood as an attempt to strengthen national stability and, consequently, national security. A number of proposals for military cooperation emerged from the movement, yet none were ever realized.³⁶⁶

364 Bebler, 1974: 809, 812.

365 Bebler, 1974: 817.

366 The most ambitious project in the field of military defense cooperation was presented in 1975 when Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates founded the Arab Organization for Industrialization to be headquartered in Cairo. With the aim of pooling financial resources and technological expertise, each Arab member state assigned 2% of their

There were also actions by individual Non-Aligned members that deviated from the movement's objectives and held negative consequences: namely, ongoing military build-up and military attacks between member states. Specifically, member states were continually increasing their defense budgets. Between 1953 and 1983, the global share of defense-related expenses of Non-Aligned member states rocketed from 3.6% to 21%. The purchase of arms directly affected the most vulnerable social sectors in the member states, hampering economic development, lowering the level of social security, causing high unemployment, and allowing for the centralization of political power in the hands of a few individuals. Worse still, most of the arms were bought or acquired in various arrangements from the superpowers, making the Non-Aligned countries dependent on the very blocs they had otherwise rejected. In the early 1970s, the U.S.A., Soviet Union, France, and Great Britain provided 80% of the arms acquired by Non-Aligned member countries.³⁶⁷

Military attacks on and among member countries exerted an even more negative influence. A full two-thirds of the 97 wars that took place between 1945 and 1969 were civil wars, the vast majority in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. All of these wars held the potential to draw in states affiliated with the two global blocs, especially to draw in the superpowers themselves. Complicating matters, the Non-Aligned Movement was committed to supporting all liberation and independence movements, and this included armed movements. However, the most corrosive influence on the cohesion of the Non-Aligned Movement was certainly the wars between member states.³⁶⁸ Between 1961 and 1983, there were 17 wars between individual member states, with the clear majority of casualties being suffered by the civilian populations of the countries involved.³⁶⁹

annual GNP for military production. This cooperation, however, did not materialize as the Arab states withdrew from the Non-Aligned Movement after the signing of the Camp David peace treaty in 1979.

367 Bebler, 1974: 813.

368 Bebler, 1974: 814–816.

369 Kende, 1983: 31–61.

Peace missions of the United Nations and Yugoslavia

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Another positive contribution was the movement's active participation in peacekeeping within the context of the UN's peacekeeping mission. At the first possible opportunity, Yugoslavia itself acted, sending a large contingent to Sinai during the 1956 Suez crisis. Although Yugoslavia did not participate in many peace missions of the United Nations, it played the most important role when the peace missions were beginning to be formed. In October 1956, tensions between Israel and Egypt were re-ignited, in which important world superpowers like the United Kingdom and France also became embroiled. The question of the borders between Egypt and Israel was directly connected to the ownership of the Suez Canal. When on July 19, 1956, the U.S.A. decided to place an embargo on financial help to Egypt for building the Assuan Dam over the River Nile, the Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser announced that the Suez Canal was to be nationalized. This was intended to help Egypt cover up the loss of financial funds to continue building the Assuan Dam, which, from an energy supply point of view, was vitally important for Egypt. This caused the military intervention of France and the United Kingdom in Egypt, while Israel used the opportunity to occupy the Sinai Peninsula that belonged to Egypt.

The conflict quickly made it onto the agenda of the United Nations. Still, the United Nations Security Council could not pass any resolutions due to the veto of permanent members France and the United Kingdom. Based on General Assembly Resolution No. 377 from November 1950 (Uniting for Peace), the discussion was transferred to the General Assembly. The first emergency meeting took place on November 1, 1956 when a resolution demanding the immediate ceasefire of all sides in the conflict, the withdrawal of troops to their initial positions, and the re-opening of the Suez Canal was passed.³⁷⁰ Afterwards, important endeavors of Canada followed, which presented the United Nations and its members with the concept of the peace mission whereby soldiers would control the ceasefire of the sides in the conflict. A consensus of the member states was reached, and more resolutions were passed by the General Assembly Resolutions No. 997 to 1003 as were needed to organize the peace missions. When organizing a peace mission, the fundamental rule was that cooperation was required

370 First UN Emergency Force (UNEF I), 2007: 2.

between the Egyptian government, as well as the refusal of any unilateral decisions on either side. Egypt received clear assurances about the international community's complete non-intervention in its internal affairs and respect for its sovereignty. However, this was only the beginning of important negotiations. Egyptian President Nasser expressed his disagreement with the inclusion of the Canadian, Danish, and Norwegian armed forces into the Peace Corps because they were NATO members and thus biased towards the tasks of the peace mission. Following extensive negotiations and the collection of offers from the donating countries of the peacekeeping forces, in November 1956 ten countries – Canada, Brazil, Denmark, Finland, India, Indonesia, Norway, Sweden, Yugoslavia – were selected to participate with at least one battalion of soldiers.

Due to the relatively small number of soldiers (6,000) and the large area that had to be covered and controlled, it was important to organize a well-functioning system of intelligence and reconnaissance in the peace mission. This important segment was delegated to the armed forces, i.e., the national contingent of Yugoslavia. Therefore, Yugoslavia provided uninterrupted rotation of the national battalion with all equipment until the end of the peace mission, whereas a few other countries withdrew their soldiers before the mission ended. In September and December 1957, Finland and Indonesia withdrew their forces; in December 1958, Colombia followed. This reduced the number of soldiers by around 1,000. By May 1967, Yugoslavia was continuing to maintain its battalion on the Sinai Peninsula, which in effect meant the tasks of the whole peace mission were being carried out by 14,250 soldiers.³⁷¹ Further, Yugoslavia cooperated in the adjudication period of the UNYOM peace mission (1963–1964), whose goal was to preserve peace and safety in Yemen.³⁷²

The Non-Aligned Movement's active participation in UN peace missions only became less relevant with the phasing out of the Cold War at the end of the 1980s, although other trends also served to weaken this positive effect: namely, the growing non-neutrality of certain Non-Aligned members which, despite rhetoric to the contrary, often supported one or the other side in a conflict. In addition, some of the movement's most prominent countries in terms of contributing soldiers to UN missions – India, Nigeria, Indonesia, and Yugoslavia – began to experience serious financial problems during this period. The UN itself found it increasingly difficult to fund peacekeeping missions due to budgetary problems, which in turn led to the accumulation of debts by countries contributing

371 First UN Emergency Force (UNEF I.), 2007, 4–16; Bebler, 1974: 817.

372 The Chronology of Participation in Peacekeeping Operations, 2007.

peacekeeping forces. As a result, neutral European countries (like Austria, Sweden, Finland, Ireland) and even some NATO members (like France and Canada) became more suitable participants for UN peacekeeping missions.

Apart from the efforts mentioned above, the considerable economic cooperation between the Non-Aligned member states must not be overlooked. Above all, this must be understood as an attempt to strengthen national stability and, consequently, national security. A number of proposals for military cooperation emerged from the movement, yet none were ever realized.³⁷³ Some Yugoslav authors even believed that more prominent military cooperation among the Non-Aligned countries would even have been detrimental to the stability of this movement due to great differences in their situations.³⁷⁴

However, several recent assessments of the standing and role of the Non-Aligned countries were not so positive. Many critics saw the tight cooperation of India in the Non-Aligned Actions by individual Non-Aligned members also deviated from the movement's objectives and held negative consequences: namely, ongoing military build-up and military conflicts between member states. Specifically, member states were continually increasing their defense budgets. Between 1953 and 1983, the global share of defense-related expenses of Non-Aligned member states rocketed from 3.6% to 21%. The purchase of arms directly affected the most vulnerable social sectors in the member states, hampering economic development, lowering the level of social security, causing high unemployment, and allowing for the centralization of political power in the hands of a few individuals. Worse still, most of the arms were bought or acquired in various arrangements from the superpowers, making the Non-Aligned countries dependent on the very blocs they had otherwise rejected. In the early 1970s, the U.S.A., Soviet Union, France, and Great Britain provided 80% of the arms acquired by Non-Aligned member countries.³⁷⁵

373 The most ambitious project in the field of military defense cooperation was presented in 1975 when Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates founded the Arab Organization for Industrialization to be headquartered in Cairo. With the aim of pooling financial resources and technological expertise, each Arab member state assigned 2% of their annual GNP for military production. This cooperation, however, did not materialize, as the Arab states withdrew from the Non-Aligned Movement after the signing of the Camp David peace treaty in 1979.

374 Smilja Avramov, in: *Nesvrstanost i odbrana : okrugli stol*, 1976: 101.

375 Bebler, 1974: 813.

Between defending Yugoslavia and global security

The global provision of security provided by membership in the Non-Aligned Movement did not safeguard each member state with respect to its own security and defense concerns in the local area. Yugoslavia too, quite unexpectedly, found itself in an unfavorable security situation as a consequence of the Soviet doctrine, which had demanded that limited sovereignty be applied to the socialist states since the mid-1960s. Generally speaking, the European environment was stable until the end of the 1950s, when the Soviet intervention took place in Czechoslovakia. Therefore, Yugoslavia used the favorable conditions to lower the share of defense expenditures from 16% to 6% of the state budget; it also lowered the number of soldiers to 200,000. At the same time, it started an extensive social reform to replace the Soviet type of socialism with “Socialist self-management,” which included economic reform measures in the direction of partial implementation of a market economy. It abandoned the rigid socialist model of setting up heavy industry in favor of developing the food processing industry which would help to raise the living standards of the population. This was a period of quick economic growth based on huge loans drawn from the Western countries. Nonetheless, the social reform caused great internal instability among the political elite, which divided itself into “liberals” and “conservatives,” i.e., supporters and opponents of the reform. The climax of this internal opposition came when the second-highest ranked man in Yugoslavia, Aleksandar Ranković, was dismissed from his position in 1966.³⁷⁶

Yugoslavia’s political orientation towards the Non-Aligned countries was, however, not without critical internal concerns, which mostly stemmed from the fact that in economic terms Yugoslavia was very dependent on Western Europe. In addition, during the 1960s Tito went on to re-establish closer connections with the Soviet Union, where the Yugoslav Army acquired the majority of its heavy weaponry.³⁷⁷

Yugoslavia stepped into relations with the Asian and African countries after it had realized it was impossible to be politically independent of the two blocs without the support of some third international force. Moreover, the Messianic

376 Pirjevec, 1995: 238–261; Sekulić, 1989.

377 Pirjevec, 1995: 266–271; Pezo, 1989: 208–210, 259.

spirit of the Yugoslav political elite was not to be underestimated. The new countries from Asia and Africa accordingly seemed like the best choice of support, and Yugoslavia counted on them for obtaining recognition in the international community, as well as fruitful economic cooperation.³⁷⁸ Gradually, it implemented its vision of development for the Non-Aligned countries which, in terms of institutions, was shown in regular summits of the member states every 3 years. Yugoslavia combined political help to liberation movements with military help to the best of its powers. In the Algerian War, Yugoslavia supported FNL with military material, which caused a grave, albeit brief, crisis with France when it seized a Yugoslav ship loaded with weapons in international waters.³⁷⁹ A similar crisis with France followed in 1962 when Yugoslavia officially recognized FNL as representing Algeria.³⁸⁰ Still, the Yugoslav export of weapons was relatively small, reaching only a tenth, or at most several tens of millions annually. If one considers the overall inflow of weapons into the Non-Aligned countries, this was negligible. In 1967, the Yugoslav position among the Non-Aligned states was strongly disturbed by the Arabic–Israeli War, not only because Egypt (an important Non-Aligned state) was involved in the conflict, but also because of the disruption of Yugoslavia's relations with Israel. This was not well accepted by either the political elite or the general public. In addition, Yugoslavia resigned from membership in the Non-Aligned Movement and allowed the Soviet Union to use its airspace for flying military help to Egypt. With this action, Yugoslavia in many ways declared itself as closely collaborating with the countries of the Warsaw Pact, e.g., the Soviet Union.³⁸¹ The Soviet intervention, and the intervention of several states from the Warsaw Pact in Czechoslovakia in 1968 suddenly opened Yugoslavia's eyes to the realization that it had been neglecting its defense readiness, prompting its army to swiftly develop a new military doctrine of 'general popular resistance', as well as to reform its defense system. In a period when the country was refusing military or defense connections and the presence of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact on its borders, developing its own defense system seemed to be the only solution for integrating both the armed forces and the civilians. Yugoslavia was thus the sole country to have established the

378 Bogetić, 2006: 310–312; Pirjevec, 1995: 224.

379 Bogetić, 2006: 238–240.

380 Pirjevec, 1995: 266, 269–270. It was exactly the acknowledgement and support for the liberational movements that formed the grounds for negative criticisms of the Yugoslav politics towards Asia and, most importantly, towards Africa from the Western diplomacies.

381 Pirjevec, 1995: 273–274.

system of a people's army during the period of peace. Together with the reform of the regular armed forces, Yugoslavia set up strong divisions of territorial army (Territorial Defense), which was also trained for the event of the entire state being occupied. The costs of funding these activities were transferred directly onto the municipalities, which stood for both local self-management and the exercising of state authority. Over the next 6 years, up until 1974, this doctrine evolved into a comprehensive system of total defense for the event of an attack by NATO or the Warsaw Pact; in total, this strategy involved 20% of the whole population.³⁸² Yugoslavia set up a strong arms industry on the basis of Soviet licenses and its own research technology, with which it produced – not always economically rationally – everything from planes, rockets, tanks, and infantry weapons, ammunition and a broad range of military equipment. Gradually, and mostly with state help, its exports to the countries of its new friends, the Non-Aligned, were rising given that they needed weapons without any political strings attached. By the 1970s, Yugoslavia had become a licensed manufacturer of Soviet arms industry products (rarely Western ones), selling many of its products to the markets of the Non-Aligned countries, albeit the export of weapons to these countries was not significant until the end of the 1970s.³⁸³ This security situation at home allowed for further active involvement in the Non-Aligned Movement, which peaked after 1972 when Yugoslavia saw some of its glorious moments of influence in the movement. It also brought it closer economic and military cooperation with the Non-Aligned countries, although between 1968 and 1971 Yugoslavia was suffering its worst crisis. Further, it ended with the defeat of the communist liberal wing and the federalists, the institutionalized change of the Constitution codifying the majority of their requirements.³⁸⁴

382 Živković, 1986: 83–121; Pirjevec, 1995: 311.

383 Pezo, 1989: 454.

384 Pirjevec, 1995: 281–310.

THE COUP THAT NEVER WAS

The rise of nationalisms in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the face of the pronounced economic inequality of its constituent parts – the republics – indicated the possibility of the common state disintegrating. The view on this issue varied greatly between the military and political elites. While politicians were looking for various ways of a different coexistence – a confederation – and allowed the possibility of the secession of individual republics, this was wholly unacceptable to the military elites. They saw themselves as a guarantor of the unchanged coexistence of the republics. Those who nevertheless believed the changes were necessary were considered to be deliberately undermining the country's constitutional order. However, since the military elite led by the YPA General Staff were subordinated to the political decision-makers, the idea of a military coup began to be developed among them. This would enable them to act independently and use force against anyone who perceived the constitutional arrangement and unity of the country as a problem. The likelihood of a military coup also grew since the military elites were closely cooperating with the ever more aggressive Serbian nationalist leaders. When it was clear the former Socialist Republic of Slovenia would be seceding from the Yugoslav federation, the military leadership prepared the starting points for a military intervention aimed at removing the republican leadership, replacing it with a loyal one and preserving the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. To ensure this type of intervention was legal, a political decision first had to be taken by the collective presidency of Yugoslavia as the supreme commander of the armed forces. Since part of the presidency did not want to decide on such a thing, the military leadership prepared everything necessary to force their decision to carry out a military intervention with threats.

Growing legitimacy of the armed forces

The Yugoslav People's Army inherited its extraordinary legitimacy potential from the Second World War as it had led the liberation struggle on the side of the Allied forces against fascism and Nazism. Precisely with the principle of total mobilization, the Yugoslav political elite developed the people's armed forces in the full sense of the expression. The YPA had a status of the liberation heir and expected to have

an important social status as well.³⁸⁵ This was significantly contributed to by the leading political elite that viewed the Yugoslav People's Army as an element for the indoctrination of the masses and for ensuring its own ideological domination and political consolidation. Thus, the armed forces became a guardian of the internal stability, international cohesion along with a shield against external threats. In this sense, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia benefitted from its extraordinary geopolitical position as well as its cunning foreign policy. Both blocs supported it and provided it with weapons. Direct military assistance to the Yugoslav People's Army came in the form of older yet operational and more affordable weapons systems.³⁸⁶ Apart from the stockpiling of Western as well as Eastern weapons in Yugoslavia, we must mention the formation of the military industrial complex, purposefully encouraged by the Yugoslav political elite. This resulted from the external political efforts of Yugoslavia to establish a 'third alternative', or the Non-Aligned Movement. Representing the Movement's most important protagonist, Yugoslavia wished to wield enviable military power to hold the position of military mentor to the third world countries or economically weaker partners. Numerous programs of military counselling, assistance, training of military instructors, and direct assistance with the development of military systems in the Non-Aligned Movement member states were implemented. The role of the arms trade, established between Yugoslavia and other Non-Aligned states, also grew in prominence.³⁸⁷

In the domestic/political sense, the Yugoslav weapons industry additionally accounted for a measure to compensate for the quite apparent differences in the economic development levels of the republics in the Yugoslav federation. The position of President of the Republic, President of the Communist Party, and unchallenged commander of the armed forces held by Josip Broz Tito ensured stable, generous, and especially unwavering financial support for the Yugoslav People's Army. The armed forces gradually and persistently became a practically new element in the federation, superior in terms of power, and seen as a sign of the Serbian domination of the common state, notably by Slovenia and Croatia. This perception arose from the obvious national anomaly of the officer staff, dominated by the Serbian nation partly due to historical circumstances yet also the centralist efforts of the political elites.³⁸⁸

385 Jelušič, 2002: 217.

386 Bebler, 1993: 63.

387 Guštin and Prebilič, 2008: 339.

388 Hadžić, 2002: 54.

All of these circumstances allowed for the following: extraordinary weapons stockpiling in the territory of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; the formation of a strong military industrial complex; and deficient control by civil society and politics of the armed forces. The preservation of the specific civil-military relations through President Tito's cult of personality gave the Yugoslav People's Army an extremely high level of legitimacy and thus the basis for developing the privileged status of the armed forces. These foundations enabled the highest military leaders to transcend the position of fulfilling the commander's orders and start influencing the decision-making process, reject the decision made by the political elite in 1991 and, finally, begin acting independently of the legal yet in the eyes of Yugoslav citizens ever less legitimate political elites.³⁸⁹

In the 1980s, generals of the Yugoslav People's Army started to make public statements about the economic policies of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and being outspoken about on the actions of the political elites, only to ultimately assume the right to concede to the appointments of the President of the Federal Presidency and Presidents of the Federal Government in the state. With significant amounts of criticism and indirect influence, they endeavored to put a lid on the increasingly plural public information and called for stricter and stricter censorship.³⁹⁰

1981 – The first internal military intervention

The first signs of the Yugoslav state crisis were already visible in the economic crisis at the end of the 1970s. In the early 1980s, after quite some hesitation the Yugoslav political class – without exception in the domain of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) – also identified it as a crisis holding political dimensions. Even though the socialist regime underestimated the political crisis, it reacted to the events in Kosovo in 1981 extremely seriously as the regime was particularly sensitive about the tensions arising between the nations in the federal state. In Kosovo, people, especially students, were demonstrating openly and in large numbers. They ignored the rules regarding public gatherings and kept publishing anti-socialist mottoes as well, deeply unsettling the state

389 Guštin and Prebilič, 2014: 122.

390 Bebler, 1992: 45–47.

leadership.³⁹¹ As it was, the state leadership was already very upset by having lost its last two strong figures, Edvard Kardelj and Josip Broz Tito, in just 2 years (1979 and 1980), together with the economic crisis that seemed unsolvable without submitting to the International Monetary Fund – namely, to the class opponent, a representative of capital. Still, the most important aspect of the Kosovo crisis was that the military leadership actively entered the domestic political arena for the first time because of it.³⁹² “Already at the very beginning, we realized that we could not expect anything from the state leadership. We set out to do our job without waiting for orders. With General Bjelogrić as well as a group of other generals and officers, we came up with a plan to deploy units in the region of Priština and other centers in Kosovo – Peć, Đakovica, Uroševac, Podujevo, and Kosovska Mitrovica”.³⁹³ Upon a formal appeal by the State Presidency and with the blessing of the leaders of the LCY, the Army intervened. It deployed an armored brigade to this province and put a stop to the demonstrations within 2 days.³⁹⁴

The regime characterized the demonstrations as an action by pro-fascist and counterrevolutionary elements and thus established a context for their resolution. Yet, it also emphasized the deficiency of the system of the General National Defense and Social Self-Protection. As this system was based on the mass participation of people in all communities, it turned out to be part of the problem rather than the solution. This led to the disarmament or disbandment of all territorial military structures. New ones were then established with reliable personnel, mostly not of Albanian descent, even though as much as around 85% of the population of the autonomous province of Kosovo was Albanian by that stage.³⁹⁵

391 Nation, 2003: 224.

392 Admiral Branko Mamula allows for a possibility that the Minister of Defense at the time, General Ljubičić, was wondering whether to take over the leadership of Yugoslavia at the moment of Tito’s death (Mamula, 2000: 23–26).

393 Mamula, 2000: 38.

394 Mamula, 2000: 33–44.

395 Ibid.; Malcolm, 1999: 316.

The first outlines of the independent role of the Army

In the mid-1980s, the Yugoslav crisis deepened further. In the institutional sense, the LCY was divided into seven republican and two autonomous province organizations. Besides these, there was the Organization of the League of Communists in the Yugoslav People's Army. The divergence between these organizations gradually started to grow with three blocs being formed: reformists arguing for liberalization; reformists supporting orthodox communism; and those wishing to maintain the status quo.³⁹⁶

The Army, which had its own military political party – the Organization of the League of Communists in the Yugoslav People's Army that exerted complete political control over the military community (around 97% of officers and 100% of colonels and generals were members of it) – sided with the camp that wanted to preserve the status quo. However, it was more in favor of the orthodox communists than those striving for liberalization. The concern with its own economic position entailed an important aspect of the Organization's political activities since as the biggest budget user (up to 22% of the total budget) it was very worried about its own financing in the battle for the diminished budgetary resources.³⁹⁷

In the middle of the 1980s, the Army was pondering how to carry out its fundamental duty by itself: to defend the communist system from internal threats as well as the state from external ones. These efforts were initiated by Admiral Branko Mamula, the Secretary of Defense. His plan of 1987, while not drawn up formally and known only by a few of his closest associates, envisioned that the Army, or better the military leadership, should take the initiative and start to dictate political reforms with the aim of ensuring security – i.e., to keep Yugoslavia together, operational, and a communist state. In 1987, the leading generals informed the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States about these plans. At that time, rumors were circulating that Yugoslavia's stability and even its existence were in question and that the Army could be preparing for a military coup first started to spread.³⁹⁸

396 Woodward, 1995: 364.

397 Marković, 2007: 216.

398 Mamula, 2000: 60–72, 104–108.

Operationalization of the possible internal military intervention 1989–1990

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As the differences between the individual factions of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia deepened, the military leadership was becoming increasingly active politically. Under the pressure of the crisis, the camp of the supporters of the status quo crumbled. On the other hand, the strength of the leader of the League of Communists of Serbia Slobodan Milošević, kept rising: through violent or peaceful means, he mobilized half the state for his camp. Yet, in the struggle against the combination of communist political orthodoxy, demands to centralize decision-making, and economic reformism, another camp also emerged: an “unprincipled coalition”, as the camp of those who were opposed to Milošević was labeled by Macedonian Politician Vasil Tupurkovski. This side was especially represented by the President of the League of Communists of Slovenia, Milan Kučan. New political groups and parties – opposition to the ruling political organizations of the League of Communists – began to started form in the western republics of Slovenia, Croatia, and then across the entire state.³⁹⁹

On January 24, 1989, new incidents ensued in Kosovo, this time related to defense of the already achieved levels of autonomy that were set to be abolished by amendments to the Serbian Constitution. Due to the Serbian pressure, the State Presidency proclaimed a state of emergency in the territory of Kosovo and deployed both the police and military forces. Each opened fire on the protesters, then still mostly peaceful, killing 90 of them.⁴⁰⁰

The goals of the joint action changed significantly. At first, the orthodox communists identified the reformists as the beginning of a counterrevolution, and according to their doctrine and communist vocation it was their duty to stop all such attempts by any means. As it was, the reformists were accused of introducing or attempting to introduce a multi-party political system. These efforts culminated in early 1988 when the military and state leadership discussed “assisting” their comrades in Slovenia, who had allowed the formation of political organizations outside of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. Plans for a military

399 Silber, Little, 1996: 115–116.

400 Pirjevec, 2003: 401.

intervention and the internment of communist and non-communist political leaders in Slovenia during potential unrests were drawn up.⁴⁰¹

When these plans were made public with the approval of the Slovenian leaders of the Communist Party of Slovenia, a serious scandal broke out, followed by the arrest of Janez Janša and two of his associates, mass protests, and a widespread movement in Slovenia calling for the release of those arrested. However, right in the middle of this affair, another front opened. Due to rigidity and lack of understanding on the part of the Army, the trial turned into a conflict between nations: between Slovenians and the Serbo-Croatian-speaking majority in Yugoslavia. This mobilized a far greater mass of people in Slovenia and in fact added momentum to the reformist communists' efforts, and led to demands for the confederalization of the state and later Slovenian independence. The compromised communism was losing its internal legitimacy across the whole state. It was replaced by nationalism, which could not function in an integrative way in the Yugoslav multinational state. One side effect of this profound dispute was that in the eyes of one side – the Slovenians and gradually the Croats – the military leadership had become suspicious, backward, and increasingly illegitimate.⁴⁰²

In comparison, the Army, designated as the “army of the people” and defender of the revolution, was offended by this widespread rejection, and radicalized in the opposite direction. The military leaders found a political ally in the Serbian political leadership headed by Milošević, especially with regard to centralizing the state and preserving communism. The new Secretary of Defense, General Veljko Kadijević, personified this informal alliance with his frequent meetings with new Serbian leader Milošević and Member of the State Presidency Jović. They were gathered around the notion of preserving Yugoslavia and centralizing the state. In the first year, they shared an interest in preserving the communist rule, at least outwardly, although at the end of 1989 Serbia openly abandoned these aspirations as well.⁴⁰³

In January 1990, Milošević's forces within the LCY were able to arrange for the gathering of an extraordinary Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. Yet, instead of securing the expected victory for itself at the Congress, they provoked the dissolution of the LCY: the Slovenian and Croatian organizations left, and others no longer saw any point in carrying on with the Congress.

401 Omerza, 2013: 37.

402 Pirjevec, 2003: 42.

403 Kadijević, 1993: 88.

The Organization of the League of Communists in the Yugoslav People's Army thereby lost its political backing, which was obviously still extremely important for it – at least psychologically, yet also personally, as these people's positions were at stake.⁴⁰⁴ When it ended up in the cold, the leadership of the Organization of the League of Communists in the Yugoslav People's Army (in fact the military leadership controlling this Organization) engaged in unsuccessful attempts to restore the LCY. Half a year later, it decided to establish its own political party: the League of Communists – Movement for Yugoslavia.⁴⁰⁵ Even though a massive influx of the former members of the LCY had been expected, the new party remained limited to a small membership of people from outside of the Army, while some of the officer staff avoided joining the party as well. However, in this way the Army in fact entered the multi-party political space that in the meantime had been established in the majority of Yugoslav republics.

Crisis of legitimacy of the armed forces

The internal crisis of the multinational armed forces was an important factor for the diminishing legitimacy of the YPA in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Years of national inequality in the Army's very structure turned out to be ever more problematic following the death of President Tito as the use of Serbo-Croatian as the language of command clearly and undoubtedly favored the central core within the federation, notably the Serbian/Montenegrin nations.

⁴⁰⁴ During the meeting, General Kadrijević explained the plans to Jović that “the Presidency should exert control over the Federal Executive Council”, that the Yugoslav People's Army had prepared the plans “for all critical parts of the state, especially Croatia and Slovenia, ensuring that it could get it all under its own control in the shortest time possible”, and that he was aware of the fact that “I cannot control the whole of the Presidency, but we can be in the majority” (Jović, 1996: 142). Kadrijević describes the nature of this meeting as follows: “It has to be emphasized that this meeting and discussion is more important than any sessions or discussions which could be held in our country today, and that there are no institutions where such discussions could be held” (BJ, 139). At another point, Jović remarks: “Veljko (Kadrijević) tends to explain such analyses to me, but for understandable reasons he does not wish to present them to the whole Presidency” (Jović, 1996: 68).

⁴⁰⁵ The League of Communists – Movement for Yugoslavia was a political party established on November 19, 1990, with the reorganization of the members of the LCY in the Yugoslav People's Army.

This was all the more present and apparent due to the growing anomalies among the officer staff with respect to the representation of the other nations. With the increasingly clear and constant expansion of Serbian nationalism, the situation was becoming more and more disturbing. The YPA was gradually understood as the Serbian Army and was hence a troubling element for the other Yugoslav nations, especially the Slovenians and Croatians.

An even more important reason for the shrinking legitimacy of the YPA perhaps lay in the stronger politicization of the armed forces and involvement in political life. Even though the Army's goal was actually to achieve the stabilization of the political system by reinforcing the centralization and curbing the progressively louder separatist aspirations of the individual nations, its entry to the political arena had precisely the reverse effect. The considerable erosion of the LCY's legitimacy as the ruling party in Yugoslavia and consequent delegitimization of the powers held by the federal authorities that represented an extension of the Communist Party amounted to a significant blow against all the elements seeking to prevent changes and keep Yugoslavia as it had been managed and led. The YPA, which declared itself the protector of President Tito's legacy and therefore took on the position of defender of the state's unity and territorial integrity also with regard to the internal attempts towards disintegration of the state, could barely expect anything other than its complete loss of legitimacy and thus initially being viewed as an irritating and ultimately a hostile element for the Yugoslav nations.⁴⁰⁶

In comparison with the armed forces in the other communist states, the Yugoslav People's Army had the specific characteristic of total politicization of the Army via the Party Organization's presence in the Army. In this manner, the political reliability of professional soldiers and control over their activities was assured, while this Organization also functioned as a formal channel, legitimizing not only the Party in uniform, but the whole political role of the federal Army. Simultaneously, the politicization of officers in the Organization of the League of Communists in the Yugoslav People's Army represented a way of legitimizing the political activity of soldiers, and it was precisely this Party Organization that represented a formal means for legitimizing the Army's involvement in politics. Therefore, all officers sooner or later had no choice but to join the League of Communists. With the 1974 Constitution, while the LCY may have strengthened its central authority, in fact it became a coalition of nine Parties: six from the individual republics, two from the autonomous provinces,

406 Jelušič, 1997: 79–81.

and one from the Army. The LCY held on to its position of the civilian supervision of the armed forces, i.e., the Yugoslav People's Army.⁴⁰⁷ Still, the representatives of these very forces became an integral part of this supervision given that 15 representatives of the Army were members of the Central Committee of the LCY, which had 166 members. Put differently, the Army gradually started supervising itself. Amidst the mounting tensions between the individual republics' Leagues of Communists, room was made for the disproportional role and strength of the highest military leadership in what was otherwise a political process of leading the state. This explains why the military leadership was able to proclaim itself defender of the Federal Constitution and guardian of the federation. For the same reasons, the YPA never considered a military coup or coup d'état with the aim of replacing the legal federal leadership. Meanwhile, the military leadership showed significantly less understanding for the ideas which would involve attacking the federal system or result in territorial truncation of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Accordingly, the Polish scenario was unrealistic. Yet, it was completely conceivable that the Army would intervene in Kosovo in 1981 and 1989 as the demands to form the Republic of Kosovo constituted a breach of the Federal Constitution.⁴⁰⁸

Plan for an intervention after the first multi-party elections in April 1990

In April 1990, the closest circles around the Minister of Defense Veljko Kadijević drew up the initial plans for the Army to intervene in both of the republics that had called for and carried out multi-party elections: Slovenia and Croatia. "However, Veljko believes that in case the rightist or irredentist forces win (at the elections), we are justified (because all of this is unconstitutional) to remove them by force. The use of force is always a possibility."⁴⁰⁹ "Veljko Kadijević proposes that the Presidency of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia demand that the Constitutional Court declare the multi-party elections in Slovenia and

407 Bebler, 1994: 353.

408 Bebler, 1993: 65; Glenny, 1999: 653–655.

409 Jović, 1996: 138.

Croatia as unconstitutional. Naturally!”⁴¹⁰ When the military leadership realized that Serbia would not support it, it considered the use of force. “It has been ensured that control can be exerted over everything, in the shortest time possible, in all critical parts of the country, especially in Croatia and Slovenia”⁴¹¹ Yet, in reality of all the plans for military intervention only the immobilization of the Territorial Defense weapons was realized: on May 15 these weapons were ordered to be transported to warehouses controlled by the Yugoslav People’s Army. Thus, the Territorial Defense of Croatia (except for 3 municipalities in Herzegovina) as well as the Territorial Defense of Slovenia (except for 13 municipalities) was completely disarmed. At the same time, this led to a significant political conflict, triggering the urgent defense self-organization of both republics and purchases of weapons in the grey/black market.⁴¹²

Thus, the military leadership could only refer to the question of the internal relations between the Yugoslav republics to legitimate its interventions in the state politics. The Army was resolutely opposed to any confederate system, especially as its representatives kept emphasizing that in such a system the Army’s role and structure would have to change as well. It was truly afraid of ‘republican armies’, not just in principle but also because of the division of its own forces between the individual armies. However, as the military leadership had noticed that nobody was paying much attention to its warnings and wishes, it started to discuss how to resolve the crisis with an intervention intended to allow for a new social contract to preserve the state. As it happened, the Army leadership – Kadijević and his closest associates – did not have it in them to opt for a violent resolution of the crisis. Throughout 1990 and in the first half of 1991 they sought political allies order to accomplish their political goals. Neither the State Presidency nor any other federal institutions could provide such support. The military leadership thus refrained from any interventions yet kept making repeated threats and considerable political demands.

The holding of the Slovenian referendum on independence in December 1990 led the Yugoslav military leadership to consider another attempt of preparing a military intervention. Leaders of the military drew up several scenarios, but these were still relatively poorly prepared in an operational sense. The Army’s problem with addressing the crisis with a military coup always stemmed from its doubt

410 Jović, 1995: 136.

411 Jović, 1995: 139.

412 Mikulič, 2007: 61.

over to attempt this in the entire state or just a few of the republics; namely, to also harm its political ally Milošević or make its Yugoslav all-state position very problematic by intervening at most in just one or two republics.⁴¹³

The Army found an excuse in the activities of the Croatian defense leadership and their illegal importing of weapons for the Croatian armed formations. The scenario began on January 9, 1991, when the federal Presidency called on the citizens and republics to surrender all weapons in the possession of illegal groups – particularly the Croatian and Slovenian paramilitary units – to the Yugoslav People's Army. The military leadership lifted the status of the Yugoslav People's Army to battle readiness.⁴¹⁴

The 'soft coup' in March 1991

At the behest of the Serbian authorities, the Army intervened in the demonstrations held in Belgrade, organized by the opposition. The military leadership – which had renamed itself the Supreme Command, the military/political leadership in the case of a war threat and during wartime – demanded that a session of the State Presidency be convened on March 12, 1991. Members of the Presidency from the western republics wondered whether to participate in it at all. As it was, the majority of politicians predicted the Yugoslav People's Army might arrest those State Presidency Members it did not support and hence carry out a takeover of power. Yet, at the session the military leadership demanded that the six members who were present support introduce a state of emergency to bestow special powers on the Army. Under great psychological pressure (the session was held on the premises of the state military command on Užiška ulica street in Belgrade), the vote was ultimately unfavorable for the military leadership as it failed to secure the majority of votes. The military leaders then resorted to another move: to conduct a military coup independently, with its own forces and simultaneously using external support.⁴¹⁵

On March 13, the Minister of the Army travelled secretly to Moscow for a discussion with the Soviet Minister of Defense Dimitry Yazov. The meeting was

413 Janša, 1994: 63–68.

414 Pirjevec, 2003: 410–411.

415 Silber, Little, 1996: 69–71.

no doubt disappointing: Yazov withheld any support, stating he could not even bring things under control in his own country. Still, the Yugoslav Minister of the Army remained at least somewhat optimistic as the Soviet prediction that the Western forces would not intervene in Yugoslavia in the event of a takeover of power instilled in him an ever more realistic hope that an independent intervention could be successful.

As witnesses report, a day later the Secretary of Defence met with the Serbian leadership, worried about the protest of the Serbian opposition in Belgrade, while confirming that the Army would take over power in the state. "In the presence of General Adžić, Veljko literally said: 'Let's go for a military coup'... I asked him what he meant by a military coup. He answered that the Government and the Presidency would be replaced. That he wouldn't touch the Assembly, but that he wouldn't tolerate any protests either. The governments of the individual republics and everything else would not be touched in case they support the coup. Otherwise, they'd be removed as well. Slobodan did not ask anything or make any comments.... After I heard what Veljko had to say, I told him that I'd resign on the following day, after the session... I'd give the Army room for action. I'd also talk to Nenad Bućin (Montenegro) and Jugoslav Kostić (Vojvodina) in order to get them to do the same."⁴¹⁶

The session of the Supreme Command and the Presidency was announced to be continued on 15 March. In order to prevent an intervention by the Presidency against the military leadership, the Serbian Member and President of the Presidency told General Kadijević that he would resign if the Presidency failed to vote to declare a state of emergency. The Presidency failed to do so once again, and the President of Presidency Jović resigned "in order to make room for the Army".⁴¹⁷ He publicly explained his resignation – the coordinated resignation of all three Serbian Members of the Presidency – by stating that he did not want to take part in an institution that "strives to tie the hands of the Yugoslav People's Army" and "has expressed obvious distrust in the state's armed forces"⁴¹⁸, even if "the Yugoslav People's Army or the state's armed forces do not have any tasks or intentions to become involved in political life or influence the decision-making process with regard to the future of

416 Jović, 1995: 296.

417 Jović, 1995: 306.

418 Jović, 1996: 306.

the state.”⁴¹⁹ Milošević then stated that “in these circumstances he no longer acknowledged any decisions taken by the Presidency of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and that he would not participate in its work (in terms of the function of replacing the Members of the Presidency from Serbia)”.⁴²⁰ However, even in the following days the military leadership refrained from any direct attempts to take over the state leadership. The Army prepared fresh analyses showing they had no legal basis for their intentions, despite the actions of the Serbian side.⁴²¹ Jović wrote that “They seemed very strange. If they took all of these analyses into account when they told us that they had decided for a military coup, it is unclear how they had made that decision. If they failed to keep all of this in mind, then they were not serious”.⁴²²

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This led the Serbian leadership to turn its back on the Army and focus on another strategy, limited to the Serbian sphere of interest. The Minister of Defense, General Veljko Kadijević, was allegedly particularly unsure and unable to handle such decisions. Admiral Mamula described him as a general who executed orders, not one who issued them.⁴²³ The dedication of the military leadership to Yugoslavism and its outlook on the crisis was an additional factor. General Kadijević even believed that the nations which did not want to be part of Yugoslavia should not be forced to do so. Finally, the Yugoslav People’s Army or the organizers of the coup would not have any external support for their actions.

After the introduction of a state of emergency was delayed in the second half of March 1991, the focus shifted away from the Army to the political opponents. The military leadership was no longer being discussed. Yet, in what were already different circumstances, on June 25, 1991 the military leadership found political support to realize what it had been aspiring to for a long time: to make a limited military intervention aimed at preventing independence being attained by the republics of Slovenia and Croatia. As events transpired, this was no longer a military coup, despite some foreign countries still seeing it as such.

419 Jović, 1996: 305.

420 Jović, 1996: 306.

421 Jović, 1995: 308–309.

422 Jović, 1995: 310.

423 Mamula, 2000: 216.

Consequences of the delegitimized armed forces in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

The fading of supranational concepts (trans-Yugoslavism) and ideas that became unacceptable to the leaderships of the republics adversely affected all elements of the legitimization of the aforementioned concepts. Thus, the National Liberation War and socialist revolution lost their importance, and consequently the link between civil society and the Army, which had appealed precisely due to the Second World War and legitimized itself as the national army, weakened. In order to nevertheless halt the diminishing legitimacy and thereby give meaning to its own survival, the Yugoslav People's Army insisted on consistent implementation of the multinational officer staff structure as well as direct communication with the civilian environment. None of these efforts were successful. The former was impossible in a practical sense as neither Slovenians nor Croatians had any motivation (with few exceptions) to attend military academies and thus join the officer staff. At the same time, this meant that not everyone held the same potential to advance to the highest ranks given that the officers did not have equal possibilities of advancing to the ranks of generals due to the republican quotas. As far as communication was concerned, the result was even worse, since the military system had been closed for years and communication was being carried out indirectly through both the Supreme Commander and the Communist Party due to deep politicization of the Armed Forces. This meant the Army was unable to either meet the communication challenges in the liberal 1980s or deal with the provocations of the young generations.

The direct delegitimization of the armed forces caused its alienation from the environment of civil society, which in turn spurred a rapid rise in the number of people not wishing to take part in the compulsory military service. Despite tough sanctions for dissidence, the question of the alternative of doing civilian service caused a serious social conflict between the youth (especially Slovenian) and the rigid military leadership. With its stubbornness, the YPA made an important mistake by persisting with the standpoint that a handful of dissidents could threaten the functional imperative of the armed forces. Accordingly, it publicly expressed doubt in its own fighting ability and strength. All of this also brought another consequence: the mobilization of movements in civil society that immediately expanded the confrontation between the Army and young people to certain other fields, notably two of them: the economic and the national aspects. The

disintegration of the armed forces' legitimacy led to almost desperate attempts to demonstrate the military power violently and hence indirectly discipline civil society. This proved to be fatal over an extended duration of 10 years. Such behavior triggered the final and complete breakdown of relations between the YPA and the citizens of the individual republics, who understood the acts of violence – which the Army had attempted to legitimize as crucial for maintenance of the state's territorial integrity and preservation of the social system – as acts of open aggression. This led to a state of war in which the YPA assumed the role of hostile occupation forces.

Last but not least, not being able to confront Milošević's increasingly nationalism and not acting according to the Yugoslav Constitution – defending the internal social order and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, the YPA was doomed as a state army that had gradually changed into the army of Serb violent expansionism engaging in heavy violations of international law and atrocities against humanity.

FROM COMPATRIOTS TO ENEMIES

On three occasions in the 20th century, the Slovenian nation and its leadership were in a position where Slovenia had to enter a war: in 1914, 1941, and 1991. However, only on the last occasion was this difficult decision to be made by the national representatives/elites. In 1914, the decision was reached by the leadership of the common Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, whereas in 1941 the leadership of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was at the helm. In 1991 – one day following the declaration of independence – the Slovenian state leadership had to decide by itself.

On June 26, 1991, the first tanks and soldiers of the Yugoslav People's Army left the barracks with the goal of occupying the border crossings of the Republic of Slovenia that had declared its independence the day before, and thereby protect the integrity of the Yugoslav state. Although units of the YPA used force to remove obstacles and roadblocks, the leadership of the Slovenian state adhered to its decision not to use armed force for one more day. This 'strategy of delay' was crucial for emphasizing the clear line between the defenders, i.e., the Slovenian defense forces, and the aggressors, i.e., the YPA. As late as at the quite dramatic session of the presidency and government of the Republic of Slovenia held on the morning of June 27, Slovenia made the decision to also defend itself with weapons.⁴²⁴

Such delay could have been fatal since in the initial stages of the conflict the initiative was left to the YPA. Simultaneously delaying the adoption of such an important imperative reduced the morale of the Slovenian defense forces. Nevertheless, Slovenian the leadership was not indecisive: the delay was caused by the gravity of the decision to enter into war yet was also a result of the agreed-upon and planned protraction. Despite labelling the Yugoslav armed forces' intervention an act of aggression against an independent state, the decision to organize an armed defense required many questions still open at the time to be resolved. Further, the following issues had to be addressed: various fields of international law, the actual battle preparedness of the defense system of the Slovenian state, the geostrategic situation in both the region and Europe, and the lack of reliable

424 Guštin, 2002: 191–214; Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 105–107; Repe, 2002: 286–289.

information concerning the plans and decisions of the political leadership of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the military leadership of the YPA.

Circumstances in 1989 and 1990

The process of Slovenia attaining its independence began in the late 1980s. The Yugoslav political crisis was seen as a constitutional crisis.⁴²⁵ The circumstances in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia intensified critically as early as in March 1988 when the political leaders of Slovenia prevented the move of the Yugoslav military leadership, which was trying to politically interpret the democratization in Slovenia as a counterrevolution in order to justify the need for a military and political intervention in Slovenia. The first serious public tensions followed in June 1988 when the Slovenian and Yugoslav federal authorities held completely opposed attitudes to the first mass protests against the arrest and trial of four persons charged with revealing a classified military document.⁴²⁶

All of these intensifications were reflected in the major process: the constitutional emancipation of Slovenia. While the Yugoslav constitutional order was federal, it lacked direct means for enforcing a single constitutional order. Slovenia took advantage of this situation so as to draw up changes to its own constitutional order according to its aspirations for greater independence and control over matters that the Yugoslav state was no longer able to manage. In light of the serious political crisis, in September 1989 Slovenia introduced numerous constitutional changes in the form of constitutional amendments, allowing it to legally secede from the socialist system.⁴²⁷ Based on these amendments, the political forces of the regime and the opposition agreed (*a roundtable process*) on holding multi-party elections. In this manner, Slovenia was gradually able to establish a system allowing it to abolish the previous communist self-management system and hold multi-party elections.⁴²⁸ One of the initial and decisive factors that led the state leadership of the Republic of Slovenia to believe this new state would have to be defended was the widespread suspicion that the Yugoslav military

425 Repe, 2001: 47–50.

426 Žerdin, 1997; Balažic, 2004.

427 Repe, 1999: 137–154; Balažic, 2004.

428 Repe, 2001: 51–67.

leadership, supported by a faction among the political leadership, would resort to using military force to bring a halt to the intensifying Yugoslav crisis, namely, that it would carry out a softer or harder coup d'état. It should be noted that the specific system of national defense in Yugoslavia meant that not all defense structures were controlled by the state and directly by the military leadership of the federal state. Instead, they were at least partially controlled by the leaderships of the individual republics. This was made possible by the system put in place in 1968, which divided the defense capabilities of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia into state and territorial forces. The latter were equipped, trained, and organized in all aspects by the individual republics of the Yugoslav Federation⁴²⁹.

Already during the elections, when it was clear that the Slovenian opposition would win convincingly, the Yugoslav military leadership attempted to lower the security risk by taking a passive measure. It ordered the removal of Territorial Defense weapons and their storage in warehouses under YPA supervision. The action was mostly successful, even though success in Slovenia was relative given that the Territorial Defense and other bodies still had quite a large quantity of weapons left in their possession. Only 30% of all weaponry remained in the possession of the Territorial Defense.⁴³⁰ The Slovenian leadership had achieved a high level of internal political consolidation and started to prepare its own defense capabilities in the event that the emancipated state would need to be protected by armed forces. In just 3 months, between July and September 1990, Slovenia clandestinely established a substitute defense system – the Maneuver Structure of National Defense, including 30,000 men and ensuring weapons for them. At the same time, the Slovenian political leadership warned the Presidency of the

429 The 1968 military intervention of the Soviet Union in Czechoslovakia was an important reason for the reformation of the defense capabilities of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In the same year, the Federal Assembly of the SFRY adopted the legislation that transferred some of the jurisdictions in the field of defense to the individual republics. Thus, the Territorial Defense of the Republic of Slovenia was also established. Although the Territorial Defense units were envisioned as a territorial component and organization supporting the otherwise federal Yugoslav People's Army in a certain territory, the differences between the Territorial Defense in the individual republics in the SFRY were considerable. The Socialist Republic of Slovenia allocated the greatest volume of financial resources to the constant training, education, arming, and all-round organizing of the Slovenian Territorial Defense. Therefore, in terms of quality the Slovenian Territorial Defense notably differed from the rest of the Territorial Defense organizations in the other republics. At the beginning of 1990, approximately 75,000 reservists were mobilized and assigned to the Slovenian Territorial Defense units (Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 21–96).

430 Mikulič, 2007.

Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that any violent operations or interventions by the YPA would be deemed to be hostile acts.⁴³¹ And vice versa: the YPA gave assurances that it would only use force to intervene in the political and constitutional transformation of Yugoslavia should it be attacked.⁴³² However, it also was worried that it would be dissolved and that ‘republican armies’ would be established, while indirectly it was held captive by the dominant communist principles.

The growing tensions led to the belief that civil war would soon break out in Yugoslavia. As it was generally thought that Yugoslavia would disintegrate with or without Slovenia, the Slovenian political elite decided to take further steps in order to attain the independence of the state. On July 4, 1990, the Slovenian Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Sovereignty of Slovenia.⁴³³ This provided a clear message to the Yugoslav state authorities and the other republics that the only acceptable solution for Slovenia was a confederation or an independent state. The sharp political reaction to the declaration of sovereignty caused considerable polarization of the outlooks on the future path of the country that was falling apart.⁴³⁴ Slovenia then started to build its own defense system (and planned to establish the Army of the Republic of Slovenia), but adapted this plan to the framework of the Territorial Defense – simply because from the viewpoint of the Yugoslav defense system this military formation was legal. Slovenia began acquiring additional weapons abroad illegally⁴³⁵.

The Slovenian political elite was expecting Yugoslavia to disintegrate with or without Slovenia (in November 1990, the CIA also published a similar analysis on Yugoslavia’s probable dissolution within 18 months). As the political elite was unable to draw up and adopt a new constitution quickly enough, it decided to call a referendum at which the population would decide whether it agreed to the establishing of an independent state.

Therefore, a national referendum on December 23, 1990, was agreed to be held as a new step on the path to independence. At this referendum, the population of Slovenia was to vote in favor of the establishment of an independent state.

431 Letter of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia to the Presidency of the SFRY, December 5, 1990. AS 1944, ARS SI); Janša, 1992: 68.

432 Minutes of the 21st session of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia, November 26, 1990. AS 1944, ARS, SI.

433 Pesek, 2007: 186–196.

434 Ibid., 205–206; Repe, 2002: 185.

435 Šurc and Zgaga, 2011: 80–85.

This is precisely what happened, and with an overwhelming binding majority of 89%. Following the referendum, Slovenia itself set the deadline for realizing this decision: half a year, that is, by June 26, 1991.⁴³⁶ The attempts to discuss the federation's dissolution with the other republics were unsuccessful. Only Croatia accepted the Slovenian suggestion and argued for the setting up of a confederacy.

After 1991, the Slovenian state leadership was pursuing a policy with two main goals: to politically prepare for independence; and to simultaneously build a defense system to hopefully reduce the security risk following the proclamation of independence as much as possible. Minister of Defense Janez Janša was in the center of the efforts to build this system. His outlook on the preparations was that the use of force during the emancipation process was a very real possibility. Therefore, in his opinion, "the fact that we are not preparing seriously enough for a possible conflict is a serious deficiency".⁴³⁷ As a politician, he was one of those members of the Slovenian political elite calling for the military strengthening of Slovenia, and crucially influenced the direction and development of Slovenian national security planning in the period before the proclamation of independence. Janša later published his strategic plans from the beginning of 1991, which showed that Slovenia was simultaneously preparing for several scenarios after proclaiming independence: high-risk (military intervention by the YPA), medium-risk (limited military intervention by the YPA), and low-risk scenarios (military pressures without intervention).⁴³⁸

The fundamental dilemma was over to what degree the use of weapons should be included in the plan of declaring Slovenian independence. It was expected that in the event of a favorable outcome the attainment of independence could also be possible without the use of arms, which was also a politically acceptable goal for the political elite. It should be underlined that the political elite was not united in its emancipation strategy. Instead, it was divided, also as far as this goal was concerned, into a more radical side and the supporters of a less aggressive, less perceptible emancipation. Some members of the political elite did not want to openly discuss the issue of the use of force, viewing this as only a remote and extreme possibility. The question of budgetary resources for the defense was addressed in this manner as well. However, the use of weapons was not excluded, nor were the defense operations in case the YPA were to intervene. The Slovenian

436 Pesek, 2007: 231–274.

437 Janša, 1992: 60.

438 Janša, 1992: 108–116.

defense system was in its infancy and lacked expert support. The need to establish a National Security Council was identified, albeit it did not have any constitutional basis.⁴³⁹

Another way of limiting the risk was to find allies. Croatia, which found itself in a similar position, was the most important of them.⁴⁴⁰ In January 1991, following the attempt at disarming the paramilitary forces in Yugoslavia (in reality, the armed forces of Croatia and Slovenia), the situation grew increasingly tense, and the Slovenian and Croatian Ministers of Defense and Internal Affairs entered into an *ad hoc* agreement on joint defense. In the form of measures listed in eight points, the agreement stated that should the YPA intervene both republics would “use all legal means, including the Territorial Defense and the internal affairs bodies, and call for the protection and defense of the democratic system and sovereignty”, interrupt the supply of the YPA in the territory of both republics, request that the citizens of both republics leave the YPA, inform the United Nations, and demand the intervention of UN peacekeeping forces. The joint statement by the presidencies of Slovenia and Croatia issued at the time stated: “In case the armed forces of the Yugoslav People’s Army should be used in breach of the arrangements and measures of the legitimate and lawful authorities in both republics, the presidency of the Republic of Slovenia and the presidency of the Republic of Croatia will take steps within the scope of their constitutional powers”.⁴⁴¹ This also implied the use of armed forces for the defense of both republics. Yet, simultaneously, at the meetings with the federal presidency, the presidencies of all the republics agreed “that the Yugoslav crisis should be solved calmly and democratically, without resorting to the use of force.”⁴⁴²

An additional dilemma concerning the use of armed force was how this would be viewed by the international community. While the Slovenian leadership may have had limited access to international actors, it did see increasing support, especially from Austria and Germany. On February 14, 1991, the Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs of the Slovenian government met informally with

439 Minutes of the 25th session of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia, January 14, 1991. AS 1944, ARS, SI.

440 Guštin, 2008a: 85–106.

441 Minutes of the 26th session of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia, January 22, 1991. AS 1944, ARS, SI.

442 Report of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia for the Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, February 19, 1991. AS 1944, ARS, SI.

a NATO representative.⁴⁴³ However, the Slovenian leadership did not foster any false hopes regarding to the international support for the use of arms for defense purposes. It was clear that the international community mostly wanted to limit the situation to an internal Yugoslav conflict, which should also be prevented from escalating into military confrontations or civil war.⁴⁴⁴

March 1991 was a turning point also due to developments occurring on the opposing side. On March 1, YPA units intervened in Pakrac in the Republic of Croatia so as to prevent an inter-ethnic conflict, whereas on March 10 it acted against the Serbian non-communist opposition in order to keep the Serbian regime in power. At the beginning of this month, the Yugoslav military leadership had decided to take power with a soft military coup (by introducing a state of emergency across the whole of Yugoslav territory and adopting a decision on the mobilization as well as disbandment of all military forces not commanded by the Presidency of the State). Still, it failed to obtain approval for its intervention from the Yugoslav Presidency on March 12 and 14, 1991 and hence the proposed state of emergency was not introduced. Instead, the Yugoslav Presidency announced to the public that it would protect the state borders and prevent any conflicts between the Yugoslav nations or any attempts to solve the disagreements between the republics by force.⁴⁴⁵

The Slovenian state leadership publicly and as a principle stressed that the YPA had been used contrary to the wishes of the Republic of Slovenia, and that given the circumstances “all the actions and procedures required for the authorities of the Republic of Slovenia to take over the administration of all the state functions” should be expedited.⁴⁴⁶ The establishment of an operative body (the *Emergency Situation Coordinating Body*) to manage all the defense preparations was an immediate consequence of the decision that preparations were to be made for what would happen after the attainment of independence. In the end, this body, quite unusual for defense preparations, was provided for by the legislation, and pursuant to the regulations it was headed by the Minister of the Interior.⁴⁴⁷

443 Janša, 1992: 96–98.

444 Repe, 2002: 330–332.

445 Repe, 2002: 264–268.

446 Letter of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia to the Executive Council of the Republic of Slovenia, March 20, 1991, AS 1944, ARS, SI.

447 Decision of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia on the establishment of the Operative emergency situation coordinating body, March 18, 1991, AS 1944, ARS, SI.

Mid-May 1991 was high time to coordinate the standpoints and measures with respect to the achieving of Slovenian independence, which at that time was only slightly over 1 month away. The strategic discussion was held at the session of the extended Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia on May 15, 1991. The Slovenian leadership established that it was still considering several versions of the emancipation process: consensual dissolution; violent accelerated dissolution before June 26; and unilateral dissolution on June 26, 1991. There was no longer any hope that the situation could be resolved by agreement and armed conflict became ever more likely.⁴⁴⁸

Less than a month before, the Presidency had ultimately adopted the basic legislation for the new defense system. After many months of adjustment and thus delays in the Assembly, both the Defense and Protection Act and Military Service Act were finally adopted.⁴⁴⁹ The Presidency also confirmed the basic outlines of the Territorial Defense reorganization, military exercises for preparing the defense system, and the introduction of a trial military service in the Territorial Defense. The President of the Presidency established that the whole situation had boiled down to three possibilities: consensual dissolution; violent accelerated dissolution before June 26; and unilateral dissolution on June 26, 1991.⁴⁵⁰

The latter was supposedly the most sensitive option, entailing the possibility of violent interventions. The Minister of Foreign Affairs predicted that a civil war in Yugoslavia was a very realistic possibility, while Slovenia's emancipation bothered certain factors of international politics precisely due to the strategic struggle for Western Europe's eastern border, as Slovenian independence would lead to the disintegration of the unified Yugoslav position. The Minister of Defense stated that the project group for defense and security had already drawn up an analysis of necessary measures before May 1, 1991 and prepared the steps that would have to be taken by the Presidency or partly by the Assembly. The (political and military) pact with Croatia was quite complex. Several members of the Presidency believed that on one hand cooperation with Croatia in the emancipation efforts meant a decreased security risk since the YPA forces would have to divide YPA military capacities between both republics and for that would be much more fragmented. However, on the other hand, this cooperation involved great

448 Minutes of the 37th session of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia, May 15 1991, AS 1944, ARS, SI.

449 Janša, 1992: 98–107; Guštin, 2011: 254–257.

450 Minutes of the 37th session of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia, May 15, 1991, AS 1944, ARS, SI.

political risk for the Slovenian position, given that an “immediate civil war and the opening of the complete front in Yugoslavia” was a very real possibility. Thus, Slovenia would only represent a single segment of this civil war and thus might be seen by the international community as (co)responsible for the bloodshed as it had failed to exhaust all of the options for negotiations.⁴⁵¹

A week later, on May 21, the state leadership discussed the level of preparations for the functioning of the independent Slovenian state. The President of the Presidency underlined that certain decisions might also imply the defense of Slovenia through armed force. The Minister of Defense explained that the Slovenian guidelines were to deploy some of its armed forces to protect the vital facilities and control the borders. “However, nothing, by any means, compels us to be the first to use force or to effectively take overpower by force in any area.”⁴⁵² Slovenia could not afford to cause an armed conflict because it did not have the necessary forces at its disposal. Yet, according to the order of the President of the Presidency concrete measures had not been discussed, not even with the state leadership. Ultimately, the President simply reminded the state leadership that the possibility of war existed, but that Slovenia had been preparing to take steps in order to “overcome the danger of war”.⁴⁵³

Only 3 days later, the situation grew tense in Maribor where one of the two centers for the trial training of recruits was operating. YPA forces surrounded the center, demanding that the recruits and officers surrender, and even arrested the regional Territorial Defense commander.⁴⁵⁴ The state leadership estimated that in line with the Slovenian strategic goals it was better not to respond to this YPA challenge by using force. Instead, it introduced several preventive measures already prepared earlier with the aim of obstructing the YPA: the YPA military barracks were disconnected from the electricity power and water supply network, and the mobilization of special Territorial Defense units was carried out.⁴⁵⁵ The state leadership also assessed that the state and political elements of the attaining of independence should not rely on the defense measures, and that all of these aspects should instead be carried out simultaneously. The reaction supposedly

451 Ibid.

452 Minutes of the 39th session of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia, May 21, 1991, AS 1944, ARS, SI.

453 Ibid.

454 Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 176–187.

455 Minutes of the 40th session of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia, May 24, 1991, AS 1944, ARS, SI.

depended on the strategic estimates of the YPA's activities in the last week of May – whether they were simply provocations or actual preparations for an attempt to prevent the emancipation process by force. Certain members of the state leadership theorized that although military defense measures may have been prepared, political measures should also be taken since the situation was very unfavorable as the Presidency of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was not functioning and the YPA no longer had a supreme commander. However, the state leadership did not decide to activate the population politically (via mass gatherings), which could have held negative implications. Instead, only a gathering of political parties under the motto For Peace and Independent Slovenia! was organized.⁴⁵⁶

Shortly before the attainment of independence, international circumstances worsened for Slovenia. The international community was worried about the possible consequences of the declaration of two new states in the territory of Yugoslavia. During visits by European leaders, especially the European Community countries as well as U.S. Secretary of State James Baker in mid-June 1991, the pressure was ratcheted up against all the state elites in Yugoslavia.⁴⁵⁷ The leaders urged Yugoslavia to solve the problem internally and offered their goodwill along with concrete material assistance on the condition that the republics put a stop to the process of transforming themselves into independent countries.⁴⁵⁸ The Slovenian leadership assumed that the international community would even be willing to tolerate a military intervention by the YPA in Slovenia if that were supported by the Yugoslav government. As far as can be discerned from the messages during the visit by Jacques Santer and Jacques Delors to Belgrade (the Slovenian leadership's presence here was limited), the European Economic Community was concerned that European security would be threatened as they obviously feared the Yugoslav conflict would lead to war and accordingly saw the independence efforts of Slovenia from this viewpoint. Therefore, Slovenia urgently had to do everything to discourage the appearance and accusations that its secession would be the cause of a civil war in Yugoslavia. Nonetheless, Slovenia also could not give the impression that it was derogating from its independence project.⁴⁵⁹

456 Minutes of the 41st session of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia, May 29, 1991, AS 1944, ARS, SI.

457 Repe, 2002: 334–335.

458 Repe, 2002: 337–338.

459 Minutes of the 41st session of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia, May 29 and 31, 1991, AS 1944, ARS, SI.

On June 4, 1991, the presidents of the government and Presidency of Slovenia met in Belgrade with the president of the federal government Ante Marković and defense minister General Veljko Kadijević to discuss the situation. They discovered that since that moment the YPA's role was merely "to prevent the possibility of violent and armed conflicts in the process of resolving the crisis."⁴⁶⁰ The Army would hence only carry out peacekeeping tasks. However, the Slovenian side stressed that the YPA should demonstrate this new role and actually stop supporting the Serbian agenda of Milošević, thus bringing a halt to the distrust. In this respect, the Slovenian representatives demanded an explanation of the military exercise with the code name "Bedem", based on the scenario of an attack against Yugoslavia and deployment of the Army along the state's western borders. Yet, the explanations were unconvincing, thereby adding to the distrust on the Slovenian side. It was clear to everyone that should Slovenia unilaterally declare its secession and independence, the Army would intervene according to the Bedem guidelines. Still, it was up to the Slovenian side to assess whether it would be capable of such an intervention.⁴⁶¹ It was in fact quite difficult for Slovenia to make this assessment since the information provided by the intelligence services was uncertain at best.

Final decision on use of the Slovenian defense capacities

Less than a month before the day of declaring its independence, the Presidency of Slovenia ultimately adopted the basic legislation for the new defense system. After many months of adjustment and hence delays in the Assembly, in March and April 1991 both the Defense and Protection Act and Military Service Act were finally adopted. The Presidency also confirmed the basic outlines of the

460 Minutes of the 42nd session of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia, June 1991, AS 1944, ARS, SI.

461 Minutes of the 42nd session of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia, 5 June 1991, AS 1944, ARS, SI.

Territorial Defense reorganization, along with the introduction of trial military service in the Territorial Defense.⁴⁶²

The latter was supposedly the most sensitive option, creating possibilities for violent interventions. The Minister of Foreign Affairs predicted that a civil war in Yugoslavia was a very real possibility. Certain factors of international politics suggested that Slovenian independence would lead to the disintegration of the unified Yugoslav position, he added.⁴⁶³

Due to the security problems, the Presidency decided to implement the final declaration of independence one day earlier, on June 25. Soon before that moment, the final decisions were also reached. It was more or less clear that the unilateral declaration of independence would not proceed without incidents. On June 21, the Presidency of Slovenia approved a decision on the implementation of measures for the preparedness and protection of the sovereignty of the Republic of Slovenia, yet only provided for a partial mobilization of Territorial Defense members and the introduction of a state of emergency. Slovenian activities were very reserved in line with the plan not to provoke a conflict.⁴⁶⁴ However, already on the day before the declaration of independence intelligence information showed that the military leadership had decided to intervene with limited support from the Federal Executive Council (Yugoslav government), which was actually not at all competent to make any decisions on the use of military force or in relation to war.

On June 25, 1991, Slovenia adopted legislation on the declaration of the independent state of Slovenia.⁴⁶⁵ Already a few hours prior, acts on independence had also been adopted by the Republic of Croatia.⁴⁶⁶ For Yugoslavia, the declaration of two independent countries in its territory (officially still the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) on June 25, 1991 was certainly a development bringing its very existence into question. Supported by the federal government, the YPA intervened with the goal of occupying the borders. As it became known later, the YPA's intervention plan anticipated that all border crossings in Slovenia would be taken over by until 15:00 on June 27, 1991.⁴⁶⁷

462 Guštin, 2011: 254–257.

463 Rupel, 1992: 135–137.

464 Minutes of the 43th session of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia, 21 June 1991, AS 1944, ARS, SI.

465 Pesek, 2007: 372–384.

466 Radelić, Marijan and Barić, Nikica (eds.), 2006; Nikolić and Petrović (eds.), 2012: 35–36.

467 Nikolić and Petrović (eds.), 2012: 38–41, 88–95.

On the afternoon of June 26, 1991, two motorized columns of the YPA, including tanks, departed from the Pivka and Ilirska Bistrica barracks and headed towards Koper and Nova Gorica. En route to their intended destinations, the military columns encountered two factors signifying that events would also develop differently to what had been expected: improvised road blocks and protests by the local population along the way.⁴⁶⁸ Early in the morning of June 27, other motorized columns of the YPA left their garrisons in Slovenia and in the neighboring Croatia and moved towards the border crossings and the Ljubljana airport.⁴⁶⁹

After receiving the initial news about the YPA's movements, the Presidency of Slovenia together with the presidents of the parliament and the government as well as the most important ministers gathered to review the situation. Even though in individual cases units of the YPA had used force so as to remove obstacles and roadblocks, the Slovenian state leadership only decided then on the use of arms. Notwithstanding that the session was quite dramatic, there was no real hesitancy to use force at the right moment. According to reports made by the Ministers of Defense and Interior, the communication to the commanding General Konrad Kolšek stated that the intervention was "deemed as an attack against Slovenia, that the challenge has been accepted, and that the attack will be met by force".⁴⁷⁰ The Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia still waited another 2 hours for the outcome of telephone negotiations and the potential termination of the intervention. Mid-morning, the Presidency passed a decision "ordering the deployment of the Territorial Defense to protect facilities and communications." Slovenian defense forces were given the instructions that "in case of contact with the YPA they should open fire."⁴⁷¹ Territorial Defense commanders interpreted the orders in the sense that they could only use arms if the YPA units opened fire first, and they acted in this manner until late afternoon. At that point, after several interventions and explanations of the Slovenian defense leadership, a different interpretation prevailed: that force should be used to prevent the YPA from achieving its goals.⁴⁷²

468 Križan, Horvatič and Hožič (eds.), 1992: 29–40, 54–56, 109–118; Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 293–298.

469 Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 207–215, 255–256, 326–341.

470 Minutes of the 44th session of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia, 27. June 1991. AS 1944, ARS, SI.

471 Territorial Defence of Slovenia Headquarter circular, 27 June 1991. AS 1944, ARS, SI.

472 Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 105–107.

The Presidency resolved to inform the public about this decision, while it recalled Slovenian citizens and all Slovenians from the YPA units. Nevertheless, it also decided to demand that Marković, the President of the federal government, to immediately terminate all of the YPA's military activities. Regardless of these efforts, during the afternoon session the Presidency established that the YPA was intensifying its military activities. Potential negotiations remained an option, but only on the condition that the military operations were suspended. At 19:00, General Brovet, assistant to the Federal Minister of Defense, informed the public that the YPA had accomplished the envisioned goals and that the intervention was thus complete. Still, the Slovenian side did not agree with this interpretation and thus a counterattack by the Slovenian defense forces was ordered.⁴⁷³ The war started.

473 Minutes of the 44th session of the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia, 27 June 1991. AS 1944, ARS, SI; Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 123–125.

INFORMATION WARFARE AS A PRECONDITION FOR MILITARY SUCCESS

The process of the disintegration of the socialist regimes in Europe at the end of the 1980s included Yugoslavia, even though Yugoslavia shared only a similar socialist state system with the socialist military-political camp in the Warsaw Pact. The crisis in the country had several aspects: it was an economic crisis, a leadership crisis (as the first generation of long-term leaders was just changing) and a management crisis. In the complex federative-confederate state system, republics were defined as (national) states. In practice, however, the autonomous provinces Kosovo and Vojvodina were part of Serbia and at the same time had almost the federal status. The ruling political elite in the League of Communists of Yugoslavia was able to perceive the crisis but was unable to set up active mechanisms for its elimination, as the elites did not want to accept the main consequences of a full market economy and a multi-party-political system. Yugoslavia was completely ineffective in carrying out the initiated reforms, both due to internal (political and ideological) inhibitions and differing visions of a new arrangement regarding the political system, economic management, and federal arrangement, as defined by individual republican political elites. Internal differences led to intense political conflicts between the independent republics and the federal authorities, the breakup of the ruling party (League of Communists of Yugoslavia, LCY) and, ultimately, the collapse of the country and war. These processes were all accompanied by an intense media war.

Information warfare

In the field of information warfare, it is absolutely vital to understand that information is a weapon. Disposing of it, mediating it, containing it and manipulating it through various lenses represent a decisive influence on the management and success of warfare, and thus the probability of winning a war. Information warfare has accompanied humanity since the very beginning. Even Sun Tzu claimed

in his book *The Art of War* that warfare is the art of deception⁴⁷⁴. For this deception to be successful, it is necessary to control the flow of information. Here, the collection, critical analysis and evaluation of information, as well as measured action based on these acts, are of decisive importance. Essential in information warfare is not only the interception of information but also the verification of its credibility. The adversary will, if possible, use the deliberate transmission of incorrect information, which may lead to incorrect decisions.

The development of mass media has added a new perspective to information. If, in the past, it was possible to somehow control information, nowadays it is almost impossible. However, it is precisely this role of the media, which must be understood as transmitters of information to people or users, that also exposes the media in the field of information warfare. The media, and with them, journalists, have become the targets of war efforts because in the event of war, the creation of support in society for the efforts of soldiers on the battlefield plays an exceptional role. The media have played and still play a decisive role in shaping this support and, at the same time, influence the mobilization of society. An even more important role of the media has proved to be in the field of demonizing the other side, that is, the opposing side, and trying to dehumanize them.⁴⁷⁵

Information warfare involves the use and management of information and communication technology (ICT) in the battlespace with the aim of gaining a competitive advantage over an adversary. Information warfare can be conducted in parallel with or before a military conflict in order to weaken the morale or the political or military will of an adversary.⁴⁷⁶

The term information warfare refers to both using information itself and attacks on information as means of warfare. It includes the transfer of information to the opponent with the aim of convincing them of something or denying already collected information.⁴⁷⁷ Due to this, it is extremely important to control information and to always create limited access for all who are not entitled to it. Information warfare is therefore studied in three dimensions or aspects: political-doctrinal, organizational and technological.⁴⁷⁸

474 Tzu, 2022: 62.

475 Whyte, 2020: 2–5.

476 Hočevar, 2009: 12.

477 Miklavčič, 2007.

478 Steve Fredericks, in Svete, 2005: 118.

The role of the state doctrine is an essential element of the development of and is a complement to an information warfare strategy. Analysis of transformation and change in the armed forces is also important. The technological aspect indicates the practical applicability of the concepts and their implications for the actual development and outcome of contemporary conflicts. Information warfare is therefore inextricably linked to the operation of intelligence and counterintelligence organizations, which collect, analyse and (after verification) forward this type of information to decision-makers. Essential work in the field of information warfare relates to purposeful deception and the forwarding of information to the opposite side.⁴⁷⁹

In contrast to information warfare, propaganda war is significantly different in terms of content, as it is primarily related to the effort to influence and shape public opinion towards the desires of decision-makers. While a high level of professionalism applies to information warfare, the reliability of the information itself is not essential for propaganda; in fact, propaganda is generally based on the misrepresentation of information and on the manipulation and conscious deception of the masses. In order to achieve their goals, decision-makers often create and mobilize the public media, through which their stated goals are achieved. Only journalistic professionalism - can prevent extensive manipulation.⁴⁸⁰

From media war to civil war

In the 1980s, internal disagreements regarding solutions to the political and economic crises in Yugoslavia deepened to the extent that the previously tightly controlled media began, with the permission of or even coordination with the political authorities, to express themselves critically about the views and actions of other republican leaders and federal authorities, as well as gradually and in dosed amounts about the problems of their own environments. This made a strong impression on the public, which was not at all used to receiving such open information, and it instigated a strong response. This was especially true since the economic crisis had objectively worsened people's economic situations

479 Seib, 2021: 13.

480 Osgood, 2006: 16.

and increased their sensitivity to the issues.⁴⁸¹ The media were “socially” owned, politically controlled and directed through the political organization the Socialist Union of Working People, which in each republic appointed media directors for newspapers, television and radio stations.⁴⁸² In the mid-1980s, the unified information system in Yugoslavia, including radio and television, quietly disintegrated into eight republican and provincial centres, which could hardly agree on urgent joint projects.⁴⁸³

In the media space, only a few newsletters chose independence, including *Mladina*, the newsletter of the League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia; *Nova revija* from Ljubljana; *Danas*, the independent weekly from Zagreb; and the independent weekly *Vreme*, which was published in Belgrade. Many things that were published by these newsletters provoked violent reactions from the political elites, which were transmitted by the media under their control. *Mladina*, for example, by reporting on the private affairs of the minister of defence and, in particular, the plans for the arrest of anti-regime persons, caused severe political tightening at the very top of the government and attempts to discipline the editorial staff of the magazine.⁴⁸⁴ The media under the control of the new Serbian political-state leader, Slobodan Milošević, in particular became more and more aggressive and manipulative. The designed content of the propaganda followed nationalist concepts and, at the same time, the preservation of the communist political system.⁴⁸⁵ Attempts to cause the political leaders of the republics to agree on ending the mutual media war were unsuccessful.

By 1988, the internal political conflict in Yugoslavia had begun to take on such dimensions that the question was first raised by the public as to whether weapons would be used in the country. The first to discuss this in public identified two potential hotspots with the greatest risk: an inter-ethnic armed conflict between Serbs (in the Yugoslav structure) and Albanians in Kosovo or an inter-ethnic conflict between Serbs and Croats in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Both hotspots affected Slovenia only indirectly. However, a third perceived focal point, whether the military structure would intervene in the republic's political

481 Bizilj, 2008: 386–388.

482 Bizilj, 2008: 234–244, 290–296.

483 Ibid, 391–393.

484 Žerdin, 1997: 19–93, Bizilj, 2008: 421–430.

485 Malešič, 2008: 421–430.

differences, primarily concerned Slovenia.⁴⁸⁶ All these major political conflicts were accompanied by a fierce media war in both newspapers and audio-visual media.

Regarding the political system, the Slovenian political leadership had decided to consistently defend the existing federal system but claimed “socialism with a human face”: socialism with respect for human rights, without political repression and with a market economy. In the autumn of 1989, however, Slovenia abandoned its monistic socialist system and allowed for the establishment and operation of political parties; Slovenia amended its constitution and called for multi-party elections, which were held in April 1990. With the escalation of unrest in Yugoslavia, the political elites in Slovenia, who led Slovenia’s independence process, took the position that they would not back down from the demand for the reorganization of Yugoslavia into a confederal community.

In December 1990, the Slovenian authorities held a referendum in which the citizens of Slovenia confirmed with 89% of the vote that Slovenia should be established as an independent country within six months. This was set as the political starting point by the new ruling political group, the Democratic Opposition of Slovenia (DEMOS), which emerged from the newly formed non-communist parties. DEMOS sought to establish independence from federal institutions and Yugoslav legislation within the framework of legal options contained in the federal division of powers through numerous legal uncertainties and the possibilities of different interpretations.⁴⁸⁷ Another important goal was the exclusion of the Yugoslav armed forces from the definition of a solution to conflict; a consequence of this strategy was that public mention of the possibility of an internal armed conflict was deliberately pushed to the background. This does not mean that, against this background, the state’s elites did not design, in addition to political, economic, administrative and financial solutions for the interim period, at least an emergency autonomous defence system to defend them from the Yugoslav authorities. For this temporary Slovenia’s defence and security structure, the Territorial Defence of the Republic of Slovenia was transformed into a state army.⁴⁸⁸

Interestingly, this silencing of information made little sense, as the rest of the Yugoslav media were freely accessible to citizens. The media (newspapers, television

486 Guštin and Prebilič, 2014: , 121–136.

487 Luthar, 2008: 508–510.

488 Kladnik, 2006c: 13–22.

and radio stations) had been only somewhat independent within the framework of the socialist political system, although in the process of democratization in the late 1980s, they were winning more free space. Officially, until the elections of March 1991, these media were still at least loosely controlled by social councils and press councils, which were set up by “social political organizations”. These included the League of Communists, the Socialist Union of Working People, the League of Socialist Youth, the Trade Union Association and the Association of National Liberation War Fighters.⁴⁸⁹ It was precisely because of the substantive differences of the political elites of the republics that information was being provided in the spirit of the political agenda represented by the republican elite where the media was published. At least since 1985, the indirect political struggle in the media had become more and more popular, which greatly roused the unaccustomed public.⁴⁹⁰

In this indirect political struggle, the Yugoslav media also paid close attention to the reporting of foreign media about Yugoslavia or about individual processes and actions; of course, they mainly published topics and information that allowed them to establish a positive connotation with the views of “their” political elites. In other words, the media were only partly independent: they followed the intentions of their national or republican political elite almost without exception or doubt. The same applies to the newspapers of the recently formed oppositions in Croatia and Slovenia, both of which emerged after 1985. In order to increase its political penetration, in 1990, the Federal Executive Council founded a media source under its own influence, YuTEL Television, to promote its efforts for economic and political reforms in the Yugoslav framework.⁴⁹¹ Thus, at the culmination of its internal crisis, the media war became a permanent feature of the Yugoslav state and environment.

The Slovenian leadership was aware of the media information and propaganda war and, as part of the planning of its independence process, the leadership designed a special project for media activity. Upon the establishment of the Executive Council after the multi-party elections in March and April 1990, the ruling coalition, realizing the importance of information in this independence process, or turning point, elevated the former committee for information to a secretariat (ministry), which was charged with taking care of informing the

489 In Slovenia, the main daily, *Delo*, proclaimed itself to be “an independent newspaper for an independent Slovenia”.

490 Bizilj, 2008: 440–448.

491 Malešič, 2013: 855–878.

domestic and foreign publics. With new leadership and new tasks, this ministry was established when the government took office after the elections in March and April 1990. The prominent and experienced journalist Stane Stanič was appointed as its head. New needs were announced by a government decision in the spring of 1991, and the prime minister replaced the secretary with a new person, the deputy defence secretary at the time, Jelko Kacin.⁴⁹² Kacin's task was to speed up the formation of the information sector, to establish the Slovenian Press Agency (STA) and to prepare the media image of the declaration of independence of the Republic of Slovenia, which had been publicly planned since December 1990 and which was intended to occur by 26 June 1991 at the latest. Indeed, on 4 May 1991, the Slovenian government established the Slovenian Press Agency, which began producing information in English and Slovene on 20 June 1991.⁴⁹³

Although the Slovenian government they did not announce this publicly, they also envisaged a "black scenario" in the planning of independence. The black scenario was understood to be the possibility of an armed conflict upon the declaration of independence, or the intervention of the Yugoslav People's Army in the independence process. In the internal analysis, which was the basis for the operational guidelines, Secretary of National Defense Janša predicted the possibility of an outbreak of armed conflict with various causes and intensities. He emphasized the need for "counter-propaganda" because he predicted that military intervention would be followed by strong media support. An important perceived issue was how to ensure that the Television and radio station Ljubljana (RTV Ljubljana) would function even in the event of occupation by the YPA. The establishment of backup broadcast locations was a key point of Kacin's "nightmare", especially since he had to spread such a dark scenario very cautiously even among the participating media personnel so as not to cause panic.⁴⁹⁴

In the final three months before the end of the waiting period for the declaration of independence to occur, as aggravations became increasingly severe, it became more and more apparent that the probability of an armed conflict on or immediately after the declaration of independence was increasing, especially since the Republic of Croatia had publicly confirmed that it would become in-

492 Kacin, 2002: 276–277.

493 Kocijančič, 2001: 7–12.

494 Kacin, 2002: 277.

dependent at the same time as Slovenia. Regardless of its own strategy for legal secession, the Slovenian leadership at this time was currently strengthening relations with other parts of the country, especially the Serbian and Croatian leaderships. At the same time, they wished to emphasize that they were not involved in these hotspots, and to notify the foreign public in particular that they had a justification for their exclusion from Yugoslavia. The presentation of the increasingly unbearable situation for the Slovenian nation within Yugoslavia was an important basis for reporting to the Slovenian public as well. Thus, individual leaders, for example, President of the Executive Council of Slovenia Lojze Peterle, publicly assessed in mid-May 1991 that there was already a “real” civil war in Yugoslavia.⁴⁹⁵ Others, such as the president of the presidency of Slovenia, assessed several armed clashes in Croatia, in which 12 militia members were killed, as a dangerous escalation but refrained from using the term civil war. The editorialist of the central newspaper *Delo* stated the following:

“This is how we are with Slovenia: after the turn in the presidency of the (Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia) and Croatia, it is no longer so important whether a civil war is really raging in Yugoslavia or not. People have completely different opinions about it these days, for example, Milan Kučan and Lojze Peterle, and about whether the military leadership, now that it has at least partially (and relatively easily) “pacified” Croatia, will also intervene in Slovenian independence”.⁴⁹⁶

The military leadership was also speaking about civil war in Yugoslavia.⁴⁹⁷ The media in the country in Yugoslavia as well as in Slovenia, as well as abroad, began to announce the outbreak of civil war. In November 1990, when the American CIA publicly estimated that there would be a civil war in Yugoslavia within 18 months, a discussion contradicting the view developed. The Slovenian government mainly wanted to reassure the domestic public so that there would be no political split with those who blamed the ruling elite for acting too radically in the direction of independence.

In fact, the Slovenian political elite was publicly holding back on assessing the possibility of an armed conflict. However, in a public conversation on 12 May

495 *Delo*, May 9, 1991.

496 *Delo*, May 9, 1991.

497 *Delo*, May 8, 1991.

1991, the Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice said that Slovenia would gain independence before the set deadline for independence even if a civil war broke out.⁴⁹⁸ He ordered accelerated preparations for the possibility of military resistance, even though he qualified “that these (measures) are only preventive, that it is a preparation for a possible extreme version of events.”⁴⁹⁹

The secretary for information was working on similar scenario. The information secretary’s internal conversation with the editors of all the main media meant there would be a similar orientation. Secretary Kacin did not want or was not allowed to reveal the government’s plans, and the editors were reluctant to follow the minister’s advice on broadcasting the content upon independence or upon tightening of government controls. In the last weeks before the announced point of independence, even after the personal commitment of Secretary for Information Kacin, only the formation of at least principled views on information performance in the most sensitive time of the declaration of an independent state took place.⁵⁰⁰

The technical aspect of media activity was less conflicted. Television and radio equipment was mainly based on studio equipment, which could not be moved from the centre of Ljubljana. However, all reporting cars and mobile equipment were deployed. Additionally, an emergency studio was trained at the secured location of Poljče, about 50 km from the city. Thus, the media were technically and programmatically prepared for the possibility that the central media house would be occupied by the YPA.⁵⁰¹

Media activity was directed at two different politically important publics: the internal public, consisting of citizens and residents of the republic, and the external public. Most of these identified positively up until the planned breakthrough event, but not all of them, and even less were for armed action. Some Slovenian media focused on questions that the authorities did not like, especially whether it had actual solutions available for a range of perceived problems, such as international isolation and the disruption of economic flows and the monetary system. There was also a strong concern that fear and the panic phenomena would cause the leading group to be blamed.

498 Valič Zver, 2022: 151.

499 Valič Zver, 2022: 156.

500 Pesek, 2012: 488.

501 Pesek, 2012: 487–488.

The external public was a more complex problem, as the influence of official media coverage was significantly lower there. Even before this time period, the media war within Yugoslavia had been fierce, especially between the Serbian, Slovenian and Croatian media spaces. The television and newspaper houses of the three different republics frequently reported completely differently on what was happening in the country, including on the issues of civil war, armed conflict, and the role of the YPA. From the Slovenian point of view, the media space was quite unbalanced since a non-negligible part of the Slovenian public followed media published in Serbian and Croatian, while the effectiveness of the flow of information in the opposite direction was much worse due to the language barriers and the lower accessibility of Slovenian media.⁵⁰²

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The international public was informed about events in Slovenia and Yugoslavia only indirectly either through information services or correspondents from Slovenia. Many correspondents covered the whole of Yugoslavia, and the Serbo-Croatian and capital press had a larger share with them than with sources in Slovenia. It was therefore important for journalists and the external public to increase the credibility of information from the Slovenian point of view.⁵⁰³

The struggle to interpret the conflict

The day before the public announcement, on the evening of 25 June 1991, the Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the constitutional charter and acts of an independent state. The central state ceremony of independence had already been announced for the next day. Due to the tension in Yugoslavia and the intelligence interest in the independence announcement, foreign and domestic journalists were abundantly present in Slovenia. About 430 journalists were registered. The Slovenian secretary for information decided to establish permanent daily press conferences in order to maintain interest in official information and potentially somewhat direct the reporting. With such interpretation This was not a civil war, but an attack by an undemocratic state based in Belgrade on a newly declared state.⁵⁰⁴

502 Krog, 2020: 49–72.

503 Kacin, 2020: 277–278.

504 Pesek, 2012: 489–491.

On 26 June, when the Slovenian authorities ordered the installation of signs for the new country at the border crossings, Minister of the Interior Igor Bavčar spoke to the public. He related the verbal conflicts, threats and pointing of weapons at the change of markings at the border crossings but emphasized that no weapons were used and that the Slovenian police had no order to act offensively. At that point, the official speaker did not want to comment on the occupation of Slovenian border crossings, a standpoint that was also adopted by the federal government. He also minimized the movements of the Yugoslav People's Army along the roads in Primorska Region, where the commander of the 51st Corps of the YPA had arbitrarily carried out the received order to occupy the border crossings on the external borders of Yugoslavia.⁵⁰⁵

On the evening of 26 June, the independence ceremony was held, and the journalists were presented with independence documents and views on the tense situation. In the centre of Ljubljana, two supersonic aircraft flew as an explicit threat to the federal authorities. The ceremony of declaring the independent new country took place peacefully; it had a television and radio broadcast and a large public participation of around 10,000.⁵⁰⁶

On the morning of 27 June, the YPA continued a limited intervention through which it was supposed to occupy all the border crossings and remove those on the border with the Republic of Croatia, as had been decided by the federal government for the establishment of control over the external and customs borders. Despite all expectations for a "black scenario", the Slovenian authorities were surprised. On the morning of the same day, the state leadership, characterizing the intervention as aggression against an independent state, decided first on passive defence but with the use of weapons and then on active defence. The president of the presidency announced this decision to the public in a personal appearance on television. The definition of the intervention of the Yugoslav People's Army as an aggression towards an independent new state was considered by Slovenia to be crucial; Slovenia consistently opposed any qualification of the conflict as a civil war in Yugoslavia, as it appeared in most foreign media and also in the views of politicians abroad.⁵⁰⁷ In this, Slovenia's persistence paid off, at least in part, when the conflict was ended and the consequences were resolved.

505 Race, 2005: 38–60; Obid and Pelikan, 2003.

506 Pesek, 2012: 485–487; Bizilj, 2008: 464.

507 Pesek, 2012: 491–492.

The outbreak of armed conflict suddenly changed the tasks and mission of the journalists present. RTV Slovenia “changed its programme in an instant to TV Dnevnik”, that is, it dramatically increased its information programme.⁵⁰⁸ Programming included frequent news, reports from the sites of armed conflict, and graphic representations of the consequences of the military activities of the Yugoslav People’s Army. An important role in the information programming was given to individual members of the Slovenian political and state leadership. Basically, the programming turned into war propaganda.⁵⁰⁹ Radio stations switched to a similar scheme.⁵¹⁰

The primary role in Slovenia’s official communications was taken by the secretary for information, Jelko Kacin. Given the new circumstances, he changed the previously planned press conferences in the days following independence into conferences on martial law. In the days of fighting leading up to the truce, he carried out as many as three of these conferences a day. He claims that the concept was changed spontaneously due to his feeling for the purpose of connecting military and state political events. This was relatively easy because the military conflict was still controlled and low-intensity. Military events were, of course, the basis of the reporting and replaced official military reports. Kacin prepared for the press conferences in such a way that he assumed the role of a commentator and did not deliver them in an official manner. He made a special effort to answer even the most unfavourable journalistic questions. He was supported in terms of content by three coordinators from the secretaries of internal affairs, defence and information, who prepared the topics. In addition, he ensured that the press conferences were attended by ministers, members of the Presidency of Slovenia and other decision-makers.⁵¹¹

Press conferences with live and in-depth coverage were all the more striking because the opposing side was divided and its unity was disintegrating. The federal political leadership was either disabled (the Presidency of the SFRY dissolved on 15 May 1991) or withdrew from supporting the YPA campaign, as Prime Minister Ante Marković did on the first day of the fighting. The YPA leadership therefore closed itself off from the press and the public during the first day of the fighting, issuing only brief announcements claiming that the intervention was going

508 Bizilj, 2008: 469.

509 Kozel, 2010: 47–50.

510 Čebulj, 2014; Race, 2005: 63–67.

511 Pesek, 2012: 490–494.

according to plan. It was only after several days that the YPA began to indirectly admit the failure of its military plan and accuse the Slovenian side of treason.

From the first day of the armed conflict, the Slovenian national television and radio programs switched to 24-hour coverage of the conflict between Slovenian defence forces and the YPA and the diplomatic activities of the political leadership. Journalist teams also tried to cover the armed conflicts and their consequences. All journalists could report freely, without censorship reviews. Only television received a controlling consultant to avoid publishing militarily relevant data. A large part of the reporting included reporting on the activities of the Slovenian state leadership, and especially on their diplomatic efforts to end the armed conflict and achieve foreign support for Slovenian independence and defence. However, in search of confirmation of the legitimacy of the defence, many reports shared the reporting of foreign media or foreign journalists and correspondents from Slovenia. Although these reports may have been critical of the Slovenian side, reporters preferred to choose those that were most similar to Slovenian reporting and positions.⁵¹² Every day, a special section was published in the central newspaper with a selection of numerous foreign views, while major diplomatic events received special attention, such as the mission (troika) of the European Union, visits to the Foreign Minister of Germany Genscher and negotiations on the ceasefire in Brioni.⁵¹³

Providing full information to the public strengthened public trust in the newly formed country, according to the interlocutors who were at the centre of the events. The very public interpretation of the ongoing armed conflict initially gave the Slovenian side a desire to emphasize the intensity and scope of the conflict (secretary of defence says: 100 dead already and four helicopters shot down).⁵¹⁴ Slovenian official spokesmen abandoned exaggeration in the following days when the Slovenian forces successfully stopped the penetrations of YPA and succeeded in battle. However, the approach was still more at the level of propaganda than reporting, and demonization of the opponent became a prominent element in this propaganda. Phrases such as “the aggressor” and “the criminal Yugoslav army” (they consistently omitted the word “people’s” in public use) prevailed.⁵¹⁵

512 Kozel, 2010: 53–56.

513 Delo, June 6, 1991; July 7, 1991.

514 Delo, June 28, 1991; Bizilj, 2008: 469.

515 Kozel, 2010: 56–60.

The question that cannot yet be reliably answered is what and how much response Slovenia's communications had in the rest of Yugoslavia. There, especially in Serbia, the media war against Slovenia continued, taking on even sharper forms due to reports that its soldiers were being killed in Slovenia. However, even this propaganda about soldier deaths became its opposite when the soldiers' mothers broke into the assembly and fiercely demanded the return of their sons from Slovenia. In the Republic of Croatia, Slovenian war reporting was also monitored and restrained at the official level. Due to political requirements, the Croatian leadership claimed that the conflict had been staged and agreed upon between Serbia and Slovenia; as the president of Croatia expressed it, it was "an operetta war".⁵¹⁶

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After several failed attempts at brokering peace, the military conflict ended after 2 July 1991 with a ceasefire. The fighting remained of low intensity, and was characterized by YPA units, especially those in garrisons in Slovenia, disbanding as mass desertion began, mainly of Croatian, Slovenian and Albanian conscripts. However, the ceasefire did not mean that the information war had also ended. Instead, the information war continued long into 1991, as the ceasefire was followed by a political agreement imposed by the European community on the freezing of independence with a three-month deadline, during which it was hoped that a solution to the Yugoslav crisis would be found or, at worst, an agreement on the future form of the state would be made. It was precisely this issue that formed the central part of Slovenian propaganda as it pursued three goals: emphasizing Slovenia's military threat, depreciating the feeling of defeat in the face of the "imposed" three-month moratorium on independence and promoting its military victory.

In the project of fashioning the independence of Slovenia, communication with the public (both citizens and the external public) was key for state leaders, both for promoting their views and solutions and for rejecting propaganda and the conflicting information presented by the opposing Yugoslav factions. During the process of independence, the probability that there would be a military conflict or an intervention by the Yugoslav military forces was evident. Regardless of the ever-increasing conflict in Yugoslavia, which was defined both within the country and abroad as a danger of civil war, armed conflict did not occur in Slovenia until the establishment of its own state. Slovenia prepared for this possibility as much as it could in terms of material and military forces, as well as in the field of information. When the risk of military intervention materialized, upon the decision to

516 Guštin, 2008a: 100–105.

defend Slovenia, the authorities of the Slovenian state immediately launched an information and propaganda offensive. In this offensive, they claimed that they were the victims of an attack by a foreign country, that Yugoslavia was carrying out aggression against an independent country and that the attacker was an undemocratic communist country attacking democracy. With information that was forwarded sufficiently openly and truthfully to the public, they managed to go far beyond the ossified communication of the adversary, specifically the YPA and the federal authorities, and achieve opinion dominance both abroad and among their own public, though very little in the rest of Yugoslavia. With its successes in the fight and in information war in particular, Slovenia transformed itself from a victim to a partner that negotiates and participates in the international stage as an independent country, and thus it achieved independence.

INTEROPERABILITY IN PRACTICE

The theory of interoperability is the most modern concept of the cooperation of different defense structures. It is frequently mentioned in the defense structures of member states of the North Atlantic Alliance and represents the most effective cooperation of members of the armed forces of different member states of the alliance. Yet the concept itself can also apply to some forms of close cooperation of various components of defense structures in the countries themselves. This was the case with the independence of the Republic of Slovenia where the defense structures were barely in the making. Based on the still current legal regulation in the field of security structures, these were divided into three components: territorial defense led by the Minister of Defense, militia/police structures led by the Minister of the Interior and national protection, based on the inclusion of trained military operations of civilian members. Since there was considerable asymmetry between the numerical and military strength of the Slovenian defense structures on one side and the Yugoslav army on the other, the question arose of how to ensure the closest possible cooperation of all defense-qualified structures in the nascent country. This explains why the decision-makers determined to implement the concept of interoperability. In practice, this meant that all structures were directly involved in the defense capabilities of the newborn country. Although this decision may seem logical and expected, it was by no means easy. Each structures had different operational doctrines, varying firepower, and was to perform distinct tasks. With a decision of this nature, it can quickly happen that instead of synergistic effects with the goal of increasing defense power, opposite effects emerge – poor cooperation, competition between the aforementioned structures, and a general reduction of the defense potential. If the latter were to happen, the Yugoslav Army would easily take advantage of this and certainly win the war. Nevertheless, this did not occur – interoperability was carried out effectively and successfully, as was ultimately shown in the clear and unequivocal victory of the Slovenian defense structures against Europe's third-largest army.

Theory of Interoperability

The involvement of armed forces in military combats has always been a great challenge that should be understood on two levels. The first one represents mutual

cooperation among individual branches of mainly land forces, whereas the other is considered to be cooperation between different friendly or cooperating armies. A large and partly unsolvable question of interoperability refers to the absence of standardization within an army per se. Upon the emergence of professional armies, this question was dealt with at least partly, while the question of their cooperation in synergy remains fully open. Coalition combat activities therefore depended considerably on attempts to exercise synergy on the battlefield, with this being primarily carried out on the basis of the division of the battlefield and of the fields of responsibility. The period following the Industrial Revolution, introduction of telecommunication technologies and more modern armament systems into military structures offered military commanders and planners fresh opportunities for managing the armed forces. This was the beginning of what is known as tactical interoperability, which in essence refers to the following: the ability of systems, units, or individuals to operate together in synergy while executing assigned tasks. From this top-level perspective, interoperability is a good thing, with overtones of standardization, integration, cooperation, and even synergy.

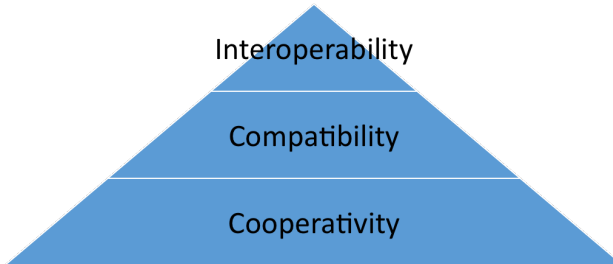
Viewed in this way, it becomes perfectly clear that interoperability represents the most homogeneous and perfect form of military cooperation which, in content, exceeds the parameters of standardization, integration, and cooperation and should in essence achieve synergetic effects. This also means that abovementioned processes are a precondition for achieving interoperability, even though they might not necessarily guarantee its realization.

Accordingly, the internal interoperability encompasses all levels of military operations from tactical to strategic, from combat to support operations, and accommodates interoperability between various types of elements ranging from platforms and facilities, through communications to the supply systems of military units.⁵¹⁷ It is precisely tactical interoperability that should help modern military systems achieve great adaptability, rational operations, and responsiveness to asymmetrical threats. Interoperability should enable simpler cooperation in common military operations. Even more, when they operate their defense systems through tactical operations centers based on the command, control, communication, computer and intelligence (C4I) systems, today's war fighters should be fully interoperable. It is only with the interoperability defense

517 Moon and Fewell, 2008: 5.

systems that they might be able to deter asymmetric treats such as terrorism and insurgency operations.⁵¹⁸

Graph 1:



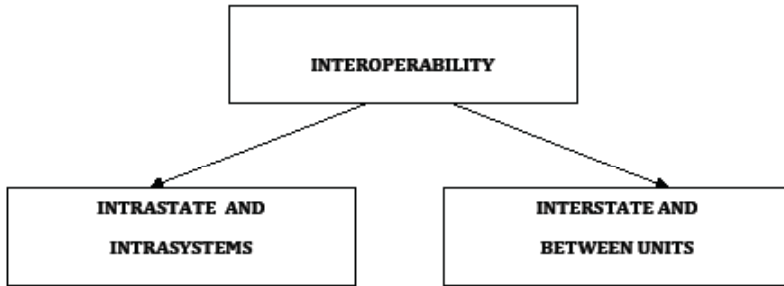
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Periods when armed forces are active within the framework of allied operations are special challenges as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has set the goal of the interoperability of all armies active under the Organization. This then led to the forming of the definition of interoperability that exceeds the frameworks of the internal operation and organization of military systems and seeks to establish what is called strategic interoperability. This is perceived as: the ability of systems, units, or forces to provide services to and accept services from other systems, units, or forces, and to use the services so exchanged to enable them to operate effectively together.⁵¹⁹ In this respect, interoperability includes the ability of forces from different nations to work effectively together given the nature of the forces within the combined military organizational structure. Acting must be effective and must enable combined military organizational structure a level of similarity of technical capabilities of the forces from different nations, reflecting their fungibility while supporting coalition military goals.

⁵¹⁸ Murray, 2008: 54–57.

⁵¹⁹ Wilton, 2006: 1.

Graph 2: Borders of interoperability



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If we can establish structure and responsibilities on the intrastate interoperability level, a very complex and comprehensive situation must be managed in order to achieve standards of interoperability on the interstate level. Most authors refer to this level of interoperability when explaining the functioning of NATO. Interoperability on this level is an element of alliance/coalition willingness to work together in the long term to achieve and maintain shared interests against common threats. Alliance and coalition interoperability is one means of achieving both effective and efficient military capabilities: a rationalized approach to the interoperability can reduce alliance-wide military expenditures, increase the flexibility or define military niches to be provided by national members so that redundancy can be avoided.⁵²⁰

When presenting the Slovenian case study, both levels are applicable. The national defense system of Yugoslavia, created on two pillars, must be perceived as one intrastate system that should incorporate the theoretical fundamentals of interoperability, yet this never happened. Moreover, the federal system, based on the Yugoslav People's Army, was important and to some extent an individual player in the defense system. The territorial defense of the Yugoslav republics might be understood as a non-integrated subsystem where even cooperation was in question.

⁵²⁰ Jamison, 2000: 9.

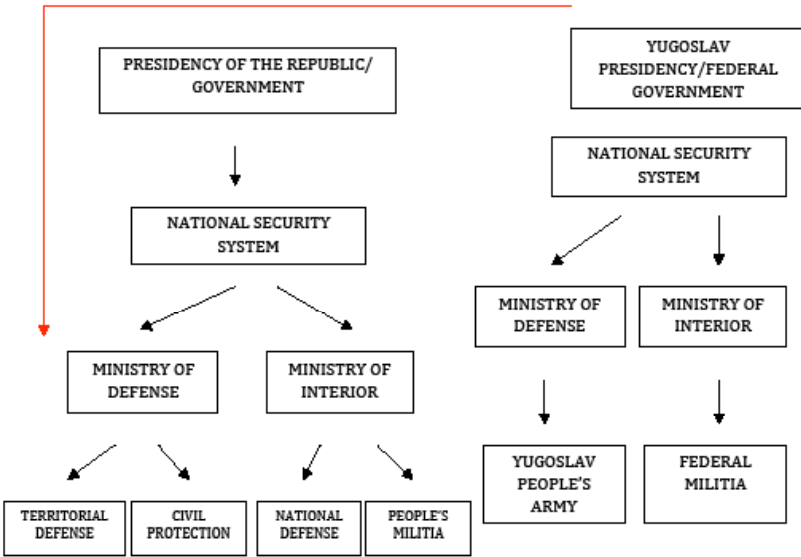
Reasons for Interoperability in Slovenia, 1990–1991

In the Slovenian case, interoperability is presented here on the operative and tactical levels as it represented harmonization in the operation of three separate subsystems of the then national security system. The spatial elements of the army were: the Territorial Defense, a Militia organized in a military manner, the supporting National Protection Forces (*Narodna zaščita*), and organizations active as part of the Civil Protection Service. Although the doctrine of General People's Defense planned for the involvement of the aforementioned elements in the process of defense, the particular tasks of these elements were varied greatly and especially their equipment, armaments, and their respective doctrines of operation. Further, there were some very important differences in organizing and coordinating the line of command. While the two subsystems of the National Protection Forces and the Militia (police) formed part of the Ministry of the Interior, the Territorial Defense and the Civil Protection Service were under the command of the Ministry of Defense. These differences called for extensive organization efforts when the Slovenian political elite decided to establish interoperability among the mentioned defense systems. The synergy alone, as provided through the interoperability, enabled success against a much stronger, better equipped and supported federal military system based on a long military tradition – the Yugoslav People's Army – which was threatening the process of Slovenia acquiring its independence and hence also its separation from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the establishment of an independent state. With this program, the first democratic multi-party elections held in April 1990 were won by a coalition of new parties called the Democratic opposition of Slovenia (DEMOS), with the program starting to be implemented immediately after their victory. The dissolution of the socialist/communist social order in Yugoslavia took a specific form as it also chiefly manifested itself as a national liberation, the breaking down of the then federal structure into independent states.

The Slovenian leadership strictly advocated the legalistic method of separation in line with the constitutional principle of self-determination, which was not accepted by the leaders of the other republics, nor the army and certainly not by federal authorities. The challenge of ensuring that the process of acquiring independence occurred within the framework of the military and security elements was clearly not simply a problem existing on paper. Since the security function only partly lay in the competence of the republican authorities, and even less so

military matters, the Slovenian authorities had to, at least to the extent necessary, start with the formation of defense forces as part of the steps in acquiring its national independence. Given that Slovenia was in a worse position, the basic principle of the new Slovenian leadership structures was to exploit every single defense capacity then available to the republic. These capacities were parts of the 20-year-active defense system established under the *general people's defense*, a unique defense system and doctrine of Yugoslavia.⁵²¹

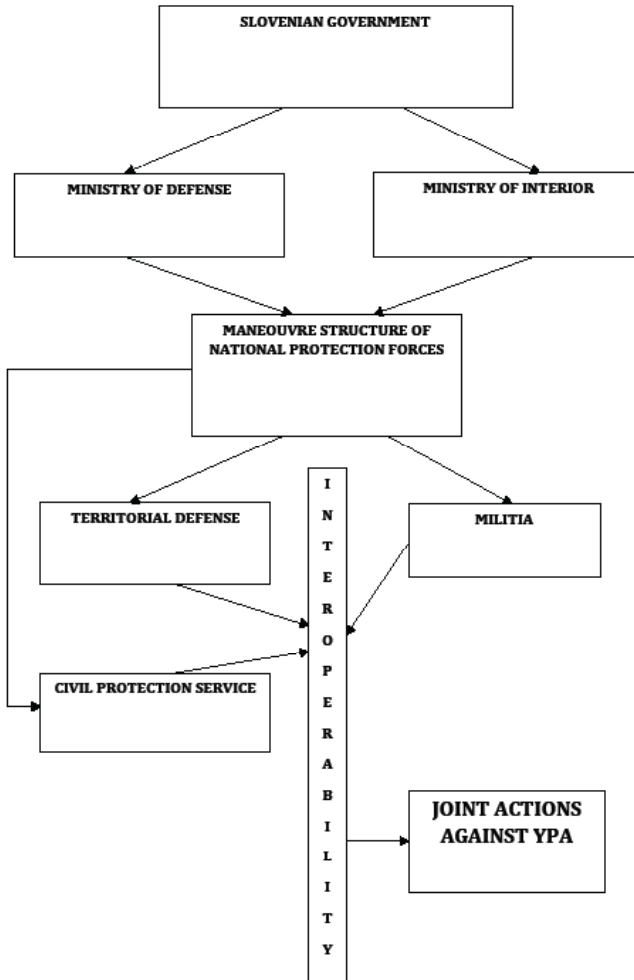
Graph 3: Organizational chart of the national defense system in Yugoslavia



To form such a defense system, the Slovenian elite based its work on experience acquired in 1990 when it simultaneously and secretly organized the Maneuver Structure of National Protection Forces, a special resistance organization that, based on the doctrine of the general people's resistance, brought together the Territorial Defense, the Militia, and other police forces that were planned to become involved as a gendarmerie, which meant they would be trained for action in the military units.

521 General people's defense was conducted also as *general people's resistance*. This important difference show that the understanding of doctrine weren't enable not at all even in Yugoslav defense system.

Graph 4: Slovenian defense system in 1990



Based on the landslide result of the plebiscite held on December 23, 1990 in which 89% of the people voted for an independent state of Slovenia, the leaders of the republic planned the independence to be realized in the form of an independent state to be established by June 26, 1991 (6 months after the plebiscite) at the latest. The strategic assessment of risk in independence was based on the great possibility the federal authorities would intervene in the process of acquiring independence by use of armed forces; namely, the Yugoslav People's Army. For this reason, leaders of the republic prepared plans that allowed for several

different possibilities, including the worst one that predicted urgent defense against a military intervention. The leaders of the Slovenian republic planned and included all available forces in the defense of the new state. These were the Territorial Defense Forces, the Militia, and the Civil Protection Service (civil defense). Each of these organizations had once formed part of the Yugoslavian defense system based on the doctrine of general people's defense. This concept proved advantageous as soon as the summer of 1990. Work in all three structures was led and coordinated by a special coordination team established to act in special circumstances on the national and regional levels. The team assumed the duties of a defense command and included both military and civilian experts.⁵²²

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The standardizing of the armament process proceeded smoothly thanks to the evenly distributed resources. All parts of the system were supplied mainly with standardized weapons from the Yugoslav defense system, generally light infantry weapons and antitank equipment. These circumstances could only be slightly improved by the small quantities of imported infantry weapons and connection systems. Naturally, the distribution of supplies through segments was uneven and depended on the different roles they played within the defense system. Being aware of its setbacks in terms of armaments, the Slovenian political and government elite, which was responsible for protecting the process of acquiring independence, prepared a defense plan intended to promote the use of passive defense in the event of any interventions. The latter meant blocking the lines of traffic, erecting barricades, and blocking military barracks through the exclusive use of arms in self-defense and urgent cases only. Strategically, the elite assessed that Slovenia would be in a much better position if the intervention were to occur after the independence had been formally declared.

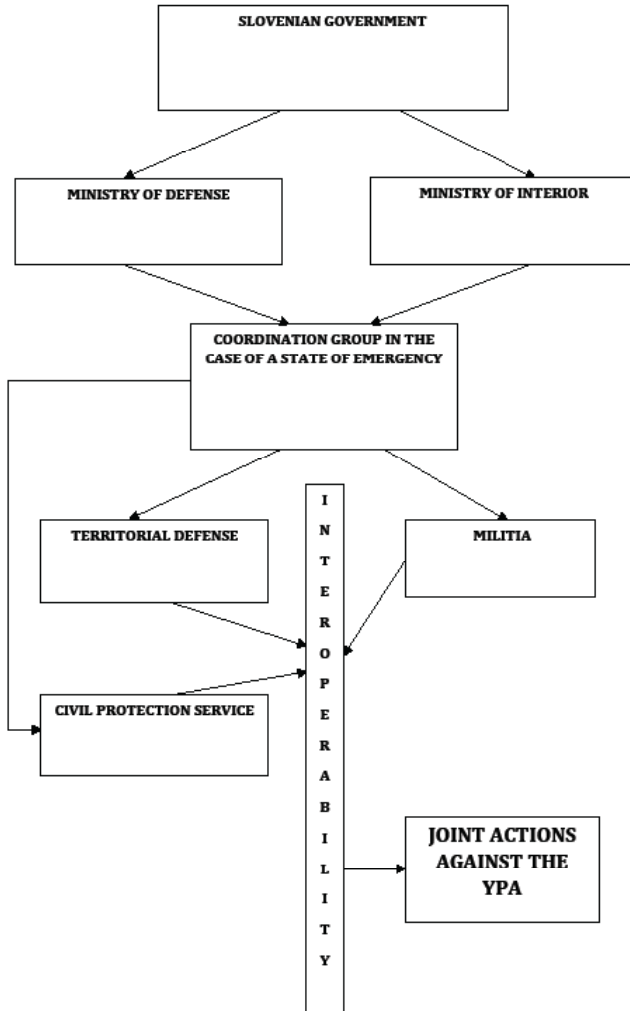
Defensive War for Independence in Slovenia: Interoperability in Practice

Since on June 26, 1991, one day after the independent state of Slovenia, the Republic of Slovenia, had been declared, the Yugoslav People's Army indeed started to follow through on its measures relating to the mentioned intervention, and in turn the Slovenian state leaders triggered the planned defense system. Contrary

522 Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 101–102.

to expectations, the initial measures of the Civil Protection Service were less successful than anticipated. It soon proved that the mere blocking of the Yugoslav People's Army units as the foundation for a passive defense in the absence of fire support would not bring the expected success.

Graph 5: Slovenian Defense System in June 1991



Nevertheless, all measures implemented in the course of the passive defense were carried out with the good coordination of the Militia and Territorial Defense units as could be seen from the well-distributed blockades and barricades on all

major traffic lines in the country. The measures intended to prevent and obstruct movement did not however halt the progress of the Yugoslav People's Army because they were not supported by arms. For this reason, on the morning of June 27, 1991 the presidential authority of Slovenia, also acting as the commander-in-chief of the defense forces, decided to use weapons in defense of the newly-proclaimed state.⁵²³

Normally, the Militia and Territorial Defense forces operated together in defense combat actions. In defense planning for the case of an intervention by YPA forces before or after the declaration of independence, those leading the defense of Slovenia envisaged the joint operation of militia units and the Territorial Defense, albeit it is not well known that they also drew up operational schemes for their joint operations. It was based on the well-established and well-known doctrine of general popular defense and social self-defense that had been in place in the Yugoslav armed forces since 1971. In the event of a military attack on the country, this provided for the establishment of territorial units in occupied and unoccupied parts of the country and the involvement of police forces to help defend of the country in the form of Militia Military Units to which all active and reserve militiamen were assigned by law. Their tasks concerned both the maintenance of public order and peace and participation in defense tasks.⁵²⁴ To repel special operations, the engagement of additionally trained, militarily organized Special Militia units in a formation size of one or more companies in each of the 13 Directorates of Internal Affairs was envisaged. On the level of Slovenia, the troops were grouped into 7 battalions of the Special Militia Unit, entailing 723 members in the narrower formation, and 1,392 members in the wider one. This defense subsystem was also preserved by the new democratic government when it took power after the multi-party elections in the spring of 1990 and was further upgraded in the autumn of 1990 with the establishing of the Special Militia Unit out of the previous Militia Protection Unit.⁵²⁵

After April 1991, the planning and coordination of Slovenia's defense preparations took place in the Emergency Situation Coordinating, which included representatives of all three components of defense (police, civil protection, territorial defense), and was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior. The establishment of such a coordination body was foreseen by the legislation still existing from the socialist period. It was precisely for this reason, due to the consideration of legality within the framework of the defense or security legislation, the new

523 Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 104, 105.

524 Čepič et al, 2010: 75–76.

525 Čepič et al, 2010: 72–75.

authority also retained its name, but filled it with new content. Two months after the Presidency of Slovenia had established such a central group on the republic level in April 1991, at the end of May 1991 it created seven more subgroups on the regional level that, based on common principles, operationally coordinated the activities of the defense forces, seven provincial headquarters of the Territorial Defense, and seven Administrations for Internal Affairs, which were regional police commands.⁵²⁶

The operational cooperation of the TD and Militia units began straight after the declaration of independence. Slovenia's plans for taking control of the new country's borders provided for the shared functions of the two formations. Since the control and management of border crossings was the responsibility of the Militia, the police officers worked to introduce external signs of taking control of border crossings. Typically, changing flags and signboards showing the new country's symbols was their first task. Territorial defense was planned as a matter of insurance or intervention in the event of YPA units making an intervention.

A special aspect of the interoperable operation of the Slovenian defense forces concerns the cooperation between the civil defense, the police forces, and the TD. Civil defense was included in Slovenia's defense plan with the guidelines of the Presidency of Slovenia on preparedness measures on May 15, 1991. These provided for its participation in obstructing the maneuvers of the YPA and interrupting the supply of military facilities. On June 27, 1991, the protection and rescue system were activated. In fact, the already prepared plans envisaged the installation of around 50 larger barricades and obstacles, which were supposed to prevent the exit and movement of YPA units from the barracks. Road companies oversaw the erecting of barricades and other obstacles, each in their own management area, operations that were planned by special groups formed by the Executive Councils of the municipalities. This aspect of interoperable operation was implemented only partially or with some delay and thus the police in several locations took the initiative and on the spur of the moment designed the installation of obstacles themselves. The defense plans also included management of electricity supply with the task of selectively disconnecting electricity to the barracks and other YPA facilities as well as the PTT company⁵²⁷ with the simultaneous disconnecting of telephone connections. Both TD units participated in the blockade of military facilities and the militia in securing them.⁵²⁸

526 Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 101.

527 National company for Postal, Telephone and Telegraph services in Slovenia.

528 Malešič, 2012: 223–225.

Clashes with the advancing largely motorized or armored YPA columns began on the morning of June 27, 1991 after the Presidency of Slovenia, as commander-in-chief, ordered the use of weapons in the defense of positions of the Slovenian Defense Forces on road communications.⁵²⁹ In the initial clashes on the first day of the armed conflict, members of the militia played a major role. Their better training meant they could more easily endure the psychological pressure of the 'first shot' and moved more readily into the fighting phase. To the extent possible, the coordination sub-groups directed the military and police components of the defense forces into combined action in the individual operational areas for which they were responsible.⁵³⁰

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At Trzin (10 km NE of Ljubljana), the TD unit received orders at noon on June 27, 1991 to stop the YPA platoon, which had disembarked by helicopter at a distance of about 15 km to the Brnik airport. In carrying out this task, the TD unit was supported by a platoon of the Special Militia Unit, which cooperated with the TD platoon for special purposes in combat. The battle, in which both units took on the same tactical tasks, was successfully completed by the Slovenian defense forces, with the opponent's unit surrendering after a 1-hour-long battle.⁵³¹

The blockade at the Medvedjek Pass (7 km NW of Trebnje), which obstructed the path of the advancing YPA armored column from the direction of Novo mesto towards Ljubljana, was set up by members of the militia and 5 TD units with a total of around 380 soldiers. The clash occurred on the afternoon of June 27, 1991, when a convoy of armored anti-aircraft weapons (BOVs)⁵³² and trucks attempted to break through the roadblock with air support. Here, the components of the Slovenian defense forces did not have the same tasks in the fight, but members of the militia set up and controlled the roadblock for which they had placed trucks coming from the direction of Ljubljana, while members of the TD secured it from positions on both sides of the road.⁵³³ In addition, members of the civil defense detonated the overpass above the roadblock. A YPA motorized unit halted in front of the barricade, then attempted to break through on June 28, 1991, with simultaneous air support. Planes machine-gunned the vehicles placed

529 Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 105.

530 Ibid., 107.

531 Švajncer 1997: 109–113; Gyergék 2008; Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 328–332.

532 Armored fighting vehicle.

533 Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 210–211.

in the blockade and the surrounding targets where the TD forces were supposed to be staying. The defensive battle of the Slovenian defense forces was successful as the column did not break through the blockade. Still, the air attack caused the rapid withdrawal of the TD units and the collapse of the barrier security.⁵³⁴

One of the last examples of the combined action of individual parts of the defense forces of Slovenia was the fight for the Holmec border crossing along the Austrian–Slovenian border in Carinthia (7 km NW of Prevalje) early on the morning of June 28. The YPA unit was given the task of occupying the border crossing from a patrol car, located 200 m away from the border control building, on the morning of June 27. The police officers in the facility at the border crossing were asked to leave the facility but refused. After an ultimatum expired, YPA soldiers attacked the border crossing object, heavily damaged it with artillery fire, and a sniper killed two policemen and seriously wounded a third in the fight. Meanwhile, the main TD and militia forces intervened from the depths of the area from the direction of Prevalje to pursue the task of unblocking the border control building and encircling the guardhouse. The reinforced crew of the YPA border guard was deployed to defensive positions within a radius of 100–200 m from the facility. In the attack on their positions on the morning of June 28, both militiamen, who had been assigned to TD units in smaller groups, and TD members engaged in the same tactical tasks. On the same morning, following a successful joint attack and the shelling of the guardhouse with a 20 mm anti-aircraft cannon, most of the crew were forced to surrender, and the officers retreated. In addition to participating in tactical procedures in combat formations, members of the militia also ensured the maintenance of communications with the operational joint command in Slovenj Gradec and even with the TD headquarters given that the communications of the Slovenian TD were a real sore point in its operational functioning due to the lack of technical resources, notably radio stations.⁵³⁵

After the YPA operation command in Slovenia announced on the evening of June 27 that it had achieved the majority of its objectives, i.e., occupied most of the border crossings, the Slovenian leadership ordered attacks to focus on occupied border crossings and border guard posts so as to unblock them. However, on

534 Švajncer 1997: 44–54; Gole 2011: 55–58; Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 210–213.

535 Prebilič and Guštin: 2001: 59–62; Korant, 2008: 27–31; Švajncer, 1993: 191–192.

June 28, the Slovenian Defense Forces also engaged in attacks on border military depots and the disarming of the deployed YPA members⁵³⁶

In the attack on the tank column that was occupying the border crossing in Rožna dolina (3 km north of Nova Gorica) on June 28, two combat groups were used, one consisting of members of the TD and the other of members of the PEM.⁵³⁷ Both groups had the task of making a surprise attack on the border crossing and disabling the YPA unit located there, which had 117 soldiers and 5 tanks. With quick action and the capture of the commanding group of YPA officers, both achieved the unit's surrender.⁵³⁸

Further, in the encirclement and preparation of the attack on the Vrtojba border crossing on June 28, 1991, the regional command in Nova Gorica included two PEM units and three TD units. However, since the border crossing was in a clearing and therefore difficult to conquer, on June 29 the command of the forces preferred to focus on negotiations, which were successful. At 18:15 in the evening, 138 soldiers along with 7 tanks surrendered to the militia forces.⁵³⁹ Similarly, the PEM unit cooperated with the TD on the blockade of the intersection in Podmark (5 km N of Nova Gorica on June 29. Both units had the same tasks, and the PEM commander took the lead in handing over the stopped YPA vehicles.⁵⁴⁰

The militia and TD were equally involved in the capture of the barracks in Bovec on June 29, 1991. Both formations occupied starting positions for the attack, although the attack itself did not take place because a special group for occupying the barracks, consisting of members of both formations, was able to bring about a surrender.⁵⁴¹

In targeted attacks on border guards, the tactics of small units came to the fore, and thus also many possibilities for the operational cooperation of military and police units. Among the 45 border guard posts each occupied by special YPA border units of platoon size (30–40 members), the Slovenian Defense Forces attacked or at least surrounded around 15 of them on June 28, 1991. In the attacks on the guard posts, the composition of the forces was different. For the most part, we may conclude that only TD units were engaged for the attacks, and frequently, in addition to military units, general and Special Militia units (PEM)

536 Janša, 1992: 48.

537 Special units of Slovenian Militia.

538 Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 366–369.

539 Ibid., 369–372.

540 Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 373.

541 Ibid., 385–386.

were also involved. This demonstrates that the selection of units depended on the local conditions and needs, with PEM units apparently considered to be equally skilled as, and capable of cooperating with, special purpose or counter-sabotage TD units. During the capture of the Dolgo village border crossing, units of both formations cooperated in a special way. The TD units surrounded the guardhouse right next to the border crossing, and after an ultimatum had expired, members of the militia, who were defending the nearby border crossing, fired at the guardhouse and the positions of the soldiers next to it. After the shelling had stopped, all 67 soldiers in the guardhouse surrendered.⁵⁴² Typical of the interoperable operation of the two branches of the Slovenian defense forces was the clash during the capture of the guard post Nova vas (11 km S of Nova Gorica). At the request of local observers and local authorities, on July 1, 1991 a PEM division and two TD units were sent to capture the guardhouse. The PEM unit was given the same tasks in the designated operational area, but also the special task of pre-negotiating with the commander at the guard post about surrendering. These negotiations were unsuccessful. After a short fight in which the commander of the YPA unit fell at the guard post, the unit surrendered.⁵⁴³

Many of such attacks were called off due to pending ceasefire negotiations. For example, on June 28 the 45th TD regional headquarters, together with the militia unit, prepared an attack on the Fernetiči border crossing (2 km W of Sežana); two TD platoons and a special militia unit were to be used for the attack in the afternoon on that day. Since they had received a notification in the headquarters before the attack that a general ceasefire had been reached, the attack was canceled and was not carried out later either.⁵⁴⁴

The division of operational tasks also took place outside of combat operations. The role of militia units in achieving the surrender of individual guards and border units of the YPA was typical. Since the commanders of the YPA border units felt it would be easier to reach an agreement on surrender with the militia units, they usually refused to negotiate with the TD and wanted to negotiate with the militia commanders. The militia accordingly assumed a large role in the realization of agreements on surrender. The TD units took over the tasks of depth security, and most of them also engaged in seizing confiscated weapons and equipment.

542 Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 416–417.

543 Ibid., 2011: 374.

544 Janša, 1992: 56.

One of the most uncharacteristic is the surrender of the crew of the Miren guardhouse (6 km S of Nova Gorica) on July 2, 1991. Having been notified that the surrender of the guardhouse had been agreed upon, the PEM department arrived at the facility. The guardhouse commander was completely surprised because he had not agreed on a surrender at all, but then he simply surrendered. It turned out that an arrangement had been made to surrender the crew of a neighboring guardhouse, approximately 3 km away, and the PEM unit had been misdirected.⁵⁴⁵

This situation of low-intensity combat carried on with an occasional ceasefire until July 3 when the last ceasefire was proclaimed. The last one was extorted by the European Community by employing diplomatic pressure. The conditions for an armistice were formed by means of the joint statement of Yugoslavia, Slovenia and Croatia signed on July 8, 1991 at the Brioni Islands under the supervision of the European Troika. Due to the armed low-intensity conflict, the problems occurring with interoperability were mostly seen in the course of the (non-)application of identical tactical processes since the main two defense components were derived from two different operational doctrines. Before that, the tactical training of TD units generally followed the territorial supervision and combats held in occupied territory with the support of local inhabitants with regard to supplies and the provision of intelligence service. The militia had at its disposal the planned formation of Special Police Units and Military Police Units, which united both professional policemen as well as those from the reserve position. Its tactical assignments mainly concerned anti-specialist operations and preservation of peace and order. As the Police units were generally much better trained than most of the TD units, the latter being largely comprised of reserve forces, the former, among others, had to assume a much more important role in initial defense combats than other forces and function as the fighting element. It was only gradually that the TD units adapted to war conditions and took on greater responsibility in combats. Further, problems were occurring due to different levels in supplying both parts of units with connection equipment and weapons and different levels of qualifications among the members of the militia and TD.

545 Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 375.

WARFARE LESSONS LEARNED

The war of independence in the Republic of Slovenia was in many ways a different war from all previous ones, especially when compared to the wars that broke out on the soil of former Yugoslavia. In addition to the time frame – which defines this war as the shortest since the breakup of Yugoslavia – another component is essential, respect for international military and humanitarian law. The war on Slovenian soil meets all the international legal criteria of a legal and just war. It is an example of a defensive war, which is permitted by the United Nations Charter, as the right to self-defense must never be taken away. The *Ius ad Bellum* aspect thus provides the *Ius in Bello* aspect. Moreover, respect for international law is important in times of war and characterized by the common term *Ius in Bello* – law in war. In this segment, the legal corpus may be divided into two parts: the Hague Conventions and the Geneva Conventions. While the first part concerns the limitation and reciprocity of the use of force, the second focuses on the aspect of protecting all combatants or non-combatants. Among them, the four most important categories are: the civilian population, the wounded, humanitarian workers who provide assistance to the wounded, and prisoners of war. It is this latter segment that is extremely important as it is about preventing the suffering of those who have surrendered and thus submitted to the victor. The treatment of the vanquished thus represents and reflects the value system of the victor and simultaneously demonstrates the maturity of the victorious armed forces and their responsible commanders. This aspect was the only example of respect for the aforementioned provisions of humanitarian law in the armed conflicts following the breakup of Yugoslavia. Without doubt, this explains why the participants in the war for an independent and sovereign Slovenia were not prosecuted at the specialized tribunal – the ICTY (based in the Hague) for the prosecution of all violations of war and humanitarian law on the soil of former Yugoslavia.

International Humanitarian Law

Although it may be expected that war and law are mutually exclusive, this is certainly not the case. Rules related to armed conflicts had been known ever since the occurrence of the first wars. The conduct of warriors outside the battlefield

had, however, not been codified or sanctioned. Nevertheless, behavioral patterns emerged that were related to the preparation of a conflict, the conflict itself and the post-conflict state – the armistice or subordination of the defeated side to the victorious side.⁵⁴⁶ These unwritten rules referred primarily to warriors, as during the period of the Antiquity and the Middle Ages the classes of free citizens and later the aristocracy, the ruling and decisive part of the society of particular countries, were commonly involved in armed combat. With the emergence of medieval warfare and knighthood, the relation towards POWs took a decisive turn as they became the subject of negotiations, ransom, or were considered as a potential source of income. The development of mass armies and the transfer of the industrial revolution to the battlefields led to an inordinate number of soldiers being captured, wounded, and killed on the battlefields. In response to the fully unsettled approach to wounded soldiers on the battlefield, the first attempts to codify rules for the treatment of the wounded were introduced (Crimean Wars 1853–1856), which culminated in the creation of the Red Cross and signing of the First Geneva Convention in 1864.⁵⁴⁷ This was the birth of humanitarian law, which forms part of the category law of war (*ius in bello*). Humanitarian law respecting the Geneva Conventions initially focused on the status of wounded soldiers on the battlefield. These starting points were significantly upgraded by the Declaration of St Petersburg dated 1868, in which the signatory states concentrated on reducing the force during conflicts and determining the rules of war – to reduce the calibers of the projectiles in an attempt to promote the use of weapons that would not unnecessarily increase the suffering of soldiers. This was followed by a failed attempt at forming a code of military law which, nonetheless, became the basis for drawing up and adopting the Hague Conventions and Declarations that aimed to reduce weapons and define additional rules in conflicts.⁵⁴⁸

546 A replica of a peace agreement, dating from 1285 BCE, between the pharaoh Ramses II and the Hittite king Muwatalli signed after the Battle at Kadish is still preserved by the UN, which are aware of the importance of this document.

547 The first Geneva Convention referred primarily to the protection of wounded soldiers regardless their membership of armed forces. These rules were later supplemented and detailed during the second and third Geneva Conferences in 1906 and 1929, which resulted in the adoption relevant conventions. Jogan, 1997: 41.

548 Two Hague Declarations were signed and adopted in 1899 and twelve Hague Conventions in 1907 which additionally limited the rules of war and the use of weapons. Jogan, 1997: 46–47.

During the Great War, the First World War, it became obvious that humanitarian law had not reached the level of international law as it was being neither observed nor implemented by countries engaged in armed conflicts.⁵⁴⁹ This was one reason the international community began to promote more humane wars and the prevention of wars as a possible form of solving conflicts.⁵⁵⁰ Yet, the lessons learned in the Second World War clearly showed that war as a form of resolving disagreements between states was outdated. Moreover, Second World War finally asserted the concept of total war⁵⁵¹ where the boundary between the battlefield and the rear disappeared, whereas the warring parties demonstrated complete ignorance of the humanitarian law in force. Germany as the aggressor refused to observe the Geneva Conventions with the excuse that it had never ratified these documents. The consequences of this interpretation were shown by the mass murders of POWs (particularly on the Eastern Front) and civilians. At the same time, conflicts during Second World War drew attention to the most important shortcomings in the conventions related to the status of POWs. This was particularly true in the case of resistance movements which were then not regarded as legal and legitimate military structures in conventions and declarations, meaning that its members were not entitled to POW status. On this basis, the international community, notably the U.S.A. and Great Britain, decided on a double measure: to adopt clear provisions on the limiting of wars, manifested in the forming of the United Nations, and legal documents to protect participants

549 It became evident that the existing Geneva Conventions and other forms of international law of war insufficiently determined the rules of war. New weapons emerged and new ways of inhumane exhausting the adversary in armed conflicts, which lead to a supplementing of the conventions from 1929. One of them explicitly defined POWs and their rights and obligations as well as the status of POWs. Thus, in 1925 an additional Geneva Protocol was adopted which limited and forbid the use of chemical and bacterial warfare. Jogan, 1997: 42–43.

550 Initiatives that are determined by the law of war (*ius ad bellum*) and are, in modern international terminology, defined by the term New York Law reach back to 1928 when the Pact of Paris, also known as the Briand-Kellogg Pact, was adopted, which renounced war as a means of solving international conflicts. This document reflected an international conviction of offensive wars and the refusal of war as a means of settling international conflicts. By forming a union of nations as a system of collective security, unrealistic and idealized expectations emerged – wars should never happen again.

551 Although the concept of total war is linked to WWII, it is possible to trace such forms of war even earlier than that. It denotes an extensive conflict or war which involves the mobilization of all available resources in a particular society or state with the aim of totally destroying an enemy in war (Sutherland, 1996: 18).

in war – the four Geneva Conventions.⁵⁵² Today, the role of the UN must be seen as the attempt to sanction states that violate international humanitarian law. This is the key difference between the current and previous attempts of the international community because a sanctions system must be put in place to force countries to observe the adopted and ratified provisions of international humanitarian law. Simultaneously, the UN relied on the Law of Geneva (the content of the Geneva Conventions) as an institution of international humanitarian law. This, at least partly, allowed for the implementation of provisions to safeguard groups protected by the Geneva Convention even in the event of wars.

Although the UN fostered a serious limitation of military conflicts and other forms of aggression, as human nature would have it these nonetheless.⁵⁵³ During the Cold War, the conflicts were limited to certain regions and above all were a show of force between both powers for the purpose of advancing their indirect/direct interests. In 1977, two amended protocols to the Geneva Conventions referring to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts and of non-international armed conflicts were drawn up and adopted. Through this action, the international community sought to protect the victims of domestic (civil) wars, thereby limiting the complete autonomy of a state – a single international legal entity – on its territory, in particular in the presence of solid evidence of the violation of humanitarian law. The responsibility for implementing international legal acts (this is also considered for humanitarian law) is assumed by the states, as international legal entities, and the international community, represented by various organizations and each individual. Thus, the GC and associated protocols give a clear and comprehensive definition in their very first article on the responsibility of the signatory states and bind them to respect the provisions of

552 The Geneva Conventions, adopted in 1949, filled the gaps in the area of military law especially in the light of protecting war victims. The four Geneva Conventions precisely regulated the status and rules dealing with wounded, sick, and shipwrecked soldiers during wars on land and on sea (GC I and II), the protection of prisoners of war (GC III) and the convention dealing with the comprehensive protection of civilians (GC IV).

553 Although the UN defined aggression as an unlawful threat with force or the use of it (UN Charter), it emerged that this type of definition was too loose. Intensive discussions followed in the General Assembly which, after almost 20 years, adopted the final definition of aggression in 1974. Aggression is defined as the use of armed force by a state against the sovereignty, territorial integrity, or political independence of another State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations. Jogan (1997: 16), in particular, stresses the complete ineligibility of aggression (regardless of the nature and background of the reasons). An aggressive war is defined as a crime against international peace, furthermore any benefits or acquisitions of the territory with the use of aggression will be permitted.

these documents and to ensure that they will be observed on all occasions.⁵⁵⁴ The international community is represented in the area of international humanitarian law by the UN, which through its bodies and moral authority aims to achieve consistent implementation of its provisions.⁵⁵⁵ Responsibility in its implementation includes each individual person, military, or civilian, who de facto committed or ordered an act inconsistent with and eventually leading to the violation of international humanitarian law. The personal responsibility of a commander related to giving orders and for his subordinated soldiers or units derives from these provisions. Likewise, each soldier is responsible for observing humanitarian law and is obliged, in the event of an inappropriate order or an order not in compliance with the relevant provisions, to refuse to carry out such an order. Sanctions in the event of a breach can be conducted on the state level or the level of the international community. These include various measures with the goal to implement, as accurately as possible, the provisions of international humanitarian law. The modern penal system is, as a rule, entrusted to the UN which is a global moral authority in this sphere and also has a clear concept and rules referring to penalizing those in breach of the abovementioned provisions. The UN Charter clearly defines the forms of penalizing. Such measures are further legitimized by the Security Council with the permanent membership of the world powers. The UN had used ad hoc tribunals⁵⁵⁶ or courts that thus far had proven to be slow, ineffective, and time-consuming.

554 Jogan (1997: 35) additionally emphasizes certain responsibilities of states which have to provide accurate implementations and rules through their commanders and take care of unforeseen cases. The countries must inform the widest possible circle of population on the content of these documents and include these in military education and training programs and adopt relevant legal documents, which will allow for the punishment of all who break the rules and initiate an investigation against all persons suspected of severely breaking the rules.

555 Such examples are the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), the Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity (1968), Resolution on the Respect of Human Rights in Armed Conflicts (1968), Definition of Aggression (1974) etc.

556 Through Resolutions nos. 780 and 808, the UN Security Council formed a special international court for the trial of offenders of the international humanitarian law in the territory of former Yugoslavia which was implemented in 1994.

Rights and Obligations of POWs

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The definition of the rights arising from the status of prisoner of war is closely linked to the understanding of the notion of soldiers or combatants. The first codified definitions of “combatants” dates back to the period of the Law of Hague, namely the beginning of the 20th century.⁵⁵⁷ In accordance with the fundamentals of the Law of Hague, a combatant is anyone who is shown to be a member of an organization with a clearly expressed system of subordination and commanding authority, he must bear a distinctive sign and weapons and conduct his activities in line with the laws and rules of war.⁵⁵⁸ Throughout the development of the armed forces, various categories of people were involved in warfare covered neither by the Hague Convention nor the Geneva Convention (1929) or previously had not been a member of any armed forces. The number of civilian employees grew and, as a result of the development of weapon systems, gradually became an indispensable part of the modern armed forces. Therefore, the Third Geneva Convention (1949) specifically focused on the issue of defining the concept of POWs since it is only on the basis of such a definition that one can discuss the status of a certain person. Accordingly, today the status of POWs is clearly and well defined.⁵⁵⁹ The legitimate status of a POW strictly forbids them from being punished for their participation in carrying out combat assignments.

557 The Law of Hague contains a clear distinction between combatants who can bear arms and conduct all combat activities and who are legitimate participants in warfare as well as non-combatants who were not designed for combat, are generally not armed and armed actions against them are not allowed. They may use arms only for self-defense. In line with the Law of Hague self-defense, this group includes physicians, medical personnel, priests, judges, and musicians in military bands. The Hague law defines combatants as members of the armed forces, militia structure and volunteer units, which are not included in the regular armed forces. Jogan, 1997: 9.

558 Jogan, 1997: 49.

559 POW status is given to members of armed forces in a conflict as well as members of the militia and volunteer units which are part of armed forces, members of regular armed forces which are in allegiance to the government and authorities, members of other militias and volunteer units, including members of organized resistance movements, persons who escort armed forces although they are not directly part of their structure – civilian members of military plane crews, as well as commanders, pilots, the population of the occupied territory, which respond to enemy armed attacks with an armed resistance and are, due to lack of time, not organized as regular armed forces, if they openly wears arms and respect military laws and customs. Dolenc, 1989: 63.

Combatants can only be punished in the event of an infringement of international humanitarian law, yet, even here, they do not lose their POW status. Soldiers can, as a rule, only be tried by a court martial at which they are allowed to defend themselves. In the event of disrespecting duties, disciplinary measures against POWs may be introduced, while they cannot lose their status. Further, although one cannot renounce the status of POW,⁵⁶⁰ one can assent to it.⁵⁶¹ POWs fall under the jurisdiction of enemy states and not the individuals or military units which have captured them. While the side exercising jurisdiction over POWs is responsible for how they are treated, this responsibility still does not exclude personal responsibilities of individuals. POWs retain their citizen rights during their entire captivity. It is necessary to treat POWs in a humane manner in this period. The side which captured POWs is obliged to maintain them free of charge and provide them with medical care as required by their medical condition. On top of that, all forms of repressions against POWs are strictly forbidden. POWs have to be protected against aggression, insults, and intimidation,⁵⁶² and it is necessary to preserve their right to respect and honor.⁵⁶³ The Law of Geneva clearly defines the necessity of equality of procedure as based on the prohibition of any racial, national, religious, or political discrimination.

The side that captured POWs must leave their personal property with them (money, letters, personal items). POWs have to carry their documents with them at all times. If not so, they should be provided by the force that had captured them. A POW should not be deprived of their signs of ranks, citizenship, and decorations. The interrogation of POWs is detailed in the Law of Geneva. During interrogation, each POW is only obliged to state their last name, name, rank, date of birth, number of army or regiment, personal serial number or other relevant data (Article 17). POWs should be interrogated in a language they understand. The Third Geneva Convention (Articles 17 to 108) clearly

560 The POW status ceases in the event that hostilities have ended (there is no legal basis for detaining POWs), repatriation (return of POWs), exchange of POWs and other forms of liberating POWs, escape of POWs and their death. Jogan, 1997: 119–121.

561 Sasoli and Bouvier, 1999: 121–134.

562 The Law of Geneva obliges the force which has captured POWs for an emergency and secure evacuation to POW camps. These have to be far enough from battlefields or operational areas where conflicts take place. Evacuation must be carried out in accordance with the provisions of humanity (provide food, water, medical care, while extreme physical exhaustion is prohibited). Jogan, 1997: 109.

563 Ilesič, 2001: 6.

defines the rules for the internment of POWs at the beginning of their captivity (quarters, food and medical care).

POWs during the Slovenian Independence War

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On June 26, 1991, the Yugoslav People's Army triggered a military intervention aimed at occupying the border crossings of the Republic of Slovenia in the initial phase to disable the Republic of Slovenia that had proclaimed its independence on June 25, 1991 and to control its territory.⁵⁶⁴ The Republic of Slovenia defined the YPA's actions on June 27 as an act of aggression.⁵⁶⁵ In line with the definition of aggression adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1974, it is necessary to emphasize that the New York Law completely prohibits direct (ideological and economic aggression) as well as indirect forms of aggression. In Article 1, aggression is defined as the employment of armed force by a state against the sovereignty, territorial integrity, or political independence of another state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations. It is not essential that a state is recognized in terms of international law or as a member of the UN. This segment of international law is the legal framework for the decision on the YPA's intervention in the Republic of Slovenia that commenced on June 26, 1991. At the moment the Republic of Slovenia proclaimed its independence, it became a subject of international law even though it was not internationally recognized and not a member of the UN. Therefore, the military operations carried out by the YPA at the border crossings and the attempt to take over the basic obligations contributing to the identity of the state – border control and establishing sovereignty over the Slovenian territory – could be legally defined as the aggression of one state against another. The conflict between the YPA and legitimate representatives of the security system of the Republic of Slovenia (the Territorial Defense forces and the Militia) may thus be understood as an interstate and not a civil war. This is a key fact because in this case the YPA and

564 Repe, 2002: 286–289.

565 On 27 June 1991 the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia declared the intervention of the YPA as an act of aggression. Repe, 2002: 289–292.

Yugoslav political leadership cannot justify the conduct of hostilities against the Republic of Slovenia as a constitutional act since, on June 25, 1991, the members of the YPA and other federal bodies were outside the borders of the SFRY and hence breaking the provisions of the Yugoslav Constitution. It was namely not defense, but an act of aggression. At the same time, the YPA and the presidency of SFRY as the highest body in command of the armed forces deliberately infringed the provisions of the UN Charter given that this aggression was in no view compatible with a peaceful solution of an interstate conflict. Yet, the Slovenian Armed Forces became a fully legitimate military institution since Article 51 of the UN Charter clearly defines the inherent right of individual and collective self-defense. Based on these starting points, the combat operations of the Armed Forces of the RS were in line with the international legal documents or provisions of international military law.

The military conflict between the defense forces of the Republic of Slovenia and the YPA erupted on June 27, 1991,⁵⁶⁶ 2 days after Slovenia had proclaimed its independence and taken over effective authority in the area the SFRY still considered to be part of its territory. Other countries considered this conflict as a civil war. Civil wars are seen as problematic in terms of the international law of war as they are generally asymmetric in nature and characterized by motivated aggression. This signifies that in such conflicts the warring parties are not equal military powers. The weaker party consequently typically uses unconventional and often illegal forms of warfare, which leads to an erosion of international legal provisions on warfare. As a result, a greater and often exaggerated and unallowed use of force is to be expected, which is later revealed to entail brutalization of the conflict. The treatment of POWs demonstrates the actual value of the military apparatus that even in the most critical situations, which war certainly is, is capable of observing the rules of international humanitarian law.

The question of how to treat POWs, in particular soldiers who deserted the YPA, in the expected military conflict during Slovenia's independence process was an issue planned in advance by Slovenian state bodies and armed forces. On one hand, this issue was part of the preparations for a possible military form of Slovenia's independence process since the threats made by the YPA and lack of supervision of them meant there was a considerable fear of a possible military

⁵⁶⁶ The military intervention began on 26 June 1991, yet the order on the employment of weapons was issued on 27 June 1991. Yet, the YPA were given an order to fire only for the purpose of self-defence or in the event of resistance at the beginning of the intervention. Kolšek, 2001: 54.

intervention.⁵⁶⁷ On the other hand, special attention was paid to all legal practices, especially in view of the danger that other countries would not recognize Slovenia's independence, which was overwhelmingly approved at a plebiscite held in December 1990. Thus, plans to secure the independence process in spring 1991 factored in the possibility the Slovenian defense forces might encounter the problem of a large number of soldiers (of Slovenian and Croatian nationality) deserting the YPA and POWs as a consequence of the dissolution of the YPA. It was therefore planned to establish a special center in remote secured areas suitable for accommodating POWs and refugees (the Jezero Plan). The police forces were also given a role in the plans concerning the treatment of POWs. The instructions were also sent to the second level of command, the territorial commands of the Territorial Defense Forces and coordination sub-groups, that were tasked with preparing special units and facilities for this purpose.⁵⁶⁸ The plan arose from the commitment of the Slovenian political leadership and the defense system to respect international regulations, yet in the special circumstances in which they were anticipated. The Territorial Defense Forces as an organized military force should have captured POWs only in the initial phase of the conflict, during combat operations and upon surrender. The procedure thereafter lay in the responsibility of the police. The plans envisaged assembly sites for the collection of POWs distributed across all secondary regional commands and central assembly sites.

When on June 27 Slovenia announced that hostilities had erupted and that it would defend itself by employing arms, the Red Cross of Slovenia immediately advised the state bodies to consistently observe the international law of war, particularly humanitarian law. The Slovenian Red Cross leadership sent a collection of positive law to state bodies.⁵⁶⁹ "Rules regarding the treatment of POWs," which on this occasion were drawn up by the Slovenian Red Cross and based on the grounds that this was an international conflict and that Slovenia was obliged

567 Janez Janša, at that time RS Secretary of Defence, designed several varieties of Slovenia's separation from a defense point of view and also presented countermeasures. Simultaneously, the Presidency of the RS was forced to respond to the aggravation of the situation and on March 18, 1991 it established the operations Coordination Body for the event of emergency situations. This body harmonized the defense and security preparations and during the armed conflict conducted assignments of the staff of the commander in chief. Janša, 1992: 107–119. This body was in fact also coordinating POW-related activities.

568 Bukovnik, 2007: 30–32.

569 Klanšek and Jelenič, 1997: 16–19.

to respect all the rules concerning POWs.⁵⁷⁰ It must be emphasized that also YPA officers were familiar with these brochures on the use of international humanitarian law, after having been made familiar during their education and training with the basics of humanitarian law. This also proves that the military personnel given the order to conduct a military intervention was aware of military law in the event of conflicts.⁵⁷¹

The course of the armed conflict was different from what had been expected by both parties. The following day, soldiers deserted the YPA en masse and a considerable number of YPA forces surrendered during or immediately after conflicts with the Territorial Defense and armed police forces. Due to the low intensity of the war and adaptation to the situation, there were no significant conflicts that could lead to violence during the combat operations. “The treatment in the event of POWs should proceed carefully – a detailed examination of the soldiers is necessary. The security instructions regarding the soldiers were clear – regardless their rank they are to be tied until they moved outside the area of the combat operations,” these were the instructions for the treatment of POWs.⁵⁷²

The unexpected and increased growth in the number of POWs and members who had quit their YPA units called for new measures to be devised by the Slovenian political leadership. On June 29, 1991, the Slovenian Secretariat for Internal Affairs (Ministry of Internal Affairs) sent a dispatch, setting out all details of the procedures and rules concerning the treatment of POWs, to all police stations through the Administration for Internal Affairs. Instructions were also issued for the treatment of those persons who had quit their YPA units and escaped to the Slovenian side – they had to be ensured safety from possible revenge measures of the YPA and granted certain legal rights. The dispatch also included the formation of transitional assembly sites in all regions, while provisions of the Geneva Conventions and the cooperation with the Slovenian Red Cross were particularly taken into consideration. This *dépêche* also launched the close cooperation of both relevant ministries, the Secretariat for People’s Defense and the Secretariat for Internal Affairs, while dealing with POW-related problems.

570 Collection by Miha Wohinz, *Pravila ravnanja z vojnimi ujetniki*.

571 General Konrad Kolšek who led the intervention as the commander of the 5th Military District claims that officers who were envisaged for the conduct of the military actions were particularly warned/informed about respecting the rules of international humanitarian law (Kolšek, 2001: 92–103).

572 Bukovnik, 1998: 208–209.

As the number of POWs continued to grow, a special operational group was formed within the Secretariat for Internal Affairs on July 2 for the work with POWs. The fundamental tasks of this group were:

- solving legal issues related to the arranging of the status of POWs;
- coordinating the operation of sub-groups dealing with the problem of POWs;
- collecting a variety of information in connection with POWs for the requirements of bodies of internal affairs; and
- transmitting information of the Slovenian Red Cross and cooperating with other competent institutions.⁵⁷³

On this basis, a large number of assembly areas was established in Slovenia, located in various facilities (penitentiary institutions, police stations, mines, tunnels, tent camps, schools etc.), among which the central assembly site at Dol pri Hrastniku held special status. As the ad hoc established assembly centers could not satisfy the needs of the increasing number of POWs, regional assembly points were established in Ljubljana, Maribor, Celje, Murska Sobota, Novo Mesto, Kranj, Koper, Nova Gorica, Sežana, and Slovenj Gradec. Regional assembly points were located at various installations most appropriate with regard to the local circumstances and operated until the release or departure of the last POW. They actually ceased to formally operate on July 19, 1991 when the RS Emergency Situation Coordinating Group called of Action POW upon the issuing of a *dépêche*.⁵⁷⁴ Thus, bodies of the internal affairs took over the care for POWs straight after their capture, and also took care of their transport and the gathering of their personal information. POWs fell into two categories: officers and soldiers. YPA officers were accommodated separately and interviewed first, in line with the Geneva Conventions. The police had to report all the information gathered on the number of POWs to the relevant bodies of the TD units. After the procedure of gathering basic information (name, last name, place of birth, place of residence) had been completed, they were accommodated in assembly areas where they were care of by the TD.

From the outset, close cooperation was ensured with the boards of the Slovenian Red Cross to which the police reported basic information related to POWs.⁵⁷⁵ As a result of Slovenia's newly acquired independence and the new

⁵⁷³ Ibid., 209.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., 211.

⁵⁷⁵ International rules of law ensure the International Red Cross Committee (ICRC) a special place in the area of care and assistance to war victims or those who are clearly protected by the provisions of the assistance international humanitarian law. In compliance with the

status of the Slovenian Red Cross, it was not possible to carry out all the organizational changes and train their members for such a unique situation as the war.⁵⁷⁶ However, on the first days of the conflict the Slovenian Red Cross informed all municipal boards of the Red Cross through a circular letter on emergency measures, gave special instructions related to, and sent forms for the work of the information and security service. In the first circular letter, the boards of the Slovenian Red Cross stressed the importance of treating POWs in line with the Geneva Conventions. At the same time, a direct connection with the Slovenian operational leadership and the services of the secretariats for defense, internal affairs, and health as well as the civil defense HQ were established. All state bodies were provided with copies of the Geneva Conventions, including an explanation of their obligation to cooperate with the Slovenian Red Cross. A special letter stressing the cooperation with the Slovenian Red Cross was sent to the HQ of the YPA Ljubljana Corps. Structures of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were immediately informed about the military conflict and at the same time received a request for moral and material support for Slovenia and the Slovenian Red Cross.⁵⁷⁷

Along with its primary obligations, the Slovenian Red Cross conducted a wide range of humanitarian missions. Teams and individuals collected and distributed clothing, food, and offered first aid to wounded, captured, and defected soldiers and civilians. The Slovenian Red Cross prepared a survey of all types of individuals who had been affected by the war – POWs, wounded, killed, and missing

Geneva Conventions, members of the ICRC have access to places and areas where these protected persons live (POWs, internees, prisoners), establish contacts with them and offer them humanitarian aid if necessary. The ICRC has unlimited possibilities to offer warring parties the protection of and assistance to victims of military conflicts. The role of Red Cross (RC) institutions is particularly emphasized in the assistance to a certain category of war victims (POWs, internees, refugees, mothers with children, elderly people) since the Geneva Conventions clearly define that national RC institutions are to collect humanitarian aid or to care for the wounded and sick, regardless of their allegiance (Klanšek and Jelenič, 1997: 16–19).

576 During an extended session held on October 8, 1990, the Chairmanship of the Slovenian Red Cross adopted the decision to withdraw from the Yugoslav Red Cross as preparations required for Slovenia's independence process were already taking place. They informed all other republic organizations of the Yugoslav Red Cross and the ICRC about their decision. Documentation of the Slovenian Red Cross, Sklep o izstopu Rdečega križa Slovenije iz sestave Rdečega križa Jugoslavije, October 8, 1990.

577 Klanšek and Jelenič, 1997: 16; Collection by Miha Wohinz, Pravila ravnanja z vojnimi ujetniki, Ženevske konvencije.

persons. The Slovenian Red Cross organized the return of 3,157 captured enemy soldiers to the Republic of Yugoslavia. In this, it closely cooperated with representatives of the ICRC who had arrived in Slovenia as early as on June 29, 1991. They visited wounded persons, POWs, and refugees and, based on reports, suggested various solutions to further improve the situation. These reports in no way mentioned infringements of any provisions of the Geneva Conventions or any other provisions of international humanitarian law.⁵⁷⁸

During numerous visits, ICRC representatives established that the POWs were being treated adequately, as confirmed by the POWs themselves. Yet, while POWs faced certain spatial problems, their rights were not reduced. The only exception was the freedom of movement, which was quite limited to prisons, which POWs found to be humiliating.⁵⁷⁹

When surrendering individual guardhouses, YPA commanders wanted to surrender to the Slovenian Militia, not to the Territorial Defense. The most likely reason is that they did not recognize the Territorial Defense Forces as a military formation or were unfamiliar with this military organization and possibly feared reprisals in response to the aggression. YPA officers and soldiers trusted the Slovenian police as part of the government system as a body that would probably treat them in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law. Their fear was however baseless, as later became evident. Further, TD members carried out their assignment in a correct manner.

578 During their visit to Slovenia, ICRC representatives wanted to assess in particular the treatment of POWs of the Yugoslav People's Army and other federal bodies in Slovenia. The results of this visit can be summarized in the following observations: the Slovenian authorities enabled the representatives to visit all requested locations (assembly sites and prisons). These visits were conducted from 2 to 10 July 1991 at the assembly sites in Ljubljana, the prisons in Dob pri Mirni and Celje. The representatives paid particular attention to the wounded POWs at the UKC Ljubljana. The POWs were separated from other prisoners; officers were joined in a special group which was separated from other soldiers and non-commissioned officers, a room accommodated on average 6 soldiers. Only higher-ranking individuals were allowed to be accommodated in a single cell or room. All rooms were furnished with showers and toilets and the hygiene in all rooms was at a high standard and was adequately furnished. Food was provided in sufficient quantities and was of adequate quality. It was possible to buy various items in the prisons, such as food, cosmetics and all prisoners had the possibility to communicate with the outer world. Further, all locations visited by the ICRC representatives offered a quality health care service. Collection by Miha Wohinz, ICRC Report, 1991.

579 Ibid.

The total number of POWs captured by TDF members and the police during the armed conflict in 1991 in Slovenia was 3,157 persons. Nonetheless, the actual number is believed to have been at least twice that figure. The reason this number was not officially known is that the majority of soldiers were sent across the Slovenian–Croatian border immediately after surrendering. The central record of the Slovenian Red Cross refers to a total 4,077 POWs, yet this figure includes civilians and members of the federal police as well as sick and missing persons. Since the information was collected on different levels (by the RS coordination group, Slovenian Red Cross, Ministry of Justice and its administrations, and at assembly sites), the number is not factually correct.⁵⁸⁰ Moreover, the number of POWs at the assembly sites changed on a daily basis.

Based on the information collected by these institutions, 1,461 POWs were confined in penitentiary institutions, the remaining share, that is 1,700, were gathered at assembly sites in the Republic of Slovenia. The lack of appropriate quarters for such a number of POWs saw the Slovenian authorities decide to accommodate POWs in prisons. While they were accommodated separately from other prisoners, they were controlled by prison guards together with members of the police, which secured the area surrounding the prison.

As the conflict in Slovenia was short in duration (27 June to 4 July 1991), it was not possible to develop all necessary instruments for the treatment of POWs. This led to certain deficiencies. In particular, it was necessary to consistently observe the prisoners' POW status in prisons. Although the prison personnel were acquainted with the fact that the status of POWs was different from the other prisoners, they could not adapt to the changed procedures and circumstances. The POWs at Dob, Celje, and Koper began protests (hunger strikes) to request the regularization of their status and were thus not staged against the actual prison conditions or the infringement of their rights.⁵⁸¹

The release or repatriation of POWs proceeded quickly following the short duration of the conflict. When on July 4, an armistice was declared between Slovenia and the Yugoslav forces, the most emphasized negotiation requests were

580 Pirjevec (2003: 64) states that the number of POWs amounted up to 4,782, with 8,000 supposedly having deserted the federal forces.

581 Thus, POWs in the prison in Dob, where 91 officers and 110 soldiers were imprisoned, announced and started a hunger strike, claiming that their rights were being violated (they lived in facilities alongside "criminals" and were given the same food). After an agreement had been reached with the prisons administration, the strike was stopped and tensions were eventually settled. Ilešič, 2001: 44; Collection by Miha Wohinz, report of KP Dob, dated 7 July 1991; Resolution of the Prisoners of War July 6, 1991.

the release of the captured soldiers and the return of military equipment. The Slovenian side regarded the release of the POWs as a request from the adversary side that was easy to implement, even though POWs generally served as an appropriate negotiation instrument. They tried to exchange POWs on Slovenian soil with Slovenian officers and soldiers who were still part of the Yugoslav People's Army or, according to available information, held in prisons and in isolation at YPA military posts, where they were exposed to constant moral and physical repressions.⁵⁸² Although the presidency (collective head) of the SFRY delivered an ultimatum on July 5, 1991, the Slovenian side agreed nonetheless to temporarily release POWs, yet with the warning that they might be recalled to the YPA.⁵⁸³ The Slovenian consent for temporarily releasing POWs had several motives. One motive was certainly to promote a more favorable public image of the Slovenian authorities since Serbia in particular had spread news of allegedly cruel treatment of YPA soldiers, who were mainly conscripts doing military service. Even the Federal Executive Council claimed in a letter to the Slovenian authorities dated July 6, 1991 that the Slovenian side was infringing rights held by POWs under the Geneva Conventions and that it had "treated them in an inhumane manner".⁵⁸⁴ The Slovenian side allowed several busses with parents of POWs to come to Ljubljana and turned their children over to them. The YPA did not wish to provide for the protection of released POWs or participate in their release. Further, it asked the parents to collect signatures on a certified statement regarding the takeover of the POWs. This certified statement contained the following wording: "I confirm that I have been informed about the fact that the Slovenian authorities will do everything necessary to ensure undisturbed transport in the territory of the Republic of Slovenia, although the Republic of Slovenia is not providing absolute security".⁵⁸⁵ This statement was also regarded as a ticket.

On request of the Yugoslav side after the immediate release of captured YPA soldiers and officers as well as customs and police officers, the EU Troika of

582 Collection by Miha Wohinz; copy of the letter of the president of Executive Council, Assembly of R Slovenija dated July 8, 1991; Janša, 1992: 247; Kolšek, 1997: 329 (Decision of SFRY Presidency dated July 4, 1991), 330 (Letter of SFRY Presidency to the RS Presidency dated July 6, 1991), 331 (Letter of 5th Military District Headquarter dated 6 July, 1991).

583 Agenda of the 51st session of the RS Presidency July 5, 1991, Arhiv Republike Slovenije (ARS), AS 1944, ARS SI.

584 Collection by Miha Wohinz: copy of the letter of Federal Executive Council, dated July 6, 1991.

585 Ibid., letter of RSNZ, dated July 4, 1991.

ministers organized a conference on July 8 on the cessation of war on the Croatian Brioni Islands, inviting all parties involved. The request to release POWs included Article 1 of the Declaration. As a sign of goodwill, the Slovenian political leadership notified Ljubljana even during the Brioni negotiations to release 86 officers being held in the Dob prison. These officers were released on the night of July 8, 1991. The Slovenian Red Cross, the Yugoslav Red Cross, and an ICRC delegate participated in this release.⁵⁸⁶ At its 54 session, the RS Presidency decided to release the rest of the POWs if the bodies of the YPA were willing to cooperate with the ICRC and release captured members of the Slovenian TD and police as well as soldiers and officers being detained by force.⁵⁸⁷ Still, the opinion prevailed that it was necessary to release the POWs within an agreed timeframe. Problems concerning their release were chiefly caused by the fact that it was difficult to establish contacts with Yugoslav authorities following the previous tensions. The YPA did not want to cooperate with the ICRC nor release any captured members of the TD and the police.⁵⁸⁸ The remaining POWs who wanted so were released to Yugoslav authorities by July 11, 1991. Along with soldiers of Slovenian and Croatian nationality, who were both citizens of newly established countries, the POWs included a considerable number of soldiers of Albanian nationality who wished to escape from the YPA and certainly did not want to return to either the YPA or Yugoslav territory.⁵⁸⁹

586 Ibid., letter of the RS Presidency, dated July 8, 1991.

587 Ibid., letter of the RS Presidency to the SFRY Presidency, dated July 8, 1991.

588 Ibid., letter of the RS Presidency to the SFRY Presidency, dated July 9, 1991.

589 Ibid., letter of RSNZ, dated July 7, 1991.

A NATION OF WARRIORS?

Slovenians were a nation whose state form remained in the context of other states for a long time – in Austro-Hungary in the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century, and then in Yugoslavia throughout most of the 20th century. State independence in the form of what was then the ideal of a nation state was therefore a key point of the national aspirations (the national model had been sought in the principality of Carantania (pre-Carinthia) from the early Middle Ages), planning and even political practice, usually at the turning points when the existing state context was dissolving for internal or external reasons. In the case of two of these forms – the State of Slovenians, Croats, and Serbs on October 29, 1918 and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians on December 1, 1918 – Slovenians, after having co-existed with others in the Habsburg Monarchy for almost 1,000 years, opted for the Yugoslav context. In Slovenian national politics and society in general, this achievement was seen as the fulfilment of the national goals and efforts of widespread social groups, but also founded on the conviction that in the context of Austro-Hungary it would not be possible to realize these national goals: state integrity and full national development. The circumstances of this political unification of very diverse parts, among which the Kingdom of Serbia was the most influential and by far the largest, led to the fact that Slovenians were mostly not seen as a nation of warriors. Such a dominant stereotype is the outcome of a combination of factors:

- Slovenians as Austro-Hungarian soldiers had been defeated in a global conflict;
- Slovenian military organization was too weak to independently protect the borders of what Slovenians considered to be their national state;
- Slovenians actively displayed their reservations to the army of the common state, albeit in many aspects these were reservations concerning the perceived foreignness of the army, in which they were a considerable yet still minor element, unable to significantly influence its character; and
- the Slovenian feelings about what was otherwise a generally accepted nation state changed from the initial enthusiasm to disappointment (given the political and economic circumstances).

The paradox of this fundamental realization is that in the Austrian environment Slovenians were not seen as a non-militant nation. Various records, decorations (for individuals as well as units) and proven military achievements of the military units consisting of soldiers from the provinces of Carniola and southern Styria attest to a high level of preparedness to carry out the toughest military operations and thereby ensure a high level of combat readiness and effectiveness. In fact,

this was also apparent in the First World War when the Slovenian 87th Regiment was assessed as being one of the best among the warring Austrian units.⁵⁹⁰

The period between the Great War and the attack of the Central Forces against what was then the Kingdom of Yugoslavia on April 6, 1941 was peaceful from the military operations viewpoint. The system of conscription ensured the equal participation of Slovenians in what was otherwise a strongly centralized military system, headed by the Serbian officer staff. This system was hindered by numerous material limitations⁵⁹¹ reflected in the severe material deficiency of members of the Royal Army as well as the outdated and very mixed military equipment.⁵⁹²

What was perhaps even more decisive was the profound internal instability of the military system caused by the very evident political and state opposition between the elites of the two majority nations: Serbs and Croats. Tensions started to mount as soon as the Kingdom of SHS was formed. They were generally restricted to the political level, while the relations between the nations became increasingly tense especially due to the inequality of the nations in the state.⁵⁹³ The lowest point came when the head of the leading Croatian political party HSS,

590 Švajncer, 1988: 34–42.

591 The Great Depression, following the Wall Street “Black Friday”, also engulfed Europe as early as in 1929. The Yugoslav state budget was reduced drastically. Consequently, the military budget, otherwise amounting to approximately 25% of the total budget, was also reduced. The effects of the reduced budget were short- and long-term. Military procurement – in terms of frequency as well as quality – was also reduced. The purchasing of uniforms was decreased. A day without meat was introduced in the soldiers’ diet once per week. One of the most evident measures was the significantly smaller number of drafted recruits (by as much as 30%) between 1932 and 1934. Even later, the military authorities would often send the servicemen on lengthy leave (Bjelajac, 1988: 81–89).

592 Bjelajac, 1988: 81–89.

593 The political confrontation, especially between the Serbs and the Croats, caused instability and led to extremes, such as the killing of the Croatian leader Stjepan Radić in the Parliament. In order to save the state, King Alexander abolished the Constitution in 1929, assumed personal dictatorship and, after 2 years, imposed his own constitution which centralized the country even more. His assassination in Marseilles was the work of extreme nationalists. In 1939, following many years of struggle, the political leaders finally reached an agreement, securing the considerable Croatian autonomy in the framework of the Province of Croatia. However, the formation of an equally autonomous Slovenian province was abandoned because of the war. Fischer et al (eds.), 2005: 298–299. The parliamentary system and national authorities were weak and unstable due to the disputes between the Croatian and Serbian political elites, far exceeding the mere political aspects. The King as the sovereign made a bold and risky move: with a soft coup he took over the control of the parliamentary system, appointed a man

Stjepan Radić, was murdered in the Belgrade Parliament. As it happened, the assassin, a Serbian nationalist who also killed two other political representatives of HSS besides Stjepan Radić, was sentenced leniently, and the impression remained that the tragic event had occurred with the quiet approval of the Yugoslav royal family.

These were decisive moments that prevented the Yugoslav Royal Army from carrying out a timely mobilization when the state was invaded on April 6, 1941.⁵⁹⁴ Further, this army was also incapable of organizing the resistance against the occupying forces.⁵⁹⁵

All of this military experience directly and indirectly shaped a particular military tradition of the Slovenian nation that was not independent and based on the national platform: the language of command was not Slovenian, the military symbols had no relationship with the history of the Slovenian nation, and the military goals were, as a rule, not part of the Slovenian vision of national development.⁵⁹⁶

This was followed by two conflicts, taking place in two different generations, which decisively influenced the future with respect to the existence of the nation and later the state. In each case, the armed struggle of the Slovenian nation represented a defense from the aggression of foreign opponents, a radical change in the social system and position of the Slovenian nation in Central Europe, as well as the establishment of new political regimes. The forming of the actual military power of the Slovenian nation, based on the qualitative and quantitative facts and, to an even greater degree, on the military morale, may be seen as an important reason. The military morale must be understood as an irreplaceable source

he trusted as the Prime Minister, amended the constitution and outlawed the “tribal” national parties. Vučković: 1976: 7–227; Lazarević, 1994: 44.

594 After Yugoslavia had been invaded by foreign coalition forces, the execution of the mobilization became impossible. The enemy, with its total aerial superiority, mainly targeted communication lines. Its rapidly advancing motorized units occupied the Yugoslav military commands before they had even been mobilized and activated (Terzić, 1980: 255).

595 The fighting in the territory of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia progressed at lightning speed. The war beginning with an aerial bombardment of Belgrade at 6:30 AM on April 6, 1941 was over in 10 days. There are many reasons for this and it would be unrealistic to expect the Yugoslav Army to have stood up successfully against the much stronger aggressors. The attack on Yugoslavia was carefully prepared by and coordinated between the countries involved: Germany, Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania (Terzić, 1980: 247–248).

596 Prebilič and Guštin, 2013: 237–257.

of motivation in combat, decisiveness, persistence, along with cohesion in the military units themselves as well as between the civil and military environments.

Fighting Strength – Its Importance and Role

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Around 400 B.C., Xenophon stated that “not numbers or strength bring victory in war; but whichever army goes into battle stronger in soul, their enemies generally cannot withstand them”⁵⁹⁷. At roughly the same time in China, Sun Tzu noted the importance of “moral law” in his teachings on the art of war. The Romans remarked on the importance of moral and motivational aspects in war and focused on them while organizing their legions.⁵⁹⁸ Even the most notable military theoretician of the 19th century, Carl von Clausewitz, emphasized: “...the fact of a victory cannot in any way be explained without taking moral impressions into consideration.”⁵⁹⁹ Napoleon gave some thought to the issue of (combat) morale as well. Kümmel offers the following statement regarding morale: “The morale is to the physical as three is to one and in the end, Spirit will always conquer the Sword”.⁶⁰⁰ “A strong soul, in modern times, is equivalent to high combat motivation. Likewise, combat motivation’s centrality to a successful outcome in military operations, from patrolling to full-scale wars, cannot be overstated.”⁶⁰¹

Today, military psychologists and sociologists perform in-depth analyses of the aforementioned mental state of soldiers complete with various aspects and definitions of the individual nuances of soldiers’ emotions in extremely stressful circumstances like war. Naturally, this research has not only been undertaken in order to define the theoretical foundations but is also focused on exploring in what way and especially who or what can have an important influence on the mental stability of soldiers. Despite all such efforts, while of course no single answer exists, it has become even clearer how important yet frequently overlooked

597 Manning, 1991: 453–454.

598 Rodrigues-Goulart, 2006: 93–96.

599 Clausewitz, 1963: 56.

600 Kümmel, 1999.

601 Catignani, 2004: 108.

or underrated this question is. The changes in the direction of the professionalization of the armed forces, increasing the firepower and sophistication of weapons systems have in no way lowered the importance of combat motivation, the internal cohesion of the units, fighting spirit, and combat morale. Quite the opposite: especially due to the ever-increasing psychological burdens imposed on soldiers while performing their tasks in the modern battlefields, where they face various forms of asymmetric and largely unconventional warfare, the multi-faceted stability of soldiers as well as units is paramount.

The foundation is the combat morale, which is central to all other concepts used in the analysis discussed in this book. Although at first glance this term is not very complicated, we can already become stuck with its general definition as psychological as well as sociological components are emphasized. It has an integrative role in society as well as in the army because it steers people's actions and aspirations in line with their personal convictions and values, keeping them in the context of socially acceptable standards. It functions as a filter and regulator, distinguishing between good and bad.⁶⁰² This very foundation has a very important influence on the establishing of a code of norms, which allows soldiers to operate in extreme situations. Thus, French underlines the following: "In many cases code of honor seems to hold the warrior to a higher ethical standard than that required for an ordinary citizen within the general population of the society the warrior serves. The code is not imposed from outside. This code of the warrior defines not only how he should treat other members of his society, his enemies, and the people he conquers. The code restrains the warrior. It sets the boundaries on his behavior. And finally for such code the warrior may be protected himself from serious psychological damage."⁶⁰³

Combat morale is not easy to define, "as it is an invisible and intangible concept, which is not easy to achieve and even harder to preserve in the units".⁶⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the essence of combat morale was summed up and introduced in the military environment by a military terminology dictionary: "welfare, and recreation — The merging of multiple unconnected disciplines into programs which improve unit readiness, promote fitness, build unit morale and cohesion, enhance quality of life, and provide recreational, social, and other support services".⁶⁰⁵ To

602 Shavell, 2002: 233–236.

603 French, 2005: 3–4.

604 Plavec, 2014: 9.

605 DOD Dictionary of Military Terms. <https://irp.fas.org/doddir/dod/dictionary.pdf>. Accessed on 17. 09. 2023.

these basis, Encyclopedia Britannica adds an important distinction of combat morale as “the mental and emotional condition (as of enthusiasm, confidence, or loyalty) of an individual or group with regard to the function or tasks at hand”, focusing on “the level of individual psychological well-being based on such factors as a sense of purpose and confidence in the future”. It also distinguishes between individual combat morale and group combat morale, which it defines as “... a sense of common purpose with respect to a group: esprit de corps”.⁶⁰⁶ It underlines this very distinction and opens a discussion about who or what may influence the existence and state of combat morale. “Morale is a mental and emotional condition of an individual or group in terms of enthusiasm, confidence and loyalty. It is subjective and directly attribute to leadership and its manifestation, such as a leader's genuine concern for the welfare of the troops. Among esprit, morale and cohesion, morale is the most volatile, turning on things both seemingly small and historically significant, such as mail, chow, hard work, victory. Whereas esprit and cohesion are the principal province of military leadership, forces outside the military can affect morale”.⁶⁰⁷ On this basis, we can establish that combat morale influences the success of the army and soldiers on the battlefield importantly, if not decisively. We may build from the fact that combat morale is thus a collection of individual traits of the soldiers who, as a group, are oriented to achieving the goals of the organization. Thus, combat morale is on one hand defined by the individual factors, while on the other it depends on the group factors.⁶⁰⁸

The following elements able to have a profound positive influence on the combat morale among soldiers may be identified:

- satisfying the biological and psychological needs of the soldiers: health, rest, food, clothes, protecting the individuals from poor weather conditions,
- soldier training: ensure the soldiers' trust in their individual skills and military knowledge, thereby developing their trust in their fellow soldiers (who are capable of taking part in the critical moments of combat at least on an equal basis), as well as trust in the commanding officers, whose orders have an indirect impact on the life or death of the soldiers,

606 Merriam-Webster online dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/>. Accessed on 17. 09. 2023.

607 Skelton, 1999: 1–7.

608 Arnejčič, 2008: 291–292.

- trust in the weaponry and equipment of the soldiers: essential for the smooth realization of military operations, allowing the soldiers to focus on their tasks and the situation on the battlefield, and
- understanding the goals of the soldiers' combat missions: essential and allowing not only for the efficient realization of combat operations themselves, but also enabling a broader understanding of military activities or their sensibility or goal-oriented nature.⁶⁰⁹

Nevertheless, we cannot equate combat morale with seemingly closely-related terms like combat motivation, cohesion, and *esprit de corps*. Although Baynes described combat morale as "... the enthusiasm and persistence with which a member of a group engages in the prescribed activities of that group"⁶¹⁰, we may – despite the fact that "morale" and "motivation" are frequently used interchangeably – draw a line between the two. However, morale highlights the condition of the group (or the unit), while motivation describes principally the attribute of an individual.⁶¹¹ "In certain circumstances or under certain stimuli, the individual assumes particular attitudes and acts on them. However, all this is based on two essential components: impulse and motive. Impulse refers to the internal process that incites a person to act. Motive is that which generates the behavior and helps the person achieve his objective. The objective is the reward that satisfies the individual's internal urges."⁶¹²

Increasing amounts of attention are also being paid to the study of elements that influence the enhancement of motivation.⁶¹³ High levels of combat motivation significantly influence trust in oneself, one's commanding officers, units, the organization and the state. It also acts as the cornerstone for the formation of a stable fighting strength of individuals as well as units. Accordingly, all of these

609 Plavec, 2014: 21–22.

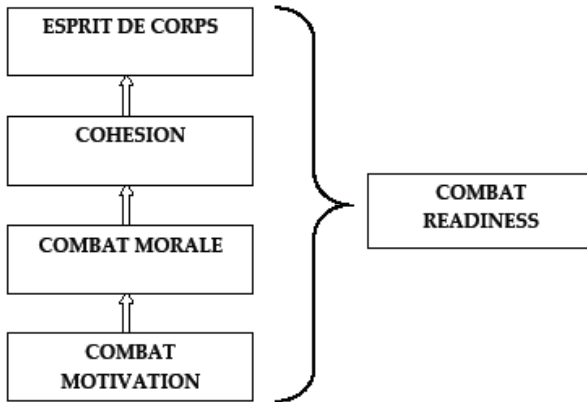
610 Manning, 1985: 15.

611 Reuven, 1986: 550.

612 Rodrigues-Goulart, 2006: 93.

613 These might include a sense of duty, a sense of accomplishment when a mission is completed, responsibility, spirit of sacrifice, love of glory, an adventurous spirit, leadership, *esprit de corps*, unit cohesion, training, self-confidence, discipline, logistical efficiency, confidence in systems of sub-institutions, a predilection for recognition and rewards, notions regarding a war's legitimacy, hope of victory, hatred of the enemy and, lastly (on many occasions), the need for self-preservation. For many armies though, hate is not a relevant motivational factor (Rodrigues-Goulart, 2006: 94).

facts place battle motivation at the very foundation of the psychological pyramid of combat readiness.



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Thus *esprit de corps* is closely related to units, not so much to the individuals. Yet, the relationship between individual soldiers and their units is by all means important. Most military personnel know esprit as unit pride, the common spirit of enthusiasm, devotion, and collective honor. A shared sense of unit accomplishment can strengthen esprit, particularly when overcoming adversity. This shared success binds individuals not only to their unit but also to each other.⁶¹⁴ This is what puts the fighting spirit at the top of the psychological pyramid of combat readiness, which Manning sees as very closely connected with cohesion: “Esprit de corps is the higher order concept, paralleling cohesion at the primary group level, implying above all pride in and devotion to the reputation of formal organization beyond the primary group, along with cohesion, necessary for sustained effective performance of soldiers in combat.”⁶¹⁵ These very foundations are what cohesion is based on, which we can understand as “... the bonding together of members of an organization/unit in such a way as to sustain their will and commitment to each other, their unit, and the mission.”⁶¹⁶ Further, Skelton also underlines the correlation between handling the stress and the role of cohesion in the units: “...while soldiers may draw real strength from unit pride and collective attitudes, their ability to endure, preserve and remain determined in the face of

614 Merriam-Webster online dictionary.

615 Manning, 1991: 711–723.

616 Henderson, 1985: 4.

mounting combat stress is primarily a function of Cohesion.”⁶¹⁷ The possibility of combining morale and esprit with cohesion is essential. In this way, the feelings of adequate comrades’ protection help to reduce the psychological and physical fear. Mutual social recognition and attachment are important factors of cohesion. Both can be assured within units through realistic training and team building. “Unit members gain confidence in their own ability to act in the face of danger and gain trust in their comrades’ ability to do the same.”⁶¹⁸ However, when discussing cohesion, MacCoun stressed the importance between social cohesion, which may be simplified as a question of whether the group members like each other, and task cohesion, which refers to whether group members share the same goals.⁶¹⁹ Building cohesion normally takes time, mentoring, and a personnel rotation policy that maintains stable units with little turnover.

With regard to building cohesion, two other concepts must be underlined that we should not confuse with each other and whose understanding is the precondition for the successful building of cohesion. When the relations and cohesion between superiors and subordinates are at the forefront, we are talking about vertical or hierarchic cohesion, resulting in the identification and especially trust in the commander, their goals, and intentions. On the other hand, horizontal cohesion involves the establishment of trust among the soldiers. As such, it is the basis for the development of adherence and spirit of the unit, and, as a rule, is based on the common values. It not only involves the conviction and adherence to an organization, but also the personal conviction with respect to the goals and values of the organization, which the individuals exhibit through their readiness to work for it. In this manner, a network of relationships forms, protecting its members and sheltering them from stress.⁶²⁰ Having said that, esprit, morale, and cohesion lead to greater combat effectiveness.

Thus, the goal of all individuals and the system as a whole is to ensure the best possible combat readiness, which we understand and interpret as the will to fight as well as, naturally, the wish to achieve victory. The latter further strengthens the team spirit, which is a precondition for ensuring the successful realization of

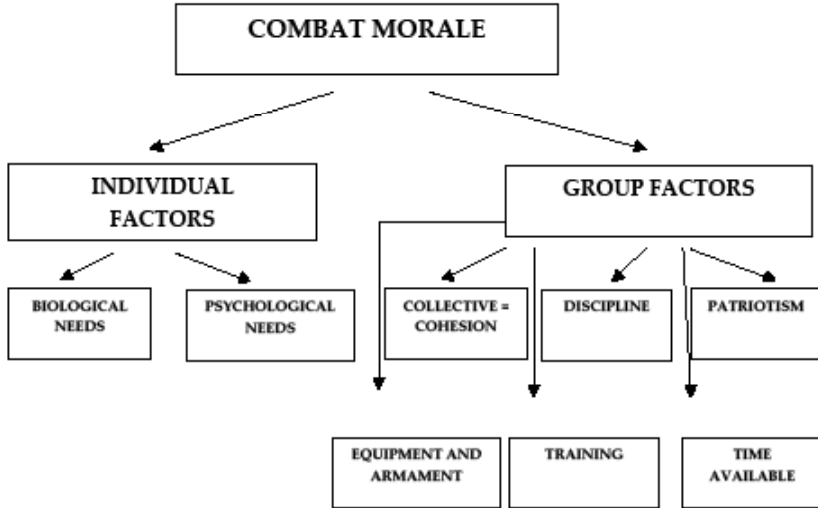
617 Skelton, 1999: 1–7.

618 Hooker, 1985: 25–35.

619 Researchers have repeatedly found out that task cohesion has a modest but reliable correlation with group performance, whereas social cohesion has no reliable correlation with performance (MacCoun, Kier, and Belkin, 2005: 1–9).

620 Polič, 1993: 32.

military tasks.⁶²¹ Quite a few questions in this respect remain open, as the encouragement and preservation of the fighting spirit cannot be applied to each and every soldier. Each individual reacts to certain approaches and stimuli in their own way and differently. Therefore, it is the commanders' task to successfully adapt the contents of the training in this area and avoid the potential counterproductive effects of their efforts in maintaining the combat readiness of the individuals as well as whole units.



Combat Morale in the Resistance Units in Slovenia during the Second World War

Slovenian society was engulfed by the Second World War in its mature stage in April 1941, shortly before the German attack against the Soviet Union, which also implied a clearly evident structure of military conflict. The fear and consequent increasingly strong self-preservation instinct immediately joined the

621 Dandridge, 2003: 68–69.

profound disappointment caused by the swift military defeat and surrender of what previously had been the fabled Yugoslav Army. Already in the first weeks of the occupation. Slovenians experienced what previously had been seen as paranoia of radical groups:

- division of the central part of the ethnic territory among three occupiers (neighboring states) or nations: Germany, Italy, and Hungary;
- the annexation (implied or actual) of each of these territories to the occupying states; and
- occupation policy, pursuing the goal of immediate (or achieved within a single generation) denationalization: the partial or complete abolition of the Slovenian language; the instant forced deportation of part of the population – around 10% in the German-occupied territory; and the forced allocation of the occupying states' citizenship.

The research carried out to date indicates that the resistance organized by the population, which very soon grew to become an armed resistance, was a response to the situation as established by the occupation in April 1941, especially national endangerment, which a large share of the population saw as their own personal endangerment in connection with the communal, national threat. With such a defining factor, the question of who would organize and lead the resistance held secondary importance as far as the population was concerned.⁶²² However, the political authenticity and definition of the resistance goals was definitely important as the anti-fascist orientation was another important factor. For the

622 However, it was very important for the internal dynamics of the relationships between the political forces. Because the response of the former ruling political forces was wrong – they were also burdened by the defeat of the Yugoslav state which they co-governed – and they had not captured the wind of belligerence, their political influence and support was lost. In the next stage, when they became aware of this loss, they were prepared – which was morally disputable – to resort to political and military collaboration in order to preserve their influence and reduce the power of the resistance Liberation Front, which had grown considerably by that point. Thus, they were willing to assist the occupiers in their efforts to eradicate the resistance movement, which resulted in a civil war in several provinces and, as the war developed, in the unbearable position of this side. We should also underline that in the Yugoslav environment these relations were very different. Let us just mention that the majority of Croats accepted the Independent State of Croatia as their national state despite the extensive crimes against the citizens of Serbian nationality as well as Jews. It took considerable disappointments for them to renounce this state and join the resistance movement as late as in 1943–1944. However, in Serbia two resistance movements – the Chetniks and the Partisans – appeared simultaneously, in July 1941 (Pirjevec, 2020: 60–71).

Slovenians, this orientation was an outcome of the actions taken by Germany and Italy against the Slovenian minorities living in their countries.

The first group to opt for the resistance was the radical left, hitherto forbidden and outlawed political option (communists). Until that point in time, this was a fringe political group without much consequence or extensive support. In view of its position, this group had nothing to do with responsibility for the defeat in the war of April 1941 which in its opinion had been caused by poor government, defeatism, and treason – all of which burdened the former ruling political structure. The channeling of the resistance attitude of a large group of people into the pool of this resistance organization quickly strengthened this option, allowing it to introduce its own political goals that went beyond national liberation, alongside the general liberation goals of the resistance against the occupiers.

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We should also mention that young people, often not yet of age, were far more engaged and ready to take risks, which also added to the mass appeal and radicalization of the resistance movement.

This was also contributed to by the foreign political context: in the international context, the Communist Party was obliged to assist the Soviet Union, which was under attack.⁶²³ On the other hand, the Yugoslav government kept operating in exile despite the capitulation of its army. After a few months of significant isolation resulting from the British reservations with regard to its credibility (the Kingdom of Yugoslavia officially joined the Triple Pact), it finally acquired the status of a country participating on the anti-Axis side. It even became one of the founding members of the United Nations Pact. Gradually, this became an important positioning factor, especially because in July 1941 Great Britain concluded an agreement on mutual aid with the Soviet Union, then under attack. In less than a year, this developed into an alliance.

The compatibility between the bellicosity of part of the population and the radical nature of the resistance organization was crucial. Initially, the share of the population in support of the resistance was, of course, minor, we can estimate it at just a few percent. If we take account that around 2,000 armed members of the resistance (Partisan) units participated in the first year of the resistance in Slovenia. However, already by the next summer (1942) the number of these fighters had risen to 5,500. Until the mobilization in the autumn of 1943, the figure had climbed to 10,000, and after the mobilization in 1944 to approximately 35,000. This is as much as 2.5% percent, which is comparable with the response countries can achieve by implementing a partial forced mobilization. Altogether,

623 Pirjevec, 2020: 53–54.

around 75,000 Slovenians fought in the resistance army, with 28,000 of them dying in various battles over 4 years⁶²⁴. Regardless of these enormous losses (40%!), which usually dampen the moment of the combat morale, the most important factor of the resistance army's fighting strength was probably its significant combat morale and general fighting spirit. Roughly every tenth male inhabitant of Slovenia participated in or was mobilized by the resistance army.

For 2 years, this army was made up of volunteers. As such, it had a higher combat morale level due to the additional element, that is, the conscious decision to join, but it also meant it was less disciplined. In fact, the commanding structures of the first Partisan units had significant problems with discipline.

Further, they strengthened the combat morale by organizing systematic agitation and political life in the units. The significance of this is especially evident in the permanent system of double command where the political commissioners were responsible precisely for the combat morale of the units. We can state that combat morale was one of the most outstanding factors of the quality of the Partisan units.

The substantive elements of motivation and combat morale strengthening entailed emphasizing that:

- the Partisans were fighting a just battle, defending their own nation, and had made it their mission to fight against Nazism and fascism, which were presented as absolute evil;
- the Partisans enjoyed the support of the whole nation, that in their battles they were united with the population; and
- the Partisans were fighting for the people, for a new world without the exploitation and miserable life the people had known before the occupation.

This shows the Partisans avoided engaging in direct open propaganda and refrained from emphasizing communism at all, especially when military conscription was introduced in the autumn of 1943. The reason for this was especially that they wanted to avoid dividing the units between the members of the communist organizations and others, motivated in particular by the struggle for the national liberation as the publicly declared primary goal of the struggle.

However, these very members of the communist organizations had a special role in the maintenance and strengthening of the units' combat morale.⁶²⁵ These

624 Čepič, Guštin and Troha, 2017: 428–431.

625 Members of the Communist Party of Slovenia represented most of the commanding officers on all levels, but also between 10% and 30% of the fighters. Due to their youth, the

organizations were also active within the units, separately from the other staff. The communists were expected and called upon to be model fighters, always ready to volunteer for the most dangerous and responsible military operations, as well as disciplined soldiers and without personal shortcomings (e.g., drunkenness, poor attitude to women etc.).⁶²⁶

The combat morale of the Partisan units was commendable: in spite of their poorer initial weaponry and unit supply, the Partisans were able to stand up to the enemy units which, naturally, also entailed significantly greater losses. Of course, on the level of individual units as well as generally, oscillations of the combat morale level existed and depended on the battles, combat success, and situation at large. It mainly holds true that combat morale decreased significantly in the periods of large-scale enemy operations and during times of shortage. It is also a fact that the mobilization of a greater number of people into the Partisan units led to a lower level of combat morale. After many fierce battles, the Partisan units also liberated the western half of the state in May 1945. They became a victorious army on the side of the United Nations, and their combat morale was considerable.

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The Role of Combat Morale in the Slovenian Independence War, 1990–1991

Less than 40 years later – that is, in the next generation – Slovenian society found itself in a similar situation as far as the question of combat is concerned. Although the process of separating from the Yugoslav state had taken place under the legitimate leadership of the Republic of Slovenia, this republic, as a Yugoslav federal unit, was only partly legally justified in its emancipation goals. The Yugoslav constitutional and legal order clearly specified – as well as restricted – the Slovenian separation initiative, especially in the area of defense. While the Slovenian side managed the separation process in such a way as to supposedly exclude the use of force (legally implemented!), the political reality was such that the Slovenian

membership was far more numerous in the Communist Youth Organization (Communist Youth League) than in the Party itself. Deželak Barič, 2007: 94–96.

626 Deželak Barič, 2007: 98–102.

state elite had to take the possibility that an armed conflict could take place into account – even if in the extreme urgency of defense. Slovenia controlled and commanded three armed formations: the militia (police), the paramilitary Narodna zaščita (National Protection), as well as the Territorial Defense, which, conceptually, was an integral part of the Yugoslav armed forces, but was under the partial command of the republic and in separate formations, restricted to the territories of the republics.⁶²⁷

Nevertheless, these military, paramilitary, and police formations were heavily influenced by political indoctrination, as was characteristic for the socialist system. The Territorial Defense had its own political commissioners as well, who took care of the moral and political aspects of the combat morale in its units. Its members along with its professional and dominant non-professional command staff (95%) were mostly positively oriented to the political dimensions of the communist regime. Members of the League of Communists of Slovenia represented a significant part of the Territorial Defense members, especially its command staff. Naturally, this political option had subsided and essentially become passive in the last years prior to the democratic elections held in April 1990. Its members had either become more fervent or cancelled their membership in considerable numbers. The only remaining active part of the previous political profiling was patriotism, a national feeling mostly focused on Slovenia and the Slovenian nation. That is why nationalism, which may not have been violent, was the only strong and growing part of the awareness. All the more so because the threats then perceived came from the former brotherly homeland, not from the neighboring countries, the Warsaw Pact, or NATO. In 1989 and 1990, a very similar process also took place among the ranks of the police. Thus, the Territorial Defense, which the Republic of Slovenia had in fact integrated into its state structures as the future army on October 3, 1990, united in the patriotic and defensively-oriented disposition as the basic building block of combat awareness and combat morale. Nonetheless, the Territorial Defense remained a mostly lightly-armed infantry army, despite the efforts to enhance its weaponry.

Military tradition was an even more significant driver of the transformation of the combat morale of the Territorial Defense and Slovenian defense forces. The Territorial Defense was traditionally to a strong degree modelled after the organization, operations, and goals of the warfare of the former Second World War Partisan units.⁶²⁸ In their political education, the Territorial Defense

627 Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 21–91; Bolfek, 2018.

628 Bolfek, 2018: 17–30.

members discovered a lot about the former battles of the Yugoslav/Slovenian Partisans. Their military actions were studied as examples during training and exercises, and in the early years following the Territorial Defense's formation in 1968 many former Partisans and Partisan officers, who in the meantime had become high-ranking officers and generals, were among its members. This tradition was even more evident from the tactics of the Territorial Defense and the way it fought in general. Regardless of the fact that the technological circumstances and concepts of combat had changed significantly after the Second World War and that the weapons had improved, the Territorial Defense resembled the well-developed Slovenian Partisan Army from 1944 and 1945 in the planning of its operations and as far as the appropriate documents of its battle operations was concerned. For more than two decades, the tradition of the Partisan struggle contained the same generalized element of ideological orientation or indoctrination in accordance with the ruling communist political structure.

Meanwhile, in the second half of the 1980s the ruling Yugoslav Communist Party separated into several parallel and even antagonistic groups, largely coinciding with the individual republics. The demands to depoliticize the army emerged in Slovenia. At that time, these demands were seen as extreme since they also called for the abolition of political education for members of the Territorial Defense and, of course, the Yugoslav People's Army. In such circumstances, combat morale would have definitely dwindled significantly had it in fact been based on the communist political ideology. Yet, the identification was transferred from the Yugoslav to the Slovenian leadership. As the awareness about the threat to the national entity (Slovenians) grew and the new democratic standards were emphasized, in 1990 and the first half of 1991 the combat morale strengthened – despite the confusion caused by the chaotic circumstances of having transformed from one social system to another.

This does not exclude the numerous dilemmas the Territorial Defense members encountered in the process of transforming into warriors – the question of whether their enemy was truly the enemy, about the oath they had sworn to the common state, and so on.⁶²⁹ Naturally, other approaches existed as well.

- The Slovenian leadership kept convincing everyone that the potential opponent, namely, the Yugoslav Armed Forces – was a 'paper tiger', thus attempting to reduce the awe of the heavy combat weaponry and superior numbers of the YPA.

629 Jelušič, 2006: 3–9.

- The Slovenian leadership attempted to upgrade the armament of the Territorial Defense and its mobility and to outfit it with improved military technology.
- In terms of numbers, the Territorial Defense units were strengthened as much as possible (the units for special purposes consisted of YPA conscripts).

The military conflict in Slovenia, which began on June 26, 1991, was low in intensity, even though around 46,000 members of the Territorial Defense and 9,000 policemen were mobilized. The response to the mobilization was very good at around 76%. However, the combat morale was only starting to form. The (negative) effect of the first shot fired was practically general and affected the YPA as well since a large share of the intervening forces were conscripts, doing their military service. Therefore, the combat morale must be evaluated with this in mind. Still, in just a few days, this effect was gone completely. The events of the first day – when several units abandoned their positions in a disorderly fashion, like for example during the battle to unblock a motorized column of the YPA in Medvedjek – were no longer repeated.

Similarities and Differences

Did the definite similarities between the transformational processes of ensuring sufficiently high combat morale in the examples under consideration occur because the patterns were transferred between the two generations, or were they simply a consequence of similar social situations that had similar results? Our standpoint is clear: the historic situation in the period of the Second World War influenced the new generation as well since the generations were undeniably mutually connected, and almost all the commanding officers in the period between 1990 and 1991 had mentors or superiors who had fought between 1941 and 1945.

Nevertheless, both cases reveal a certain deeper rule: that the identification with one's wider community or nation is so strong that in critical situations, when the nation is perceived to be under threat, it causes a powerful boost in combat morale.

MILITARY DOCTRINAL TRANSFORMATION

Military doctrine is the highest military and professional document of an individual army and based on the historical experience and theoretical knowledge about warfare, which is put into operation in the national defense strategy and ensures the uniformity of understanding members of the system in terms of coordination and focusing on the efforts of the military system.⁶³⁰ The doctrinal definition of the armed forces as one of the crucial building blocks of national security is a long-term process based partly on anticipation of real circumstances and resources while, on the other hand, it is also a theoretical reflection on the possibilities of future armed conflict, its nature and form, as well as ways to use armed forces in them.⁶³¹ Following the profound changes in the broader security environment along with the exceptionally rapid development of the young state of Slovenia, it is possible to experiment with (pre)rapid changes military-technical documents whose effect was not developed until the end. Implementations of military doctrines were completely without pointing to objective reasons. The result was a pressing military disparity between doctrinal foundations and facts in the armed forces. Slovenia's doctrinal transformation of the armed forces had to be carried out in two respects; the end of the Cold War, and then the conventional understanding of warfare based on the conflict of mass armies which has changed the security environment and, in addition, there was, in the years 1990–1991 the altered national framework in which national security had to be implemented – the Republic of Slovenia became an independent state on June 25, 1991. Slovenia had formed territorial forces (1968) under its jurisdiction that changed into the sole national defense power of the young country. However, even before the process of creating the national security system had come to an end, a new challenge emerged. At the end of 1993, the political elite of Slovenia adopted a new strategic decision – for Slovenia to join the North Atlantic Alliance. This meant the necessary transformation of the armed forces and related doctrinal adjustments had to be implemented. In 2004, the Slovenian defense system took on this strategic objective when becoming a new full member of the Alliance. This step was followed by assuming responsibilities and duties, which have proved to

630 Furlan et al., 2006: 3.

631 Žabkar, 2003: 25.

be a necessity for redefining military-strategic documents and the re-transformed armed forces. Noting the reducing of funds for defense, the objectives of the recent transformations have not been achieved, which raises the question of the suitability of organizing the Slovenian Army, as well as fostering the ability of performing tasks defined in the Constitution and the Defense Act.

The Role and Importance of Military Doctrines

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Any military doctrine constitutes the basis for the enforcement mission of armed forces. A military doctrine defines facts, which call for new ways of thinking with the objective of supporting national interests and goals. It is intended to inform the national security structures and enforce the defense strategy. Representing principled positions on the organization, administration, and operation of the armed forces in the implementation of all tasks, it sets out the fundamental principles by which the internal structure also identifies the armed forces and directs their operation. Accordingly, it is based on historical experience and theoretical knowledge about warfare. While it is binding, it requires prudence when being applied in practice. The objective of a military doctrine is to ensure a unity of understanding and is the basis of the harmonized implementation of armed forces during times of peace and war. In addition, it provides basic elements of military operations and constitutes a fundamental starting point for military planners and decision-makers. A military doctrine is a document that transparently presents the armed forces to the public, its communication and to inform the international environment with special emphasis given to allies and providing direct and indirect civilian control of the armed forces.

The most important determinant and starting point of a military doctrine is the national security strategy in which the mentioned document represents the operational segment of the national defense strategy. This means that the strategy indirectly affects the design of military the doctrine and all segments of national security planning and, indirectly, the international environment.

The Argument for a National Defense Force for Slovenia

SFR Yugoslavia was the security environment in which Slovenia, in the north-western part of the SFRY, reaffirmed its defensive function in the 1980s. Yugoslav defense was defined according to the geostrategic position between the two blocs, both of which were in Europe and strongly polarized and territorially demarcated.⁶³² In the case of Yugoslavia, it the concept of total defense was established. It foresaw a strong and well-equipped regular Yugoslav People's Army together with a Yugoslav Navy and Air Force – war aviation and anti-air defense.⁶³³ An important component of the Yugoslav armed forces, which became formally independent of the Yugoslav People's Army, was eight formations of the Territorial Defense – each republic and the two autonomous provinces had a statutory basis for the design of such formations on the level of provinces.⁶³⁴ In terms of strategic military planning, however, there were units included under the umbrella of federal defense planning, meaning their own military doctrinal documents had yet to be developed, with only the coordinating subsidiary bodies with a common defense design and doctrine then existing.⁶³⁵

The doctrine of armed conflict in Yugoslavia finally emerged in 1983 in the form of two additional documents: the Strategy of the armed forces and the Guidelines for the defense of Yugoslavia against aggression.⁶³⁶ With this doctrine, Yugoslavia faced an extreme economic crisis and politically uncertain period,

632 Prebilič, 2012: 313–324.

633 Strategija oboroženega boja, 1985: 103–143.

634 The Soviet military intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 was an important reason for reforming the defense capability of the SFRY. In that same year, the Federal Assembly of the SFRY adopted legislation whereby part of the competence of defense was transferred to the Republic. With this, the Territorial Defense (TD) of Slovenia was also developed. Although the units of the TD were projected as a territorial component and to support the organization of defense in each area by the federal Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), there were large differences between the TDs in Yugoslavia. The Socialist Republic of Slovenia spent maximum funding for ensuring ongoing training, education, training, arming, and a versatile organization. It is this quality in Slovenia that strongly distinguished it from the other organizations in the other republics. In early 1990, the Slovenian TD units drafted and distributed about 75,000 reservists (Kladnik, 2007: 42).

635 Bolfek, 2011: 168; Švajncer, 1992; Živković, 1985.

636 Švajncer, 1992; Živković, 1985: 29–33.

which coincided with the concomitant decay of the communist bloc and transition of socialist authoritarian regimes into democratic social organizations.

The Armed Forces had their own initiative in the crisis years when the trend of budget funding available for defense and in particular the armed forces was dropping. This led it to gradually transform the system into the classic defense layout, to abolish the concept of total defense and in turn reduce the role, tasks, and responsibilities of the Territorial Defense, particularly the command over its forces. "Prepared doctrine of TD envisaged the subordination of defense units of TD under the command of YPA units".⁶³⁷ This transformation of the TD doctrine met with resistance, especially from the Slovenian political elite due to ideological reasons, and even more so in order to maintain its influence on the Slovenian TD and the preservation of the relatively autonomous republic's positions in the federation, to oppose the reform of the armed forces, which would have been deprived of a good portion of its powers and defense if it strayed from Republican leadership. The General People's Defense doctrine and social self-protection had a close relationship with "Tito's heritage" and was sacrosanct, which was psychologically accepted, as was its silent upgrade.⁶³⁸ The doctrine of armed conflict was officially redefined by the Yugoslav military leadership in 1990.⁶³⁹

It is also the case in the process of 'peeling off' and then 'decoupling' – during Slovenia's independence in 1990 and 1991 there was an urgent defining of the new position also in the area of defense and particularly the armed forces. Moreover, because after the first democratic elections in the spring of 1990 contact between the newly elected Slovenian and Yugoslav political elites was interrupted, the supreme command of the YPA decided to disarm the Slovenian (and Croatian) TD.⁶⁴⁰ This decision immediately forced the Slovenian leadership to accept its own defense policy. In addition, it began with the construction of an improvised defense system, intended to be able to respond to the potential threat of an external intervention.⁶⁴¹ After a few months of building up the defense system,⁶⁴² and with the changed security environment in the autumn of 1990 the

637 Slapar, 2004: 4–13.

638 Kranjc, 1991: 59–85; Kranjc, 2007; Marijan, 2008: 25–63.

639 Marijan, 2008: 102–123.

640 The Presidency of Slovenia demanded the removal of decision, but the federal presidency were unwilling to accept it. The results were full immobilization of TD.

641 Jelušič, 2002: 215–228.

642 Mikulič, 2007: 43–52; Janša, 1992: 48.

Slovenian political leadership decided on the legalistic path as much as possible in order to deter possible internal conflict and, as a result, countermeasures by central military authorities carrying out transformations of the military system in that aspect. Yet, there was an important additional reason: resting on the status quo to allow the construction of a defense system; both material and structural sense, with a view to making the defense system operational immediately after the shaping of individual components. In the autumn of 1990, with the constitutional amendments the Slovenian parliament enacted the Territorial Defense the sole army of Slovenia, which was before associated in the Yugoslav defense system only in a state of war.⁶⁴³

In the autumn of 1990, the newly appointed military leaders of Slovenia started a thorough reorganization and upgrading of the defense system. Still, the upgrading of the doctrinal system was not devoted so much time and energy, even though it was among the urgent tasks for crystallizing the military doctrine. One may assume that it was because of the prioritizing of tasks, yet on the other hand because the doctrinal construction needed time to develop; the defense system was thus conceived and presented as a system for a transitional period until full independence.

In October 1990, the plan of the legislative system contained: the proposed defense doctrine was to be prepared by October 30, 1990, the Law on Defense and Protection by December 31, 1990, the Law on Military Service by February 28, 1991, and the Law on Service in the Armed Forces by May 31, 1991.⁶⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the upgrading of the defense system was delayed; delays also affected the combat readiness. Instead of the new law on defense and protection being adopted by the end of 1990, the public and internal discussions (mainly on the basic issue of demilitarizing Slovenia to avoid a military conflict with the YPA) was extended for several months and the law was adopted on March 6, 1991.⁶⁴⁵ With this law, the state decided for military defense, hence the need for a definition of the doctrinal system.

The first important aspect of the doctrinal changes was the conversion of the TD into the state army. The TD was designed as a component of the Yugoslav Armed Forces with specific tasks, but from the spring of 1991 it was officially performing all tasks in defense of the new country. It redesigned the military records,

643 Guštin, 2011: 253–264.

644 Slapar, 2004: 4–13.

645 Uradni list Republike Slovenije, 6. 4. 1991, No. 15, 555, Zakon o obrambi in zaščiti (Defense and the Protection Act).

and the TD was populated by younger vintages from a reserve composition of the YPA – formerly Partisan brigades. By attracting a large number of all means of transport, its mobility and military exercise was carried out by moving units at a distance around 150 km (the exercise “Premik” (“Movement”) in 1990). A few secretly imported military equipment and anti-armor weapons only filled the bigger gaps in lightweight arms; it did not have any heavy weapons, armored and motorized forces, or aviation. The defense of the Slovenia was based on low-intensity combat (obstruction, stopping, psychological war), with the use of the TD, police forces, and civil defense.⁶⁴⁶ It cannot be identified from the available documents what was happening with the proposed military doctrine.

Doctrinal development after independence, 1991–1994

The army of the Republic of Slovenia, the Territorial Defense of the Republic of Slovenia (TD) which, together with the other parts of the defense forces won a strategic victory in July 1991, was at first despite the earlier reform operations between the autumn 1990 and May 1991, the army which was carrying a strong mark of the defense system of Yugoslavia. The military victory in an otherwise still controlled war was flattering, and the interoperable collaboration of individual components was good. The independence period (1991–1994) was based on establishing the national defense on the model of Western democratic countries. This meant it became the primary defense system to establish a professional part of army and start to implement as quickly as possible military duties to the full extent. In 1993, a resolution on new geostrategic goals was adopted, according to which Slovenia should implement its national security through full integration into NATO. This objective was for years included in all the development strategic and normative solutions and actions. Thus, in 1994 the Act on Defense was adopted to normatively arrange the organization of the defense system and the Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF). The purpose of the Act was the de facto establishing of the SAF and its new structure, which was divided into maneuverable and spatial parts. The remaining parts of the army were based on

⁶⁴⁶ Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 53.

the recruitment system and general military obligations for the minimum necessary professional core. Following the footsteps of countries with a parliamentary democracy, the competences of the state bodies concerning the management system and defense system management and orderly civilian control of the military were established. The period between 1994 and 2004 was marked by extensive organizational changes in the SAF under the influence of the security environment when Slovenia became an associate member of the North Atlantic Assembly and a member of Partnership for Peace.⁶⁴⁷ In the autumn of 1991, war erupted in Croatia, which is Slovenia's immediate neighbor, thereby representing a security threat to.⁶⁴⁸ This circumstance demanded the military leadership to continue focusing on the provision of operational military forces.

Commanding the new armed forces

In war, in June 1991 the Territorial Defense of Slovenia entered otherwise hierarchically organized, albeit still in line with the formation of the territorial army. The republican headquarters were still far from a general headquarters organization, even though it had such attachments. The military leadership was under a strong political influence and at the same time the organizationally capable minister for the people's defense.

The TD was organized in the form of seven regional commands and brigade MORIS. Each and every one of them was actually a regional headquarters, which had its core leadership and responsibility for the comprehensive leadership of the TD in its operating area.⁶⁴⁹ Each regional headquarters had three to five subordinate regional defense sectors. Commanding positions were taken by officers who came from the ranks of the old TD, mostly professional or also ex-reserve officers. Their rank insignias were low, with the nominal (positional) rank insignia being colonel or brigadier.

647 Grizold, 2005: 59.

648 Tatalović, 1997: 99–118; Tus, 1999: 67–91; Marijan, 2005: 295–317.

649 Kladnik (ed.), 2011: 48.

The doctrinal development of Slovenian defense

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At the end of 1993, a Resolution on the starting points for the national security of the Republic of Slovenia was prepared and adopted.⁶⁵⁰ The document primarily assessed military threats from the conflict zone of Yugoslavia and related concerns with the risk of an armed intervention against Slovenia or an attempt to change the borders of its own country by neighboring countries and eventual a wider military conflict. The defense system of the country was designed with two components – military and civil defense. Under the Resolution and the law, the Defense Force consists of the Slovenian Army. Its basic task was military defense in the case of an attack on the country, ensuring the necessary combat readiness, as well as professional training for armed combat and other forms of military resistance. There was also an option for the Slovenian Army in accordance with the Constitution that the Slovenian Armed Forces should be considered part of the international forces. Training for the execution of military defense was envisaged as the implementation of general military obligations (with regard to conscientious objection training was provided for other duties in defense). Commanding officers, non-commissioned officers, and staff should be trained in the appropriate general/civil education institutions, later on in military schools and supplementary forms of training. The Resolution also confirmed previous arrangements that normatively did not deviate from the normal arrangements prevailing in democratic countries. The commander-in-chief was the president of the Republic (at the end of 1991, the Constitution was amended and the form of presidency was designed as an institution with little real power), and war or a state of emergency must only be declared by the Slovenian Parliament. However, the planning and preparation of the armed forces was in the hands of the government (or Ministry of Defense as a professional institution). The government was also directly responsible for preparing and implementing defense tasks. The National Security Council was providing for the coordination and exchange of views for the government. The Parliament was also monitoring the implementation

650 Uradni list Republike Slovenije, 30. 12. 1993, 71 / 2568, Resolucija o izhodiščih zasnove nacionalne varnosti Republike Slovenije /The resolution on the starting-points for national security of Republic of Slovenia/, 20. 12. 1993; Dopolnila resolucije o izhodiščih zasnove nacionalne varnosti Republike Slovenije.

of defense policies or programs.⁶⁵¹ At almost the same time as publication of the Resolution, at the end of 1993 the state leadership in cooperation with military strategy thinkers accepted the new geostrategic decision to join NATO,⁶⁵² announced as an objective of national strategic importance. NATO membership was perceived as an elegant solution for many of the security challenges facing the Slovenian state:

- insurance against the increasingly brutal war in Bosnia;
- deviation from the former Yugoslavia;
- ensuring the missing elements of the defense system; and
- confirming political affiliation with the new geopolitical area of the West.

In the field of legislation, the following laws were adopted that enabled the SAF to develop as a conventional military organization:

- the law for the provision of funds for the fundamental development of programs for the defense forces (1994), leading to the provision of resources to purchase complex combat systems such as aviation, equipment for air space surveillance, anti-tank defense, communications etc.;
- the law on military service obligations (1995), which recognizes conscientious objection in all phases of military obligations; and
- to realize and operationalize the legitimate democratic control of the defense system.⁶⁵³

It took 1.5 years for a group to produce the first national security military doctrine of the new army.⁶⁵⁴ This doctrine reflected the great changes made by the SAF in the early years after successfully winning the war and its tasks in the new geostrategic architecture of the independent state. Meanwhile, the Republic of Slovenia had taken successful steps towards integration into Western security organizations by signing an agreement on cooperation with NATO and entering the Partnership for Peace program. The then valid doctrine was based on the principle of national self-defense, meaning the armed forces must be capable of eliminating any forms of aggression (limited or radical) or dealing with non-conventional attacks. The exception to the rule was possible cooperation in the structures of UN operations. The doctrine structured the armed forces between two pillars: maneuverable and territorial forces. The former was better equipped

651 Ibid.

652 Uradni list Republike Slovenije, 12. 1. 1994, 2 /2548, Dopolnila resolucije o izhodiščih zasnove nacionalne varnosti Republike Slovenije.

653 Grizold, 2005: 131.

654 Decision of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, no. 801/95-25, 27. 7. 1995.

and trained, also representing contingents for international cooperation. The latter was numerically superior and the basis for conscript training. At the top of the military chain of command was the operational headquarters, subordinated to the army headquarters along with the chief of the general staff. This organizational structure enabled a swift response to possible aggression in response to the lesson learned in the short-lived independence war. This military doctrine was based on the initial period of extremely short preparation for possible aggression and ends with a fractured attack on an opponent, capturing them and taking over strategic initiatives. For combat actions a high degree of mutual cooperation within the SAF's structures is characteristic. They must be timely mobilized, flexible, and decisive when stopping a possible opponent's penetration into national territory. In the direction of the main enemy's forces, the attack is normally organized as a flexible defense. It certainly must be carried out in the direction of the national borders and must slow the pace of the attack and force the opponent to rely on unplanned access for its approach and therefore lose time while making it an easier target for the defense structures. When planning the defense steps, all populated cities or their parts are included, with a view to providing additional favorable conditions for the defense.⁶⁵⁵ The considered methods of warfare included: assault (as the fundamental and decisive acts of the engagement), defensive methods, special operation forces, and guerrilla/partisan warfare. After being introduced, the doctrine was pushed to the side and operationally remained mostly unrealized.

Structural and organizational changes made after 2001 were critical for the development of the SAF. They were influenced by many factors: the rise of global terrorism, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and, as a result, the increased need for inter-ministerial and inter-state cooperation in the field of defense. Otherwise, the solid majority of public opinion support for the Republic of Slovenia's membership in NATO in 1999 was the first test, when the alliance carried out an attack on Serbia without a UN mandate. While the war composition of the SAF until 2001 was gradually increasing (73,000 military recruits), in 2002–2003 following a rapid reduction it involved 39,000 military recruits. In 2003, military service was performed by the last generation of recruits because the state leadership adopted a decision that Slovenia should quickly move to professionalize its army.

655 Doktrina Slovenske vojske. Ljubljana, 1995. Nonpublished manuscript, preserved by authors.

The national security strategy was prepared and came to use 8 years after the first officially accepted platform for it, in 2001.⁶⁵⁶ It was understandable that it should be quite different from the situation when war was underway in former Yugoslavia and Slovenia was completely differently positioned in the international order. In 2001, Slovenia was already on the threshold of entering the European Union. Negotiations on its accession to NATO did not foreshadow any specific date of an invitation, although it previously had been a member of the preparatory Partnership for Peace. The war in Yugoslavia ended and all that was unresolved was the question of Kosovo.⁶⁵⁷ Among the sources of military threats, a resolution stated in particular in an (unlikely) war of large dimensions and a rapid deterioration of the security situation on the territory of former Yugoslavia; otherwise, the resolution showed non-military sources of threats were coming into focus. The resolution therefore was relying on the preparations for NATO integration and identified a different organization of the defense. The base should become a qualitatively improved yet less numerous army that is redesigned and modernized. Although the resolution did not yet call for the introduction of professional armed forces, it was revealed by the intention to increase the share of professional soldiers in the army and to modernize the army. The defense system was still divided into military and civil defense. The military defense after the resolution was the Slovenian Army, whose main task was military defense of the state, along with the implementation of the country's obligations in the international arena, and in peace support operations.⁶⁵⁸

The resolution was supplemented in the same year by the defense strategy; the Slovenian government adopted the first version in 2000 and the final one on December 20, 2001.⁶⁵⁹ This was a fundamental document for the design of the doctrinal changes. Together with the simultaneously adopted new General long-term program of development and equipping of the Slovenian Armed Forces, this was the basis for a further 3-year period in which military planners set themselves tasks to devise all major platforms of the military system of Slovenia. Three years

656 Uradni list Republike Slovenije, 6. 7. 2001, 56 / 2957, Resolucija o strategiji nacionalne varnosti Republike Slovenije (The resolution on national security strategy of Republic of Slovenia, / (ReSNV), 21. 6. 2001.

657 Pirjevec, 2008: 142.

658 Uradni list Republike Slovenije, 6. 7. 2001, 56 / 2957, Resolucija o strategiji nacionalne varnosti Republike Slovenije, 21. 6. 2001.

659 Uradni list Republike Slovenije, 20. 12. 2001, Uradni list RS 4. 12. 2001, št. 97/4801, Splošni dolgoročni program razvoja in opremljanja Slovenske vojske.

later, in 2004, Slovenia became a member of NATO. It also formally entered into the system of collective security. In the same year, it also abandoned the recruitment system of the SAF and introduced an all-volunteer system of recruitment as the first step in the direction of professionalization.⁶⁶⁰

All these changes called for a comprehensive form of doctrinal document to reflect all those shifts in security that the defense system had experienced in the over 13 years of the country's independence. The task of preparing the doctrine of the SAF was given to a special group of high-ranking senior officers led by Assistant Chief of the General Staff of the Slovenian Armed Forces Brigadier General Branimir Furlan. The result of the ensuing 3 years' work was the new doctrine of the SAF which officially entered into force in 2006.⁶⁶¹

The Chief of the General Staff specified that the doctrine respects the fundamental documents of the NATO Alliance (the Alliance's Strategic Concept) and its doctrine (especially the Allied Joint Doctrine, the AAP-1) and, of course, the Slovenian security and military environment along with its military experiences and tradition.⁶⁶² The doctrine was actually derived from the principle that "the military defense of the Republic of Slovenia is based on the use of joint allied forces and integration of the Slovenian Armed forces into this concept".⁶⁶³ Therefore, while acknowledging that the SAF are operating mainly in cooperation with the Allied forces, it underlines the importance of interoperability perceived also as the ability to operate in multinational structures outside Slovenia. Among the fundamental sources of threat, as already stated in the 2001 Resolution, the country is highly unlikely to confront a classic military conflict, especially terrorism and other non-military security challenges. The structure of the SAF according to the current doctrine is flexible; it is capable of organizing deployable small-sized units according to the expectations of its Allies. Forces are organized according to their mission, space, and the concept of Combined Joint Task Forces. "The concept of Combined Joint Task Force is the basic mode of operation of the Slovenian Army units within the Alliance in the implementation of the military defense of the Republic of Slovenia or in crisis response operations."⁶⁶⁴ Therefore, the doctrine provides for the offensive, defensive, special, stabilization (crisis response

660 Kotnik Dvojmoč, 2012: 11–25; Grizold, Tatalović, Cvrtila, 2010: 204–221.

661 Furlan et al., 2006.

662 Ibid., 5.

663 Ibid., 13.

664 Ibid., 18.

and peace support operations), support, information, and transient operation of the Slovenian Armed Forces.⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid., 48–72.

SEEKING SECURITY IN THE EMBRACE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA

In 2004, the Republic of Slovenia's ratified the North Atlantic Treaty and became a full member of NATO. Before that, Slovenia as a federal Yugoslav republic had been a member of the 1953 Balkan Pact (the Agreement of Friendship and Cooperation), while even earlier it had also been a member of other military alliances as part of Yugoslavia: The Little Entente; the 1934 Balkan Pact (the Balkan Entente); while in the decades before the First World War it was also part of the Triple Alliance.⁶⁶⁶ Slovenia's NATO membership was a process that took 10 years and called for the significant efforts of the Slovenian political elite as well as a thorough military adaptation. The attainment of Slovenia's independence in 1991 coincided with the dissolution of the Cold War bipolar world. The socialist Warsaw Pact had dissolved, and many countries that had abandoned their socialist regimes at the time had to face the issue of defense. In view of the political values of the world that these countries wanted to belong to as well as the political reality, NATO became the wish and goal of many Eastern European governments.⁶⁶⁷

During the Cold War, Slovenia – until 1991 a federal republic of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the northwest of that country – was completely integrated into the Yugoslav defense system based on independent total defense, an independent defense policy, and the rejection of any military alliances. In 1991, the Slovenian public opinion was therefore half in favor of the armed neutrality of the future Slovenia, while only 10% of respondents supported the transition to collective defense (NATO); in fact, 72.3% of respondents rejected the idea of joining NATO.⁶⁶⁸

On June 25, 1991, after a year-long process of emancipation, Slovenia declared its withdrawal from the Yugoslav Federation. Already during this process, Slovenia had formed and partly established a defense system based on new

666 Repe, 2002 : 26–32.

667 Šteiner, 2015: 20–21.

668 Kranjc, 2009: 19.

foundations that were partly pragmatic (Territorial Defense) and partly strategic. In 1990 and 1991, Slovenia was discussing how to establish its own defense system. One of the proposed solutions was the option of the new state not having an army, meaning that it would have to rely solely on civil defense. This option, however, was only supported by a political minority. In such internal political circumstances, Slovenia seceded from Yugoslavia.⁶⁶⁹ After a short military conflict in which it prevailed, it finally attained its independence.

Efforts for Slovenia's accession to NATO

In 1993 – after the Yugoslav Wars had become somewhat more distant but nevertheless represented an imminent threat in the Slovenian security assessments – the Slovenian state and its political elite started to consider collective defense. The prevailing aspirations of the Slovenian state elite – to ensure that Slovenia ultimately ended up under the umbrella of the collective defense, represented in Europe by the only remaining functional military alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) – set out the new state's orientation.⁶⁷⁰ We can safely assess that the trust in NATO, which would supposedly support the defense of Slovenia in the case of a repeated attack by the Yugoslav Army, was the main reason that Slovenia wished to join NATO. Yet, for the new state's elite, accession to NATO also represented confirmation of Slovenia's integration and dedication to democracy.

As a Slovenian goal, accession to NATO was stated for the first time in its 1993 defense policy resolution, confirmed by the National Assembly. At that time, NATO was the goal that all of Eastern Europe was aspiring to. States expected this organization to ensure collective security and thereby solve their security problems. In March 1994, Slovenia was included in NATO's Partnership for Peace program, while in the same year it also became an associate member country of the North Atlantic Assembly (NAA). In the same year, the first Individual Partner Program was prepared as well, stating the political goals of Slovenia along with its military and other capabilities that the new state could offer to NATO.⁶⁷¹

669 Kladnik, 2006a: 79.

670 Grizold, 2001: 786.

671 Slovenija in NATO.

However, unlike the political elite, the Slovenian population kept supporting the concept of armed neutrality for a long time. The political parties were not equally eager to support the state's integration into the collective defense of NATO, even though none of the parliamentary parties explicitly opposed the accession. Further, NATO's failed intervention in the Yugoslav Wars had a profoundly negative effect on its perception. According to information from the public opinion center, in 1994 only 12.7% of respondents supported Slovenia's accession to NATO. Armed neutrality had far stronger support, at around 40% of respondents.⁶⁷² In the following year, the situation remained the same.

In 1997, at the annual NATO meeting in Madrid Slovenia's request for accession was denied. This was a momentary disappointment for the Slovenian domestic policy but did not lead to a withdrawal. As the rejection was explained in terms of the insufficient reforms of the Slovenian Army, Slovenia undertook a series of military adaptations.⁶⁷³ In 1998, it drew up the national Strategy for the Integration of the Republic of Slovenia into NATO.

The accession process involved a series of military structural reforms and reforms of the defense system in general. The central goals of the reforms were described in the Military Defense Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia prepared in 1998. The Strategy provided for the restructuring of the armed forces into rapid reaction forces, main defense forces, and auxiliary defense forces.⁶⁷⁴ The enlargement of the professional permanent staff was also planned.

In 1999, NATO adopted a Membership Action Plan that included Slovenia. On this basis, the reformation of the Slovenian Armed Forces in a dialogue with the NATO structures took place. The 4-year period until the accession with four annual national programs represented the core adaptation period of the Slovenian Army in the organizational and technical sense.⁶⁷⁵ The most important aspect was the transformation of the security threat focus from military to non-military, as well as the consequent transformation of the armed forces from a mass army to a smaller-scale professional army. The mass army staffed with ordinary citizens had become unsuitable in light of the new security threats, and almost all NATO member states had already introduced professional armies. In 2003, Slovenia did the same. In 2002, Slovenia was invited to begin the accession negotiations for

672 Toš, Grizold, Svetličič, 1994.

673 Bebler, 1999: 155.

674 Vegič, 1999: 1001.

675 Akcijski načrt za NATO, 1999.

its membership in NATO. Thus, swift changes began: the scaling back of reserve staff; abolition of the draft system; introducing a professional army; and establishing forces that could take part in Allied contingents. After a decade of decline, the percentage of defense expenses once again came close to 2 percent of GDP.⁶⁷⁶

The attitude of the Slovenian public to the accession

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The Slovenian public was very divided with respect to Slovenian the country joining NATO. On one hand, some people argued by pointing out the reality (claiming that Slovenia's defense would be best ensured with the state's membership in NATO) and others supported the accession (believing that NATO was an excellent defense alliance); while on the other hand sceptics expressed reservations, especially due to the unauthorized use of force against Serbia in 1999. The feelings of a severe threat due to the Yugoslav attack, the war in the neighboring country, and then the war in Bosnia were appeased towards the end of the first decade of the new independent state, and feelings of security grew. The perception of an external military threat had eased significantly and was no longer increasing despite the war in the proximity of Slovenia.⁶⁷⁷ This resulted from the significant public disappointment with the effect as well as the concrete actions of the NATO alliance (and the main NATO members) in the Yugoslav Wars during the 1990s.

Information about the attitude of the Slovenian public to NATO is available since 1994. In that year, leading public opinion researchers asked respondents who supported collective defense and who favored Slovenia's own defense. Two-thirds of respondents supported the concept of own defense, even though more own resources would be needed to maintain such a system. This can be interpreted indirectly as showing that Slovenia's integration into NATO was still not accepted by the (majority of) the public in the spring of 1994. Approximately 1 year later, in January 1995, 44.2% of the public was in favor of the country's membership in NATO; 47% of respondents had no strong opinions about it,

⁶⁷⁶ Nacionalna strategija za vstop v NATO, 1998.

⁶⁷⁷ Bebler, 1997: 31.

while 8.6% of respondents were opposed to it.⁶⁷⁸ The relative majority of the public thus supported the endeavors of the Slovenian government for the country to join NATO, although not very strongly.

The Slovenian political elite and state officials were surprised by this information as it was out of step with their expectations. It came as a shock as well as a revelation since it became clear that public support for Slovenia's NATO membership was not self-evident, and that more systematic and expert argumentation of this idea would be necessary. Quite surprisingly, the public opinion did not register that NATO membership would impinge on the sovereignty of Slovenia, even though the majority was resolutely against the establishment of any NATO military bases on Slovenian territory. Rather than on the military aspects, people mostly focused on the political aspects of NATO membership.⁶⁷⁹ Around this time, the government also launched a more focused campaign to promote NATO membership in order to ensure public support for the project. It resulted in an increased percentage of people supporting the accession.

Table 1: Public support for Slovenia's NATO membership.⁶⁸⁰

	Oct 1996	Jan 1997	Feb 1997	Mar 1997	Oct/Nov 1997
YES	66.4	61.3	58.3	64.1	55.4
NO	15.7	20.5	21.1	18.3	18.4
UNDECIDED	17.9	18.2	20.7	17.6	26.2
N=	958	996	942	965	2,031

The percentage of those in support thus came close to two-thirds; resolute opponents amounted to 15%–20%; while the percentage of those undecided or neutral was roughly the same. When NATO rejected Slovenia's accession request in 1997, the number of opponents grew to more than 25%.⁶⁸¹ The question once again became pressing before the conclusions with regard to the second stage of enlargement were reached, when Slovenia was among the candidates as well.

678 Malešič, 1999: 208.

679 Bebler, 1999: 128.

680 Toš et al., 1997.

681 Malešič, 1999: 208.

Membership referendum

The suggestion that Slovenian voters themselves should decide on the accession to NATO had already been voiced in 1994 and 1995. Afterwards, the internal political struggle focused especially on the form of the referendum and the question of when it should be held. At the beginning of 2003, the political parties agreed to call a consultative referendum on the country's accession to NATO.⁶⁸² The negotiations between the political parties led to the following question: "Do you agree that the Republic of Slovenia should become a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)?" On January 30, when the consultative referendum act was adopted, the day of the referendum was set on Sunday, March 23, 2003.⁶⁸³

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Turnout at the referendum held on that day amounted to slightly more than 60% of registered voters. The results were: 66.08% of voters agreed; and 33.92% were against it.⁶⁸⁴ Since the participation at another simultaneous referendum – the one about Slovenia's accession to the European Union – was far greater, we may conclude that at least some voters resented being asked about NATO membership at all. In comparison with the earlier statistics, the share of voters who disagreed with Slovenia's NATO membership had not diminished.

For the Slovenian political elite, the referendum represented a watershed and the foundation of the NATO membership they had desired so much as it provided the political and state elite with enough support to pursue the accession. Eventually, NATO in fact extended an invitation to Slovenia, which became a member on March 29, 2004.⁶⁸⁵ On the occasion of the accession to NATO, the President of the Republic of Slovenia told the following to his soldiers: "Slovenia has become a member of NATO. It has become a partner to the countries that we have wished to align with in the years since our emancipation. These are states with highly developed democracies, market economies, and considerable living standards – but at the same time also the strongest armies. (...) With our NATO membership, we have received a significant security assurance, but at the same time also a great responsibility. With its integration into NATO, the security and defense of the Republic of Slovenia are no longer merely nationally significant.

682 Rebernak, 2004 : 4.

683 Uradni list Republike Slovenije, 13, February 10, 2003.

684 Uhan, Kovačič, 2003: 41–42.

685 Bebler, 2003: 10–11.

The Slovenian security is becoming a part of the European and international security. We will participate in the decision-making process and take part in the solving of the most important issues in the world.”⁶⁸⁶

At that time in 2004, the NATO organization was trusted by as many as 49.3% of respondents.⁶⁸⁷ Aware of the much-needed adaptations, Slovenia undertook a new circle of reforms and adjustments of its defense structures to suit NATO’s allied standards. However, a profound economic crisis was already looming and, together with the internal Slovenian scandals like the purchase of the Patria armored personnel carriers, it kept pushing the Slovenian Army to the very brink of importance and necessary financing. In a few years, the budgetary envelope available for matters of defense shrank by 40%.⁶⁸⁸ Meanwhile, public opinion is still not certain that the country’s inclusion in the collective defense was a good decision at all.

686 Repe, 2015: 142.

687 Toš, 2005.

688 Veldin, 2017: 28.

CRISIS AND THE MILITARY SYSTEM, A MILITARY SYSTEM IN CRISIS

To understand the complex interplay of the global financial crisis, the national and international responses to it, and the overall implications they hold for national defense spending, we must first look at basic terminology and economic theory. While there is no precise definition of a “financial crisis”, a common view is that disruptions in financial markets rise to the level of a crisis when the flow of credit to households and businesses is constrained as is the real economy of goods and services. The origins of the financial crisis that started in mid-2007 lie in the mounting losses in subprime mortgage markets in the U.S.A., which triggered disturbances throughout the international financial system. The subprime crisis caused a reassessment of financial risk that encompassed other markets including leveraged loans, takeover financing, credit derivatives, and commercial paper. In this changed atmosphere, many market participants became reluctant to extend credit either because they could not judge the prospective borrower’s financial condition with any confidence, or were unsure what the assets in their own capital base would bring should they be forced to liquidate them to cope with unexpected losses.⁶⁸⁹ This in turn had a trickledown effect and heavily impacted the national economies over the next years, with the effect still being felt, especially in European countries. The first wave of global financial crisis in the autumn of 2008 was somewhat delayed in Europe, but the effects of the second and third waves have created a perfect economic storm that has upended European finance and politics. These conditions have led to growing unemployment and social unrest, the fall of a number of governments, and increasing pressures to reduce discretionary governmental spending, including for defense and foreign assistance⁶⁹⁰. The tight fiscal circumstances over the next 5 years will require cuts in

689 Jickling, 2010: 2–4.

690 The EU-27 most probably experienced an average annual economic growth rate of 1.5% through 2013 with a continuing risk of a double-dip recession and weak growth by historical standards until at least 2015. Debt would grow from 80% of GDP in 2010 to more than 100% of GDP by 2015 without policy changes. These facts show that many European countries would face severe macroeconomic imbalances, including large output gaps, high

force levels, capabilities, and readiness, as well as deferred procurements, further eroding overall European military capabilities already suffering from two decades of underinvestment. European governments have undertaken a major reduction in their structures, and defense spending has been flat to slightly declining in the past two decades.⁶⁹¹

Economically burdened nations are now compelled to restructure budgets to cope with the current crisis and reflect the new fiscal realities. Most countries have opted for a reassessment and subsequent reduction of their defense budget. Defense strategies have been revised, military doctrines supplemented or changed, hot debates have ensued in European governments and parliaments, yet the outcome has more or less been the same: doing less with less. This chapter will look at the theory behind defense cuts, how defense cuts are being implemented in the biggest defense spending nations and will conclude with a deeper look at the defense cuts and defense budget situation in Slovenia.

However, in economic theory there is less agreement on whether cutting defense budgets is economically sound for countries in the long run. The economic debate in the U.S.A. suggests that in the short run cuts in defense spending are likely to have disruptive effects on the U.S. economy. Productive resources, both labor and capital, must shift out of defense-related industries and into nondefense industries. The adjustment costs that this shift entails are likely to restrain economic growth as the defense cuts are implemented. Therefore, if anything in the short term defense cuts are expected to have a negative effect on a country's economy. Economic theory is less clear, however, about the likely long-run consequences of reduced defense spending. The neoclassical macroeconomic model assumes that all goods and services are produced by the private sector.⁶⁹² Rather than hiring labor, accumulating capital, and producing defense services itself, the government simply purchases these services from the private sector. Thus,

unemployment, a wide fiscal deficit, and the need to exit from exceptionally loose monetary policy. Further, demographic trends would result in an increase in the ratio of pensioners to taxpayers, in turn leading to a sustainability gap. Demands on public resources to support ageing populations would decrease the GDP growth of the EU-27 from 2.4% to 1.7% per year through 2020 (Flanagan et al., 2011: VI).

691 Total defense spending among the 37 European countries examined fell from EUR 251 billion to EUR 218 billion between 2001 and 2009. Per-soldier spending in these countries increased from above EUR 73 thousand to more than EUR 91 thousand in the same period, with a relative shift of spending toward equipment and operations and maintenance and away from personnel and infrastructure (Flanagan et al., 2011: VIII).

692 Barro, 1984.

according to the neoclassical model, the direct effect of a permanent US\$ 1 cut in defense spending acts to decrease the total demand for goods and services in each period by US\$ 1. Of course, so long as the government has access to the same production technologies that are available to the private sector, this prediction of the neoclassical model does not change if the government instead produces the defense services itself. A permanent US\$ 1 cut in defense spending also reduces the government's need for tax revenue; it implies that taxes can be cut by US\$ 1 in each period. Households, therefore, are wealthier following the cut in defense spending; their permanent income increases by US\$ 1. According to the permanent income hypothesis, this US\$ 1 increase in permanent income induces households to increase their consumption by US\$ 1 in every period, provided that their labor supply does not change. Still, the wealth effect of reduced defense spending may also induce households to increase the amount of leisure they choose to enjoy. If households respond to the increase in wealth by consuming more leisure, then the increase in consumption from the wealth effect only amounts to US\$ $(1 - a)$ per period, where a is a number between zero and one: That is, the increase in wealth is split between the increase in consumption and the increase in leisure. This means that in general the wealth effect of a cut in defense spending acts to increase private consumption, and hence total demand, by US\$ $(1 - a)$ per period.⁶⁹³

Economic theory indicates that these defense cuts are likely to restrain economic growth in the short run as productive resources move out of defense-related activities and into nondefense industries. Yet, economic theory is less clear about the long-run consequences of reduced defense spending. Ireland and Otrok found that models which assume that the Ricardian equivalence theorem holds find that a permanent decrease in defense spending decreases aggregate output in the long run. On the other hand, models that assume that Ricardian equivalence does not apply predict that a permanent decrease in defense spending increases output in the long run, provided that the proceeds of the spending cut are used to reduce the federal debt.⁶⁹⁴

When great budgetary pressure is growing, there is a tendency for the defense debate to be dominated by tribalism, that might manifest in two ways. First, what might be termed as service tribalism or inter-service rivalry is a result of a sometimes quite unedifying bargaining process over which service has more military

693 Ireland and Otrok, 1992: 68.

694 Ibid., 72.

competency and therefore should not lose the financial resources.⁶⁹⁵ Such an approach leads to competitiveness between military services and can bring irreparable consequences for the military organization as a whole. In other words, this is a death blow to the *esprit de corps* and the end of cooperation and interoperability as modern and needed military doctrines for meeting new challenges to peace and security in the world today.

The second is represented by campaign tribalism, which embraces not only the demand that current operations should be undertaken seriously, with both the right equipment and the requisite level of political support, but also the idea that these campaigns represent the final, defining moment in the history of strategic thought.⁶⁹⁶ This understanding of modern armies is indirectly questioning the modern military doctrines and strategies: what is the prime goal of national defense systems and where should they be employed to preserve the security of a state? Were governments successful in presenting the importance and role of European forces in Afghanistan? Are the extreme efforts of European soldiers far from the homeland understood and supported by political and national legitimacy? Because of this, more and more European militaries are changing into expeditionary forces, light, deployable, and maneuverable for the needs of the missions but disregarding the constitutionally based obligations of military forces – defense of the homeland. That is leading to constantly reduced public support to the defense systems and therefore no understanding of defense expenditures needed to safely meet obligations while on the missions. Therefore, no taboos in the process of auditing the military system should be present. Every area of it must be carefully examined and its value determined. Otherwise, the imposition of efficiency savings across the board is nonsensical and further cuts might reduce rather than enhance the value and efficiency of the system.

Economically burdened nations, including many EU members,⁶⁹⁷ are now compelled to restructure their budgets to cope with the current crisis and reflect the new fiscal realities. Most countries have opted for a reassessment and subsequent reduction of their defense budgets. Government efforts to stabilize and

695 Cornish, Dorman, 2009: 737–738.

696 *Ibid.*, 738.

697 Given the current economic climate, especially in terms of the consolidation and cleaning up of public finances, as well as the particularly unstable international context, European states should nonetheless feel that it is very much in their interests to ‘Europeanize’ policies in which the benefits of joint spending have no equivalent in terms of what can be done on the national level (Liberti, 2011: 9).

reinvigorate their national economies raise the question of how these adjustments will affect defense expenditures and the manner in which governments will seek to achieve national and international security goals.⁶⁹⁸

Many questions arise from the cutting of defense budgets, but one is especially hard to answer: to shrink the personnel or lower the equipment costs.⁶⁹⁹ Both may bring immediate results, but they are interlocked and especially in case of personnel would have long-lasting consequences.

Most countries, the United States of America as the biggest defense spender included, have opted for budget cuts and to scale down their defense capabilities, with the U.S.A.'s projected defense cuts totaling more than US\$ 450 billion over the next 10 years. Describing it as a cut is a misnomer.⁷⁰⁰ Still, some cuts will have some direct and indirect impacts on national economies. Panetta announced on January 12 that around 7,000 U.S. troops in Europe will be removed – around 9% of the total there. Other officials predicted that the permanent overall size of the Army and the Marines will shrink beyond the 5%–8% cuts the Pentagon had previously planned. According to industry contractors, the Pentagon has signaled that the slowdowns will mostly affect troubled major weapons programs, such as the Air Force's F35 jet fighters and aerial tankers, the Navy's new aircraft carriers, and the Army's development of a new ground combat vehicle. The Air Force's Global Hawk drone program – which has had major cost overruns and

698 European countries are today faced with the dilemma of having to shed certain capabilities in order to modernize others. As a result, defense catalogues of most European armies look like half-empty bookshelves. This is not just a problem facing small and medium-sized countries. Even Britain and France, Europe's strongest military powers, have recognized the fact that no single European state can afford to buy, develop, and operate every category of armament (Toje, 2008: 12–13).

699 Defense equipment is extraordinarily costly for various reasons: the first is the fact that initial purchase costs must be considered only as the initial ones where the costs of sustainability through the service life should not be disregarded. Second, the biggest savings are made when an entire weapon system is removed from service rather than the traditional salami-slicing of all weapons systems. Third, defense should no longer subsidize industry and be forced to accept unnecessary costs and inefficiencies (Cornish, Dorman, 2009: 733–753).

700 The plan actually calls for an increase in the national security budget over the next decade – but it would scale back the 18% boost previously set for that period. This means Obama's proposed changes would shift such spending by less than 1% annually. If approved, the change would have been much smaller than the genuine reductions that followed the Korean War (20%), the Vietnam War (30%), and the Cold War (30%). As Obama made clear in a brief speech while standing with Panetta on January 5, "the growth in the defense budget will slow, but the fact of the matter is this: It will still grow" (Smith, 2012).

poor reliability – is slated for early termination, but most other cancellations will involve smaller programs. Already a number of major defense projects are being cut or are under serious threat in the U.S.A., including the F-22, new helicopters, next-generation armored vehicles, and high-technology naval vessels.⁷⁰¹

Despite the decrease in some countries, in 2010 total world military expenditure reached US\$ 1,630 billion, representing 2.6% of global gross domestic product (GDP) or US\$ 236 for each person. Spending was 1.3% higher in real terms than in 2009 and 50% higher than in 2001.⁷⁰² What are or what might be some of the most important consequences of the defense budgets cuts? To understand this, the internal structure of defense budgets must be understood.

Crisis and the Military in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 1929–1938

The Great Depression, following the Wall Street “Black Friday”, also engulfed Europe as early as in 1929. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia was seriously affected by the crisis a year later and by 1931 the situation had become worse.⁷⁰³ The implementation of restrictive measures was necessary. In June 1931, the currency – the dinar – was stabilized legally, and in August 1931 the state budget was decreased for the first time, by 5.8%.⁷⁰⁴

701 Lockheed Martin Corp, the largest U.S. weapons maker, urged Congress to act quickly to avert an additional US\$ 500 billion in defense cuts that would begin in January, warning that uncertainty about the future was dampening investment and hiring across the industry. Lockheed Chief Executive Bob Stevens told the Senate Aerospace Caucus that the very threat of the cuts, which would double the US\$ 487 billion in cuts already planned for the next decade, was already having a chilling effect on industry. Tom Captain, head of aerospace and defense industry research at Deloitte, said the industry accounted for about 2.2% of U.S. GDP and was supporting more than 3.5 million direct and indirect jobs. Captain said he hoped that educating lawmakers and the public about the consequences of further defense spending cuts would help “cut through the fog” and encourage Congress to take other actions to cut the deficit. Shalal, 2012.

702 SIPRI Yearbook 2011.

703 Kresal, 1999: 77–95.

704 Fischer et al (eds.), 2005: 473–474; Tomašević, 1935: 25–26, 41–47.

Simultaneously, after 1921, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians shared profound internal instability with the other countries of Europe's south-east. The parliamentary system and national authorities were weak and unstable due to the dispute between the Croat and Serb political elites, far exceeding the mere political aspects. The King as the sovereign made a bold and risky move: with a soft coup, he took over control of the parliamentary system, appointed a man he trusted as the Prime Minister, amended the constitution and outlawed the "tribal" national parties.⁷⁰⁵ This did not allow the state to avoid the economic crisis. Production dwindled and the crisis then spread to agriculture, which represented the most vital part of the Yugoslav economy.⁷⁰⁶

However, the circumstances resulting from the Great Depression were a decisive factor. During this crisis the Army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was forced to come to terms with a program of saving after the recession had led to the reduction of budgetary resources in the early 1930s. The Yugoslav state budget was reduced drastically. State budget revenue between 1930 and 1933 fell by 32%, while the gross domestic product plummeted by as much as 40%. Consequently, the military budget, otherwise amounting to approximately 25% of the total budget, was also reduced. The resources intended for the army and navy in the 1932 budget decreased by 25%, just like other expenses. Priority was given to personal expenses, which represented a significantly bigger share despite the pay cuts and suspension of employment in the state administration. Only the army still had the option of applying for loans for urgent material needs. Yet, as a 3-year moratorium on the payment of foreign debt was enacted, few options for taking out a loan remained.⁷⁰⁷ When preparing the 1933 budget, on September 20, 1932 the Parliament passed a law reducing the income of all state employees, thereby lowering their earnings by 20%.⁷⁰⁸

The new legislation on the structure of the Army was implemented at the same time as the changes in constitutional and political life. The King as the supreme commander sought to modernize the Army as soon as he took over power. The task was to be carried out by General Milan Nedić, but he was prevented from doing so because of the resource shortage and the resistance of the other generals, especially a group led by the guard division commander, General

705 Fischer et al (eds.), 2005: 321–327.

706 Vučković, 1976: 197–227; Lazarević, 1994: 44.

707 Tomašević, 1935: 73, 110, 123.

708 Tomašević, 1935: 96.

Petar Živković. Only urgent changes in the formation development were made. Around 50% of all servicemen were in the infantry. During peacetime, 57 infantry, 10 cavalry, 38 artillery, and 7 special regiments were deployed at 16 division areas, and these operated in 5 army areas. However, the basic infantry formation was not modernized. Divisions as the basic military formations still consisted of up to 40,000 troops, and their expected concentration in the event of mobilization took 30 days. The transformation of the divisions into more mobile units fell through in 1935, also due to the inability to procure a significant number of motor vehicles.⁷⁰⁹ The effects of reduced military budget were short and longer term. Military procurement – in terms of frequency as well as quality – was additionally reduced. The purchase of uniforms was reduced while in the diet of the soldiers one vegetarian day a week was introduced. One of the most evident measures was the significantly smaller number of drafted recruits (by as much as 30%) between 1932 and 1934. Even later, the military authorities would often send servicemen on lengthy leave.⁷¹⁰

Nevertheless, the professional part of the Army, especially the officer corps, did not suffer severely because of the crisis. In 1931, it amounted to around 14,500 people, 6,741 of whom were officers. The number of employees did not decrease. However, their wages, notably the cost-of-living bonuses, were reduced. The mass retirement of more than 40 generals and 80 senior officers in the spring of 1929 was not caused by the crisis. Instead, the King wanted to ensure the loyalty of the generals and the officer staff. He saw the Army as a means of supporting his regime, but according to his own assurances he did not want to politicize it or involve it in politics.⁷¹¹ Professional officers and non-commissioned officers were forbidden from being politically active in any political parties or “tribal organizations”. Yet, this could not prevent them from having contacts with individual political groups, or even from being part of the forbidden and thus illegal Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Examples of radicalization and even communist ideas appeared among the officers. Between April 15 and 17, 1932, a group of younger officers attempted to overthrow the Maribor garrison, but failed. Ten officers were arrested, one officer committed suicide, and another was sentenced to

709 Bjelajac, 1994: 83. By 1941, these formations were reduced to a size of 27,000 to 28,500 men, while their concentration now took 12 days.

710 *Ibid.*, 81–89. According to National Health Service data, it was 45% of recruiters insufficiently developed for military service. Fischer et al (eds.), 2005: 479.

711 Bjelajac, 1994: 134–147.

death and executed. The “Maribor Rebellion” was the “worst form of undermining the military discipline” in the state's existence.

In October 1934, still in the middle of the Great Depression, King Alexander was assassinated in Marseilles. After his death, the military reforms kept failing one after the other, not only because of the economy but also due to the resistance of the traditionalist decision-makers among the generals. General Petar Živković, who also became the Minister of the Military and Navy from 1934 to 1936, re-established himself once again as the guarantor of the Army's unity as well as its traditionalism.⁷¹²

At the same time, the state had to be prepared for potential military operations. As soon as in 1935, the state leadership predicted that the expenses for military purchases would have to increase to the 1930 level as the political situation in Europe had made the acquisition of modern military technology a priority.⁷¹³

The question of the defense against Italy was at the forefront. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia only had one superior neighbor, hostile throughout its existence. Exactly during the economic crisis, it managed to ensure somewhat less strained relations with Italy, but only for a short period between 1932 and 1934. This military political situation resulted in the defense doctrine of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Yet, already in the 1920s it had protected itself from other less dangerous opposing states (Hungary, Bulgaria) by entering into a military pact called the Little Entente (with Czechoslovakia and Romania) and a military alliance with Turkey and Greece called the Pact of Balkan Agreement.⁷¹⁴

Therefore, its doctrine was traditionally based on offence. The same goes for its military operative plans, which, however, were simultaneously based on the presumed defense against Italy. In 1932, in order to improve the defense against the Kingdom of Italy, it decided to construct fortified defense lines just behind the borders in accordance with the European trends of the time. The first analyses and preparations for the fortification of the “Western Front”, a defense line from the Karavanke mountain range to the Kvarner Bay, date back to as early as 1926, although the final decision on the construction was adopted by the Yugoslav Army general headquarters in 1935. The construction of the fortified line was only possible when the state obtained a loan of 5 billion dinars from France since

712 Ibid., 171–172, 181.

713 Tomašević, 1935: 160.

714 Guštin and Prebilič, 2008: 38–52.

the regular budgetary resources were insufficient.⁷¹⁵ The military budget for 1935 reached the sum of 1,7 billion dinars and 513 million dinars in the extraordinary expenses.⁷¹⁶ Thus, the state's political interests resulted in a focused investment of additional resources and additional state borrowing.

Crisis and the Military in Socialist Yugoslavia, 1980–1991

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At the end of the 1970s, Yugoslavia found itself in a crisis caused by external aspects (the Second Oil Crisis, increasing prices of oil, more expensive loans) and especially by the internal factors (inefficient system of the “agreed economy”, ineffective investment in industrial capabilities and social infrastructure). Yugoslavia had engaged in a period of cheap credit in the period 1974–1978 by about US\$ 14 billion in order to achieve faster economic development. The burden of paying back the loans soon became too heavy.⁷¹⁷ In 1979, the International Monetary fund called on Yugoslavia to implement a program to ensure its financial stability, and only under those conditions did it intend to support the rescheduling of loans which then, with interest, amounted to about US\$ 20 billion. The initial economic crisis swiftly turned into a social and political crisis,⁷¹⁸ especially because the system crisis coincided with the change of generations in the very rigid state authority structure. The death of the charismatic historical leader Josip Broz Tito also had a detrimental effect on the military structures.⁷¹⁹

For the Yugoslav People's Army, the crisis mostly implied a reduction of budgetary resources for the Army allocated from the federal budget, as well as for the Territorial Defense (another component of the armed forces), also financed from the budgets of the republics and municipalities amounting to 0.5% of GDP. Initially, the Army attempted to make up for the budgetary resource shortage by

715 Marković, 1995: 102–112; Terzić, 1980: 151–156. 40 companies and 52 battalions worked on the fortification. In 1939, this meant 30,000 and in 1940 even 60,000 laborers.

716 *L'Yugoslavie d'aujourd'hui*, 1935: 170.

717 Borak, 2002: 53–57, 137–139.

718 Fischer et al (eds.), 2005: 1151–1153.

719 *Ibid.*, 1148–1150; Bilandžić, 1986: 83–94.

seeking internal resources – partly by increasing self supply (economy, farms, land holdings) and largely through increased sales of weapons and military equipment to the other Non-Aligned states. In 1986–1990, the Yugoslav military industry exported US\$ 4.7 billion worth of weapons and military equipment (up to 1985 – US\$ 2.0 billion). The profits from these exports also contributed significantly to the state budget and thus to the military budget.⁷²⁰

Such economic successes gave confidence to the top military, that emphasizes its contribution to solving the economic crisis, but also the specific requirements: to modernize the armed forces. Their commitment culminated in the supersonic fighter project on whose construction the technological acceleration of the Yugoslav economy should be built.

In the late 1970s, the military structures acquired relative independence, also reflected in the automatic allocation of a guaranteed percentage of budgetary resources. The weakness of the supreme command contributed significantly to this independence since the collective presidency succeeding Tito as the supreme commander could not force its authority upon the generals. The important role of the Army was also strengthened by the geopolitical situation of the state – the existence of Yugoslavia outside of both Pacts, reaching the Yugoslav borders, making the defensive readiness of the state very important. However, the 1981 uprising in Kosovo, finally stifled by a YPA intervention, called for a different orientation of the military structures, also forced a focus on the “internal enemy”. The weapons of the Territorial Defense of Kosovo (a section of the armed forces) were confiscated, and Albanian recruits became suspicious in advance.⁷²¹

In 1982, the military leadership started altering the strategic concept of the state's defense. However, the system of the total national defense was preserved. A concept of defending the vital strategic directions – or theatres of operations – was drawn up, and on the operative level the Territorial Defense was subordinated to the Yugoslav People's Army to a greater degree than before. The defense was now focused on the western part of the state, against NATO. The reorganization of the YPA into several army areas corresponded to the new deployment. At the same time, the number of armed soldiers was reduced. Yet, since the political elites of the republics opposed this, most resolutely in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, the reorganization was only carried out as late as in 1987. The republics especially resisted the reorganization due to the position of the Territorial Defense that was to be changed with this reform. The plan indicated that the Army leadership

720 Kovačev, Matijaščić, Petrović, 2006: 127–203; Stamatović, 2001.

721 Meier, 1996: 20–24; Mamula, 2000: 11–53.

was preparing to intervene in the internal affairs, possibly introducing a “state of emergency”. Such a plan was in fact drawn up. Still, in the critical years between 1990 and 1992 it was not implemented.⁷²² The reduced tensions in Europe and weakening of the Warsaw Pact enabled the reduction of military service to 12 months and a reduction in troops under arms to 186,000 men.⁷²³

Further, the YPA had to face the increasingly tense relations within the leading political elites, mostly divided according to their adherence to the republics, to reformists or supporters to the return to classic socialism. Due to these conflicts as well as the actions of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia during its internal disputes and the standpoints of the YPA leadership in the conflicts between the republics, the YPA, which had previously ensured the state integrity, now gradually became a party in the political clashes. Already in the early 1980s, the YPA opted for an internal intervention should the regime or the state be threatened.⁷²⁴ First, the YPA leadership had to face the Slovenian political elite, which was trying to preserve its own autonomy and the republic's state/political autonomy by reforming the socialist regime. As it was, the dominant centralist approaches to putting an end to the crisis kept pushing Slovenia into a corner. The relations between Slovenia and the YPA were also strained due to the disputes with regard to the concept of the military doctrine reform and the diminishing role of the Territorial Defense. Despite the fact that the majority of the generals did not support the Serbian nationalism, they sought and gradually found an ally in it due to common interests. “The idea of a single centralist Yugoslavia, controlled by the Serbs, also suited the ideas of most generals.”⁷²⁵ Since the Slovenian political leadership tolerated (or even encouraged) the public discussion of these problems, after almost 20 years the military was also criticized publicly. Not used to public discussion, the military saw the criticism as “attacks against the Yugoslav People's Army” and required the prosecution of the authors of critical articles.⁷²⁶

The military leadership was very sensitive in its reactions to any proposals for political solutions outside of the official system. Within its ranks, the Yugoslav People's Army adhered to a stricter version of Yugoslav socialism (communism) and doctrine of consistent Yugoslavism through “brotherhood and unity”. Its

722 Meier, 2003: 11–47; Mamula, 2000: 60–75, 88–89; Špegelj, 2001: 71–93.

723 Meier, 2003: 11–47; Vukšić, 2006: 88–128.

724 Meier, 1996: 68–69; Mamula, 2000: 51, 89; Pirjevec, 1995: 384.

725 Meier, 1996: 96.

726 Tancig, Žagar, 1988; Tancig, Žagar, 1989: 211–219.

primary purpose until as late as 1990 was to use its authority to preserve the existing political system and federal state. Non-communist political groups were seen and treated as the “internal enemy”. However, problems kept increasing with the unsteady progression of the democratization process, until in the spring of 1991 these political parties finally won the democratic elections in Slovenia and Croatia, thereby taking overpower.⁷²⁷

Consequently, the military structures became directly involved in the political struggle within the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and the disputes between the political leaderships of individual republics with regard to political, economic, and social system reforms, and adopted a completely negative attitude to the nascent democratic alternative. Thus, they became either the target or the sought-after ally in the ongoing political struggles. Since the spring of 1988⁷²⁸, when this attitude was demonstrated publicly, and until the dissolution of the state, the Army changed from an important part of the state system to, above all, a strong and important participant in the political conflicts. At the same time, it was susceptible to the economic crisis given that it was heavily dependent on the state budget. Some republics, including Slovenia, resorted to the only option they had to oppose the Army as the main budget user: they refused to confirm the federal budget. After considerable and prolonged efforts of the federal structures, even Slovenia agreed to a new way of financing the Army, in turn losing the option of influencing its basic financing directly.

The rekindled Albanian unrest in Kosovo in February 1989 called for another intervention by the Yugoslav People's Army. Even more importantly, due to the involvement in this problem the military leadership and the Serbian political

727 Fischer et al (eds.), 2005: 1283–1284.

728 Open conflict between the leadership of the YPA leadership and the Slovenian political leadership broke out in March 1988. At the military council session on March 25, the generals accused Slovenia that due to the passivity of its leadership the so-called counterrevolution had been allowed to develop there, which could result in a military intervention. The Slovenian political leadership opposed such accusations sharply and reproached the Army indirectly for its tendencies to carry out a military coup. Because the military leadership was unable to secure the support for an actual intervention with the indecisive LCY party elite, which otherwise opposed the Slovenian reformism, in the spring and summer of 1988 the security structures of the YPA tried a non-commissioned officer and three civilians, accusing them of having revealed military secrets. The reaction of the nascent Slovenian civil society was forceful, and the protest was supported by around 100,000 people. The rigidity of the military structures offended the national feelings of the general Slovenian population, which led to the swift formation of the political opposition and radical standpoints of the Slovenian population, seeking the solutions for the crisis outside Yugoslavia.

authorities led by Slobodan Milošević became increasingly connected. Similarly, the Yugoslav People's Army also wanted to intervene when the Republic of Slovenia adopted certain constitutional amendments in 1989.⁷²⁹

In the following months, the Army had to withdraw somewhat. It was forced to take part in the new government of the reformist Ante Marković since this was the only way to ensure its continued social and economic positions and privileges, even if somewhat reduced in scope. Still, intimately it never came to terms with the political situation in Slovenia and Croatia where new political parties were at the helm. The problem of depoliticizing the Army, undertaken by the new leaders of these two republics, may have been acknowledged by the generals in principle, but even after the actual dissolution of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in January 1990 they did nothing to solve it.⁷³⁰ The other goal of both republics – namely, the development of Yugoslavia into a confederation or the formation of independent states – contributed to the situation. The Army leadership refused to take any part in these options or the possibility to establish the armed forces of both republics. Meanwhile, its threats contributed to Slovenia and Croatia making a priority of developing their own defense forces by combining their security, police, and military forces, which was even legal in the context of the total national defense system through a flexible legal interpretation of the defense and security legislation.⁷³¹

The period from the end of 1990 to the announced attainment of the Slovenian and Croatian independence in June 1991 was marked by the possibility of the generals themselves taking overpower in Yugoslavia either through a softer or more radical coup, and by the search for political solutions to the state wide crisis, heading towards an armed internal conflict more and more openly. In January 1991, the military leadership attempted to exert pressure against the Slovenian and Croatian leadership by stopping the establishment of their autonomous military formations and demanding the surrender of weapons and dissolution of “paramilitary formations”, especially the military units of the Republic of Croatia. In March 1991, after putting an end to the demonstrations of the Serbian opposition by acting openly and deploying tanks, the generals of the Yugoslav People's Army tried to make the presidency of Yugoslavia declare a state of emergency – a soft version of a coup d'état. But, without the support of the

729 Meier, 1996: 175; Dizdarević, 1999: 235–274.

730 Meier, 1996: 157–212; Špegelj, 2001: 97–99, 110–112.

731 Janša, 1992: 35–46; Špegelj, 2001: 119–158, 192–194.

State Presidency, the Army did not intervene. It only intervened after Slovenian and Croatian independence had been declared on June 25, 1991, and even then in a limited extent and unprofessionally.⁷³²

Economic Crisis and Implications for the Defense Budget of Slovenia, 2008–2012

The global economic crisis, which started in 2008 as a financial crisis in the United States of America and in Europe, also appeared in the Republic of Slovenia soon thereafter. The onset of the crisis took place in time for the elections and thus the change of government in the autumn of 2008. In the years preceding the outbreak of the crisis, the defense system had drawn up a development-oriented vision of the future of the military sector, characterized by the recent introduction of the professional army in 2004 and the ambitious program of its outfitting.

With a defense budget of only EUR 536 million, Slovenia is one of the minnows in Europe, easily outspent by all of its neighbors. Moreover, the global crisis forced the Slovenian Ministry of Defense to make drastic cuts to the annual defense spending planned in its 'Mid-Term Defense Plan' (MTDP) for 2007–2012. Although the defense budget increased by an annual average of 9.2% over the period 2001–2008, 2009, and 2010 saw successive sharp cuts as the economic downturn deepened.⁷³³ Slovenia had been moving further away from meeting the NATO requirement of spending 2% of GDP on defense before 2014, with defense spending coming in at only 1.52% of GDP in 2009 and falling to 1.47% in 2010, despite lower GDP growth. Frequent spending cuts mainly hit procurement. In late July 2011, the Slovenian government proposed a further 7% cut to the national defense budget under draft plans submitted to the country's parliament. The government had already approved a reduced budget for 2011. If this additional cut had been accepted, defense spending would have fallen by EUR 95.5 million or 20% compared with 2010, as Slovenian Ministry of Defense officials told Janež's.⁷³⁴ This would have represented a figure of EUR 412.3 million

732 Fischer et al (eds.), 2005: 1315–1320.

733 Annual Report of the Ministry of Defense for 2010, 2011: 3–6, 95.

734 Sentinel Security Assessment – The Balkans, section Defense Budget, August, 2011.

for 2011. According to the final draft supplementary budget, defense expenditure would have represented 1.32% of GDP in 2011.⁷³⁵

Under the Mid-Term Defense Plan, defense expenditures were originally planned to reach 2% of GDP in 2009. However, the combination of higher-than-expected economic growth in 2006 and 2007 and parliamentary cuts to the spending plan meant this target was not reached. Defense spending grew by just 5.36% in 2009, significantly lower than the 2001–2008 average of 9.2%, and shrank by nearly 20% in 2010.⁷³⁶ Following Slovenia's NATO accession in 2004, Slovenian defense spending has been directed predominantly to programs related to its transformation away from a conscript-heavy force to a fully professional NATO-compatible service. The key planning document is the MTDP for 2007–2012, which emphasized force restructuring and improved mobility and sustainability. The most significant trends under the MTDP were: normalization of procurement spending to bring it under the main budget; the stabilizing of personnel costs at around EUR 210 million; and a major increase in operational funds, which were to be more than doubled from EUR 70 million in 2005 to EUR 180 million by 2010.⁷³⁷ Yet, since the MTDP was released, the increase in operational funds appears to have been scrapped, with Major General Alojz Šteiner announcing in May 2009 that the army would have to cope with a cut of 19% to its operational budget. It seems likely that the number of battalions was to be reduced. Efforts were also underway to bring procurement spending under the main budget. Recent ministry activity included the purchase of new combat vehicles for EUR 438 million; stabilizing personnel costs at around EUR 210 million; and increasing funds for operations from EUR 70 million in 2005 to EUR 180 million by 2010. The mid-term Defense Plan for 2007–2012 initially anticipated defense expenditures reaching 2% of Slovenia's GDP by 2009; however, it was unlikely that Slovenia would achieve this mark before 2014. To reach that level of spending, the defense budget would have to be increased by between 8% and 16% over that period. The economic downturn compelled the Slovenian Defense Ministry to make draconian reductions in defense spending. In March 2009, as the economic crisis worsened, Defense Minister Ljubica Jelušič announced that the defense budget would be cut further and only grow by 5.36% compared to 2008. In April 2010, a new national Security Strategy was adopted, but in light of

735 Ibid.

736 Sentinel Security Assessment – The Balkans, section Defense Budget, August, 2011.

737 Prebilič, 2008: 32.

the then financial situation the implementation of its ambitions seemed unlikely. By 2015, Slovenia wanted to be able to field up to 750–1,000 troops for 1 year. Besides downsizing, the main axes of the reforms were to achieve an all-professional force and to modernize equipment through increased defense spending with greater investment. Capability priorities were C2, deploy ability, mobility, combat effectiveness, sustainability, and survivability. Recent ministry activity included the purchase of new combat vehicles for EUR 438 million; stabilizing personnel costs at around EUR 210 million; and increasing funds for operations from EUR 70 million in 2005 to EUR 180 million by 2010.⁷³⁸

Following the victory of the right-middle coalition at the early elections held in December 2011, the Minister of Defense was also replaced. The first measure undertaken by the new Minister was to find fresh possibilities for defense budget cuts and internal rationalization. Consequently, in March 2012 the new staff plan of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Slovenia came into force, providing for a decrease in the number of employees in the administrative part of the Ministry from 1,378 in 2008 to 1,265 by the end of 2012. To date, the number of employees in this sector of the Ministry has been reduced by 60. A reduction of members of the Slovenian Army was not envisioned in this plan, meaning that this number will also remain at the level of 7,600 people in the future.⁷³⁹ The new Minister of Defense mostly saw reserves in the income received by the Ministry employees since these already represent as much as 63% of the budget.⁷⁴⁰ Savings in the field of defense were also urgently needed in the future. Therefore, resources in the amount of only EUR 440 million were foreseen for 2012 after the budget revision, representing 1.24% of GDP. The real decrease in GDP in the same year by more than 1% should also be taken into account. This seriously affected the Slovenian Army staff's level of fighting morale and motivation already achieved since the expenses for equipment (as a result of the new weapons systems purchased due to the tasks in the context of the Euro Atlantic Alliance) increased fourfold, while the salaries remained the same for several years. Consequently, a soldier's average monthly salary amounted to as little as EUR 700 per month and

738 Annual report of the Ministry of Defense for 2010, 2011: 59–64.

739 With the implementation of the organizational and staff changes of the administrative part, the reorganization of the Ministry of Defense was complete in March 2012; information available at http://www.mo.gov.si/nc/si/medijsko_sredisce/novica/article/12029/5751/

740 Delo, March 23, 2012, Hojs: Na MORS bi lahko privarčevali z znižanjem plač (Defense Minister Hojs: the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Slovenia could save by reducing the salaries).

most members of the Slovenian Army saw participation in the missions where their salaries rose to EUR 3,300 as a great opportunity.⁷⁴¹ Naturally, however, the participation in the missions cannot and should not be the only motive to seek employment in the Slovenian Army because according to the Constitution the primary mission of the defense forces is to ensure the security and defense of the state, especially in the territory of the Republic of Slovenia.

741 Zupančič, 2012: <http://www.delo.si/novice/varcevalni-ukrepi/vojsko-menda-se-vedno-potrebujemo.html>

A REDEFINITION OF DEFENSE – MOBILIZATION OF THE NATION

The phenomenon of the territoriality of the armed forces has been present throughout military history. The reason, of course, lies in the fundamental mission of every defense structure – to protect the territorial integrity and population in that territory. At the same time, it is worth pointing out that territoriality is also reflected to a good extent in the completion of the armed forces. It is known that mobilization territorial units complemented individual military formations and thus ensured maximum combat morale and motivation in the performance of defense tasks. In the case of the case study, however, territoriality has another extremely important meaning – since Yugoslavia is a federation, following the founding of the country in 1945, it was expected that its constituent parts, i.e., the republics, would have the possibility of forming the territorial component of the country's defense system. Yet this did not happen until 1968. The reason was largely distrust in the republics and their interests in the case of them forming military capacities, especially from the point of view of the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army. It was he who was convinced that in Yugoslavia the monopoly over defense capacities must be guaranteed exclusively in the hands of the Yugoslav Army. Still, the geopolitical changes, indicated through the prism of the military intervention of the Red Army in Czechoslovakia, forced the consideration of the establishment of an additional territorial component in support of the federal Yugoslav Army. Since the costs of this component were imposed on each republic and did not interfere with the federal defense budget, the Yugoslav political elites agreed to such a decision of the political leadership in Yugoslavia. However, the many reservations and fears of the Yugoslav military leadership turned out to be justified as the territorial component in the case of Slovenia became the backbone of defense capabilities during the secession and defense of the autonomy and independence of the new state of the Republic of Slovenia.

Theoretical foundation for armed forces

In the theory of armed forces, territoriality represents an important component, which can be defined from two standpoints:

- as the fundamental implementation of the armed forces tasks that, from the very beginning of the armed forces, have mainly been aimed at protecting the territory, seen by a certain community as its property, from a variety of threats. This has been and will undoubtedly remain the basic task of the armed forces even in the new security architecture, which reveals itself in the armed forces' activities within the collective defense system;⁷⁴² and
- as the recruitment or enlistment of armed forces members. This task has traditionally depended on a certain territorial component as the integration of recruits into the territorially defined community has had an extremely significant influence on the mobilization responsiveness as well as the speed of its implementation.⁷⁴³ The territorial component has been all the more crucial to ensure the success and especially engagement of armed forces members in the realization of military operations. All of this is generally understood under the general term of combat morale,⁷⁴⁴ which is directly associated with the concept of territorialized community (homeland) defense.

Territorialization of the armed system

From these foundations, it follows that the armed forces' territorial component is the very aspect that importantly constructs, gives meaning, and facilitates their existence and functioning. Moreover, the most fundamental facts are ingrained in the essence of the armed forces:

- Military tradition is a reflection of the social culture,⁷⁴⁵ i.e., the norms and patterns of behavior that are upgraded with the system of the military profession. As such, it is a collection of characteristics, territorially conditioned, and specific for an individual community. The territory and history of this territory represent an important part of the military tradition and define not only the operations of the individual armed forces but make for an indelible element of the military identity.

742 Huntington, 1981.

743 Hudson and Henk, 2014.

744 Ilisoi and Nagy, 2004.

745 Kiernan, 2010.

- Military identity represents the foundation of any military organization.⁷⁴⁶ Its legitimacy and contents stem from the military tradition, and as such it does not only define the tasks of any individual armed force, but also constructs and brings meaning to its existence. The territorial component plays a special role in this regard as it underlies the symbolism of the armed forces and their tasks.
- The military/combat morale has been associated with the territory ever since the existence of armed forces.⁷⁴⁷ The defense of the territorialized community (homeland) is certainly the highest value of an armed forces and their primary purpose. For the greater part of military history, participation in the realization of defense operations has been inseparably linked with citizenship and the individuals' political rights in society. Sociologically, the (in)ability of community members (traditionally men) to function within the system of the armed forces would result in a negative social evaluation.

The change of the territorial concept has always represented the necessary redefinition of the armed forces, which has then been shown in the form of professionalization on one hand and the distancing of the armed forces from the civil society on the other.

If precisely because of their integration into the territorial environment the armed forces once represented its exclusive and then the most important part, and while they were later an essential part of the life of any civil society, today this is no longer the case. The constant and overly hurried alteration of modern societies' territorial concept is no doubt an important factor in the diminishing importance of the armed forces territorial component.

Not long ago, it was precisely the territoriality of the armed forces that defined an individual society, which saw this as the foundation for its identity.⁷⁴⁸ The changed state borders after the end of the Cold War, the completely different understanding of security, and especially the definitions regarding who and how should ensure this security have been and remain the most important factor of armed forces reforms. The armed forces should supposedly be highly professionalized and specialized, yet the territorial concept is increasingly missing from the equation as the tasks of the modern armed forces ever more often transcend the territorial limitations of states. The system of collective security, which focuses

746 Manning, 1991: 453–454.

747 MacCoun et al., 2005: 1–9.

748 Prebilič and Juvan, 2019: 99–117.

not only on compatibility but also on interoperability, sees the territorial understanding of the armed forces' tasks and their concept of activities as an obstacle rather than encouragement in achieving the defense capabilities regarding the security goals envisioned in such a manner.⁷⁴⁹

We have simultaneously witnessed the redefinition of the territorial concept. The lowest common denominator is meant to be represented by the groups of allied countries. This has resulted in new foundations for the establishing of a new concept of military identity in which territoriality is spatially no longer understood as the territory of an individual member state, but as the territory of the whole alliance – i.e., the territory of indirect responsibility for security, involving territorially more extensive tasks of the armed forces.⁷⁵⁰

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This raises the following paradox: the existence, activities, and successful realization of the individual armed forces' tasks are inseparable from territoriality which, however, represents an extraordinary challenge in modern collective security defense systems. This challenge manifests itself during the joint operations of the allied armed forces and in the reservations of the states regarding the formation and further intensification of the cooperation of member states in the field of defense.

One may claim that without the establishment of a new, territorially broader social identity, it will be impossible to ensure any further progress regarding close cooperation in the defense of the allied member states. Moreover, the consequences of the strengthening sovereignty are also evident in the field of defense where discussions on the fundamental tasks of the armed forces and questions whether the armed forces, their missions, and thus also their training should be restricted to the states' national territories are becoming increasingly frequent.

The Slovenian Armed Forces: Tradition

Historically, the Slovenian ethnic territory – the foundation of today's Republic of Slovenia – was a strategically important transition area (referred to as the Ljubljana Gap) between the Pannonian Basin, the North Italian Plain, and the

749 Jordan and Kiras, 2016.

750 Prebilič and Guštin, 2016: 123–144.

North Adriatic area.⁷⁵¹ Politically and militarily, the area around this passage was once dominated by several great empires – for a long time from the 10th to 18th centuries the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, then the Austrian Empire, and finally by Austro-Hungary. For roughly 1,000 years, this was the state/political framework of the military control over this area. Its population, which formed the Slovenian nation towards the end of the 18th century, also served in these militaries.

As a rule, strong armed forces components would have been established here because of the strategic importance of this passage.⁷⁵²

The Austrian Empire was one of the first to purposefully establish a territorial component. In the Austrian provinces, the *Landwehr* (home guard) was established in 1808. The Home Guard consisted of all combat-capable volunteers between 18 and 60 years of age who had not previously served in the Army and until then had been excused from military service.⁷⁵³ The Home Guard comprised battalions and companies. Styria had to provide 13 battalions with 13,800 men, Carinthia 5 battalions with 5,900 men, while Carniola and the Littoral with Trieste had to provide 15 battalions with 15,700 men.⁷⁵⁴ The Home Guard was not trained well enough to take part in very demanding military operations and was also poorly outfitted and armed. It was restored after the Napoleonic Wars.⁷⁵⁵

After the formation of modern armed forces in the mid-19th century, Austro-Hungary placed emphasis on the newly established territorial armed forces component, tasked with defending this territory. With the new military legislation of 1868, the Home Guard as an independent territorial component of the armed forces was established. *Honvéd* in the Hungarian and consequently also *Landwehr* in the Austrian part of the Monarchy were established also due to political pressure – following the Hungarian demand for its own, separate Hungarian Army.⁷⁵⁶

Regardless of these political implications, five *Landwehr* regiments were established in the Slovenian part of the Austrian half of the state and deployed around

751 Prebilič, 2012: 313–324.

752 Bassett, 2016: 11–99.

753 Učiteljski tovariš, June 12, 1908, no. 24, Ustanovitev domobranstva.

754 Ropič, 2004.

755 Bassett, 2016: 120; Urbanitsch and Wandruszka (eds.), 1987: 199–202.

756 Urbanitsch and Wandruszka (eds.), 1987: 417–430, 634–686. Under the Austrian Defense Act (RGI. 41/1889, §4), “the Landwehr is tasked in time of war to support the Army and to defend the homeland; in peacetime, and by exception, also to maintain law and order and security of the homeland”.

the wider area between Graz and Pola and the Austrian–Italian border beside the Soča (Isonzo) River. In the defense plans, two of these regiments were tasked with defending the border area by the Soča River (26th and 27th, until April 1917 the 2nd Mountain Rifle Regiment).⁷⁵⁷

The system of staffing the joint Army was adapted to the territorial nature of defense in Austro-Hungary as it was exceedingly territorially oriented. Each infantry regiment was staffed from a single recruitment area, while the cavalry and artillery regiments were staffed from a single or several neighboring recruitment areas.⁷⁵⁸

The Austro-Hungarian defense at the Soča River between 1915 and 1917 represents an important reference point for the territoriality of the Slovenian military tradition. In the awareness of the Slovenian population, this defense has gained a dimension of a nationally-relevant defense of the Slovenian homeland.⁷⁵⁹ Also for this reason, the Austro-Hungarian command assigned an above-average share of Slovenian national units to this front since it was counting on their active participation.⁷⁶⁰

The dissolution of Austro-Hungary divided the Slovenian space geostrategically, as the western part as far as the Ljubljana Gap went to Italy, while the eastern part from the end of the Ljubljana Gap to Maribor was annexed to the new Southern Slavic nation state: the State of Slovenians, Croats, and Serbs (October–December 1918) and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians (from 1931 the Kingdom of Yugoslavia).⁷⁶¹ The defense of this territory thus gained a new dimension as its territorial defense was indeed important, but not decisively so for the state with an emphasis on the axis between the basin of the Sava River, Belgrade, the Drina River basin, and the Vardar River basin.⁷⁶² All of the defense and formation planning in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia followed this main strategic orientation. The focus of the Yugoslav defense changed in the mid-1930s when the strategists and subsequently also the state concentrated on the defense

757 Imperial Royal Landwehr.; Die k.k. Landwehr-Gebirgstruppen : Geschichte, Uniformierung und Ausrüstung der österreichischen Gebirgstruppen von 1906 bis 1918, 2006.

758 Ibid.

759 Macdonald and Cimprič, 2011; Grdina, 2009; Rajšp (ed.), 2010; Jurić-Pahor, 2019.

760 Švajncer, 1988; Svoljšak and Antoličič, 2018.

761 Pirjevec, 1995.

762 Bjelajac, 1988; Bjelajac, 1994: 206–40.

of this area by constructing a defense line and thus undertook to defend the territory behind the fortified line (the Rupnik Line).⁷⁶³

The Partisan warfare of the resistance movement during the Second World War was basically territorial as well. The Slovenian Partisan Army (as part of the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia), as a highly developed guerrilla army, was exceedingly territorially defined and oriented in terms of combat, even though attempts had been made to upgrade it with the capability of maneuvering in the field.⁷⁶⁴ It even developed the basis for a separate territorial component, the 'detachments' in comparison with the 'brigades', which were supposed to be maneuver units.⁷⁶⁵

Following the Second World War, Socialist Yugoslavia within the somewhat altered borders (all of the Postojna Gate territory now belonged to Yugoslavia) developed a similar defense doctrine. The Cold War contributed to this, and the initial division between the Western and Eastern camp ran precisely along Yugoslavia's western border. After 1950, Yugoslavia refrained from opting for either of the blocs and decided for independent defense instead. This involved the strengthening of the territorial component of its armed forces. Initially, this component represented approximately 10% of the Yugoslav Army's structure, while later it gradually increased to one-fifth.⁷⁶⁶

In 1968, the Yugoslav political and military leadership established an additional territorial component that was initially improvised. However, already in the same year it was converted to a systemically separate territorial formation of the armed forces. These structures were initially called units of the total national defense, while as of 1971 they were referred to as the Territorial Defense. The latter was organized by the republics as eight separate military formations. Their task was to defend the territory of each individual republic or autonomous province, even in the case that an opponent would occupy the area. In total, these units consisted of approximately 1,100,000 troops in Yugoslavia. However, in Slovenia the number of its members amounted to around 83,000, which represented approximately 45% of all the military conscripts from Slovenia. Because

763 Habrnál, 2005; Jankovič Potočnik, 2004.

764 Guštin, 2008b: 48–61.

765 Ibid., 58.

766 Dimitrijević, 2006; Marković, 2007; Dimitrijević, 2005; Dimitrijević, 2017.

of the Slovenian national identification, the Territorial Defense of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia held an important place in Slovenian society.⁷⁶⁷

Immediately after the declaration of the independent and autonomous state on June 26, 1991, an armed conflict broke out that Slovenia faced with a partially supplemented Territorial Defense, which however was formally still operating as the territorial component of the Yugoslav armed forces. The conflict's level of intensity and complexity was such that the almost fully-staffed territorial component of the Slovenian state was able to cope with it, and the territorial organization even strengthened the effectiveness of the Slovenian side. Slovenia therefore achieved its independence using the purposefully defined territorial component of the armed forces.⁷⁶⁸

The Slovenian Army, 1991–2018

In view of the circumstances, in the initial period of the Republic of Slovenia its Army remained territorially organized as the threat level and hence the need to defend the Slovenian territory from any incursions of the Yugoslav Army from the neighboring Croatia was still considerable. On February 3, 1992, the Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia adopted a general plan of organizing, outfitting, arming, and training the Slovenian Army.⁷⁶⁹ Its organization was based on the concept of the armed neutrality of the Republic of Slovenia. According to this plan, the Slovenian Army was supposed to consist of 45,000 troops, 18,000 of whom were supposed to belong to its maneuver part. The Army's peacetime complement acquired a strengthened reserve army, staffed with conscripts from the regular complement. In this period, the organizational structure of the Territorial Defense of the Republic of Slovenia was divided into the maneuver and territorial components. The territorial component or the territorial forces consisted of approximately 27,000 troops, which represented approximately 60% of the Army's full complement. It had a permanent and wartime complement. The territorial component was integrated into the Territorial Defense Headquarters of

767 Bolfek, 2018; Novak, 2005.

768 Kladnik (ed.), 2011; Švajncer, 1993.

769 Kladnik, 2007: 34; Guštin, 2016a: 91.

the Republic of Slovenia, 7 Provincial Territorial Defense Headquarters, and 27 Regional Territorial Defense Headquarters.⁷⁷⁰

The territorial commands and units remained active even after the adoption of the Defense Act of 1994. However, the size of the territorial units was reduced to around 7,400 troops.⁷⁷¹ In 1998, a thorough reorganization of the Slovenian Army began with the aim of adapting it for the entry into NATO (National Strategy for the Accession of Slovenia to NATO, 1998). Among other things, the territorial military commands were restructured as well. The Strategy of the Military Defense of the Republic of Slovenia adopted at the time provided for the restructuring of the armed forces into rapid reaction forces, main defense forces, and auxiliary defense forces. An organizational adaptation of the armed forces (the division into mobile and immobile forces) was carried out.⁷⁷²

The subsequent reorganization of the Slovenian Army in 2002 involved the reduction of the territorial forces as well. In 2003, the Slovenian Army became a professional army with the envisioned staff of 7,500 members. The territorial forces were supposed to consist of a voluntary contractual reserve consisting of 1,500 members, but this plan was never fully implemented.⁷⁷³ In the following year, 2004, Slovenia joined NATO. The accession process entailed a series of military structural reforms and reforms of the defense system in general. The formation of the forces included in the collective defense completely overshadowed the issues regarding the Army's territorial component.⁷⁷⁴

In the medium-term defense program of the Republic of Slovenia for 2016–2020, the very existence, let alone development, of the territorial forces dedicated to operations in the territory of the Republic of Slovenia became of secondary importance. All of the available resources were aimed at adjusting the Slovenian Army to the NATO standards and preparing the forces for the operations taking place outside of Slovenian national territory in the framework of NATO.⁷⁷⁵

Due to the refugee crisis in 2015 and other security or even military threats nearby (e.g., in Ukraine, as well as the wars in Libya and Syria), demands appeared

770 Ibid., 91; Šteiner, 2015: 20–21.

771 Šteiner, 2015: 21–24.

772 Ibid.; Guštin, 2016a: 94.

773 Majer, 2006; Juvan, Zupančič and Kopač, 2010, 23–25; Juvan, Zupančič and Grošelj, 2010: 20–22; Juvan et al., 2010: 29–31; Grošelj, Juvan and Zupančič, 2010: 303–333.

774 Gutman, 2007: 43.

775 Šteiner, 2015: 171–191.

in the public that apart from taking part in NATO the Slovenian Army should largely focus on the defense of Slovenian territory. Simultaneously, the financial crisis and the consequent 40% reduction of the defense budget severely impaired the technological modernization and adaptation of the Slovenian Army to the NATO standards in particular.⁷⁷⁶ The following radical proposals appeared:

- unification of all repressive forces in a police/military formation;
- withdrawal from the NATO structures;
- restoration of the Territorial Defense;
- establishment of a voluntary national guard; and even
- the reintroduction of conscription.⁷⁷⁷

Fifteen years after Slovenia had joined NATO, the adaptation of the Slovenian Army to the collective defense system is under the strong impression of the tradition and military experience of its leading cadre. The tradition of the Slovenian Army is closely related precisely to the Territorial Defense, which was evidently a territorial force. The same applies to the main source of military tradition – the Slovenian Independence War of June and July 1991 in which territorial forces fought against maneuver forces. A significant part of the commanding staff on the highest level is also personally involved with the territorial component of military operations (the staff either originates from these military formations or participated in the Slovenian Independence War 1991).

Further, the Slovenian military identity was once influenced by the less than fully realized Slovenian national independence. The Slovenian military identity used to be – since military organization is almost always related to state organization – exceptionally handicapped because the Slovenian national identity was once not based on the sense of belonging to a certain state. This means that individual members of the armed forces had to resolve this dichotomy in their own way, on the personal level, either through assimilation, refusal to join a military organization, or even retirement. Consequently, the presence of Slovenian staff in the professional military structures of Austro-Hungary and in particular the Yugoslav Army (as well as of the first post-WWII generation, in the structures of the Yugoslav People's Army) was modest. This was an important element in the creation of 'the new times', as the military identity had to be established completely anew.

⁷⁷⁶ Kladnik, 2007, 70–71.

⁷⁷⁷ Prebilič and Guštin, 2013: 250–255.

AFTER THE END OF WAR?

The defense of one's homeland, state, and nation has been and remains a timeless and universal value. However, defense systems are represented by and made up of individuals prepared to risk everything, even their lives, for the safety of others. Therefore, we would expect a decent and respectful attitude to everyone who leaves the defense system for various reasons. That is however not always the case. In the absence of significant security challenges and with the formation of the historical memory these very defense systems and those who are no longer essential for this system – the veterans association – often have to face significant budget cuts. Such actions result in the erosion of values in the system itself, the fading of its positive image, the undermining of the military identity, and ultimately diminished battle readiness. If we take into account the fact that the veterans association is a bridge between the civilian and military environment, and that it can ensure and contribute significantly to understanding the tasks of the defense system, it becomes obvious that the attitude to veterans and their organizations should be cherished.

The existence of the national security system, with the defense system as part of it, allows the continued existence and functioning of the state. The state authorities have a monopoly over the use of force. In exchange, this system ensures the security of the citizens on the national as well as individual levels. However, in certain specific respects defense systems are different from other social systems. Of these, force is especially apparent, which individuals have at their disposal and which, in extreme cases, is aimed at taking the lives of opponents. Further, every member of the armed forces has to understand the level of risk involved in their work as well as accept the possibility that they might lose their life fulfilling the call of duty. For this reason, defense systems are subject to precisely defined rules governing the mutual relations based on two otherwise simple rules: unity of command and subordination.

According to Južnič, soldiers and officers must completely identify with the state that they are defending professionally, and whose interests they represent.⁷⁷⁸ Therefore, military service is the most distinctive state service, bringing together and intertwining the national and military identities. The former is closely connected with the area that also otherwise defines the living space of a certain nation and thus indirectly also its characteristics, while the latter is additionally based on the living space that has to be defended as such. Although currently this sort of

778 Južnič, 1993: 306.

understanding of the relations between the military and national identities tends to be relativized, here it is claimed that the relationship between these identities has by no means changed despite certain new tasks as well as forms of staffing for the armed forces. Moreover, the defense systems of modern states are based on these same foundations and therefore effective in the realization of their tasks. On the other hand, the relativization of these foundations undermines the most important basis of the military organization. One would expect some complementarity between the military and civilian values, but instead increasing divergence is taking place. On this basis, we may conclude that the military values do not necessarily reflect the civilian values, and the understanding of the tasks as well as need for the military system itself are rendered all the more important. The veterans' organizations, indirectly related to the military system, share a similar fate. The phenomenon of veteran's organizations is not new: ever since military veterans – former soldiers – attained their distinct social status in the 19th century, their activities expressed themselves precisely in their organized representation. Veterans were the basic building blocks of the veteran organizations, either as passive members or as active participants and founders of organizations. Veterans depended on the state as individuals granted the special status of veterans by the state that defined and recognized this status with the legislation, which did not necessarily involve any material benefits. Veterans' organizations were often also intermediaries between the veterans and the state with respect to the recognition of the veterans' formal and material benefits. Veterans mostly came together in local-level organizations and under the auspices of the state. The first large-scale national veterans' organizations appeared in the second half of the 19th century. The common war experiences as well as the ideological-political distinction were an important factor of the organizational pluralism of veteran organizations.

However, the question of values is not always at the center of attention. The current economic and financial crisis has led to numerous cuts and austerity measures, intended to reduce the expenses for the social systems that the state budgets could no longer finance due to the shortage of income. Defense budgets were by no means an exception. The defense budgets of all European countries without exception decreased in the period between 2008 and 2014.⁷⁷⁹ It is also possible to note the correlation between the severity of the recent financial crisis in the states and the extent to which their defense budgets have diminished.

Therefore, it is notable of especially the Southern European countries that their defense budgets have been cut by as much as 30%. This fact has resulted

779 De France, 2015: 1–4.

in the internal restructuring of their defense budgets by lowering the costs of training, purchase, and maintenance of equipment, while the expenses for wages, which represent an ever-increasing percentage of defense budgets, have been kept stable. Therefore, the question of the financing of veterans's associations – which may be under the auspices of Defense Ministries – is not at all unusual. Diminishing resources are to be expected, as in the circumstances when the very system is financially threatened such expenses represent a non-critical component of the system. At the same time, the provision of veterans' benefits is uncertain.

Thus, some experts refer to the expenses for veterans, which in the United States include all forms of rehabilitation, payment of disability allowances and benefits to veterans' family members, as the impairment of veterans.⁷⁸⁰ Given that there are around 24 million veterans in the United States and 3.5 million of them are eligible for various benefits due to injuries – it is to be expected that after the conclusion of the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, where 1.6 million soldiers were involved in military operations, the number of beneficiaries increased steeply. The authors estimate that the expenses after the end of the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan will increase by an amount ranging between US\$ 422 and US\$ 717 billion.⁷⁸¹

When discussing the position of the veterans association, at least three stakeholders should be mentioned: the institutions of the states that adopt and carry out the decisions; the veterans organizations themselves, as it seems that they are often not bringing attention to certain issues actively enough; and civil society, which we would expect to be significantly more proactive in cases when the position of veterans organizations is being discussed. What is their participation, who is responsible, to what degree, and why does it seem that the role of veteran's organizations in contemporary societies should have more room in terms of quality and quantity? These are the issues that this chapter focuses on.

Who is a veteran?

Even though this seems unnecessary, we should nevertheless shed light on certain dilemmas and questions concerned with veteran's organizations and the status of

780 Stiglitz and Bilmes, 2009: 61–90.

781 Stiglitz and Bilmes, 2009: 61–90.

veterans. We should immediately underline that the word “veteran” is associated with two aspects: the legalistic view, based on the legal definition of this status and thus also related to its statutory benefits; and, second, the more general understanding of veterans, related to their participation in military tasks and missions or in the sense of their retirement from the active armed forces. In neither case is the status of veterans completely clearly defined. This is first and foremost the result of the manner in which the armed forces are staffed, and also depends on the tasks that members of the armed forces pursue in the name of the state. Precisely these tasks have lately exceeded what otherwise has been the basic mission of all armed forces: to protect the state territory from the aggression of external elements of threat. Naturally, such tasks are the result of the altered security architecture, including the various forms of alliances that entail certain obligations apart from the security benefits they bring. Despite the aforementioned systemic changes, there are also specific features that exist on the national levels of individual states. In this sense, we should underline the capabilities of the state itself, especially its attitude to its defense system and thus also towards the people who have been performing various tasks in the context of this system.

The International Encyclopedia of Military History⁷⁸² explains that definitions of veterans vary depending on the nation or state that these veterans live in. Generally speaking, veterans are people who have served in the armed forces during conflicts, albeit use of this term has held various meanings in various periods and in case of different nations. For example, in the United States the term describes individuals who served in the armed forces⁷⁸³, while in the case of other nations the same term is essentially reserved for people who have in fact fought, i.e., taken part in combat missions. An instance of such a designation is apparent in Great Britain, for example: “ex-service” is a designation for people who served in the armed forces, while the word “veteran” is reserved for those who actually fought. Nevertheless, such a definition does not question the benefits of the veterans that are in this sense plainly and exactly defined.⁷⁸⁴ On the other

782 International Encyclopedia of Military History, 2006, K-Z volume 2.

783 In the United States, the term denotes everyone who has actively served in the Army for at least 2 years and who has left the armed forces at least with the status of honorable, regardless of whether they have taken part in combat operations or not, or the persons who have been permanently injured or disabled due to the consequences of wars (Sešel, 2007: 19).

784 The definition of British veterans is short and clear: anyone who has served in the armed forces for more than a day is a veteran (Dandeker et al., 2005: 161–177). This sort of widely inclusive definition represents more than 5.5 million of former military personnel in Great

hand, Australia and Canada subscribe to a different definition of veterans. The former grants the status of veterans merely to people who have actively participated either in operations abroad, or in the wars that the state has fought in the past.⁷⁸⁵ The Netherlands similarly associates the veteran status with participation in military operations: veterans are all members of the military who participated in wars or were involved in international operations or operations in the context of the United Nations. On the other hand, Canada redefined the term in 2000: veterans include everyone who have ever honorably served in the armed forces of Canada or its allies. In 2001, the extended definition of veterans also included all former military personnel and members of the reserve forces who fulfilled the conditions set out by the Canadian Ministry of Defense and who ended their jobs with an honorable discharge.⁷⁸⁶

Veterans and society

Veterans are inseparable from the armed forces as they have operated or keep operating within their structures. Thus, their position in society reflects the situation within the defense system as well as this system's presence in civil society which is, as a rule, more or less distanced from it. The armed forces are subject to the functional and social imperative, which in essence defines the very legitimacy of the armed forces. Gow (1992: 27) defines the legitimacy of the military as "the quality of the relations of the armed forces with their socio-political environment" and distinguishes between two types of legitimacy:⁷⁸⁷ functional and socio-political legitimacy.⁷⁸⁸ Gow also deems it possible that the socio-political

Britain. Together with the family members who these people are responsible for and their widows/widowers (associated with the title of veterans by definition), this amounts to approximately 13 million people or around 20% of the British population. A more restrictive definition of veterans has been proposed but has not been adopted due to public disapproval (Sešel, 2007: 20).

785 Burdett, 2012: 2.

786 Sešel, 2007: 20.

787 Ibid., 27, 28.

788 The functional legitimacy is related to the effective fulfilment of the functional imperative or the basic task of the armed forces: defense against external physical threat. Should the armed forces be unsuccessful in the realization of this fundamental task, their legitimacy would be

imperative could “clash” with the functional imperative, and that it is precisely the balancing between the functional and socio-political demands that represents one of the aspects of the armed forces’ legitimacy. “While the armed forces must be capable of carrying out their fundamental tasks, they cannot become alienated from their own society”.⁷⁸⁹ In other words, the armed forces are subject to the demands and expectations with regard to their obligations and jurisdictions. The realization of the social as well as the political imperative is also seen in the support that citizens provide to the military organizations. Thus, the level of harmonization is related to the level of legitimacy which, as a concept, represents the importance of understanding the relations between the armed forces and society. Two sides face each other in the process of legitimizing the armed forces: the army that demands legitimacy, and the population of the state which can, in certain conditions, provide this legitimacy. In this sense, the loyalty of the public or civil society also functions through the prism of understanding the armed forces as the proponent of the basic social values. On this basis, a field of interaction between the armed forces and civil society is formed and the relations between the civilian and military spheres are defined.

The relationship between the civilian environment and military organizations is formed on the basis of two imperatives: functional and social.⁷⁹⁰ The functional imperative stems from the tasks expected to be carried out by the army, especially when the state security is endangered. Meanwhile, the social imperative consists of other goals set before the armed forces as a result of ideologies, values, and cultural norms. In order to ensure the legitimacy of the armed forces, it is necessary to ensure a balanced approach to further either the functional or the social imperative. If the defense system is completely dedicated to meeting the demands and expectations of the social imperative, then its functional obligations can no longer be fulfilled. The same holds true in the opposite case: if an army fails to pay enough attention to the social imperative, it will soon become estranged from civil society and therefore become, in extreme cases, illegitimate and as such unnecessary.

significantly hampered. Gow establishes that the army can fulfil its functional imperative in two ways: 1) latently or clandestinely, without the active use of force; and 2) in a more obvious manner, by openly engaging a hostile military force. The socio-political legitimacy has to do with the efficient fulfilment of the social and political imperatives, defined by the author as a collection of non-functional demands placed on the military by its own society.

789 Gow, 1992: 28.

790 Huntington, 1957: 1–3.

We can draw similar parallels in case of the status and role of veterans and the veteran's association. If the fundamental functional imperative of a defense system is to ensure the security of the civilian environment, then this imperative represents, in the case of a veteran's association, the status of veterans in society. This status is related to the formal legal framework: to fulfilling the legal norms or conditions that define veterans. As we have already underlined, this issue is subject to considerable diversity, which is certainly reflected in the national characteristics of how veteran's associations are organized and function in individual societies. The functional imperative is related to veterans themselves and their position in society, while the social imperative, on the other hand, dictates the presence of veteran's associations in civil society. Both of these are interconnected and complement each other, yet they are not always balanced. The absence of one of them normally has an impact on the other.

The functional imperative of veterans organizations

The formation of the normative basis defining the rights and duties of veterans, which are represented by these very veteran's associations in the name of individual people, is among the more important factors of the functional imperative. The variability of benefits depends on national legislation as well as military traditions, the formal and informal statuses of soldiers in society and in the state, and on the financial capabilities of individual states. Even though all and many other forms of veterans' health-related benefits⁷⁹¹ as well as those intended to ensure a

791 In case of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the veteran benefits continued to be addressed by the U.S. budget planners for the next 10 years or more. Stiglitz and Bilmez (2008: 78–79) assessed these expenses based on the example of the 751,000 U.S. soldiers who operated in both crisis areas and belong to the category of beneficiaries of the various forms of compensations. Otherwise, more than 1.7 million U.S. soldiers were deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. The compensations are due to either physical or mental injuries caused during the fulfilment of the tasks in the combat zones. The estimate includes the costs of immediate treatment as well as the expenses for compensations to be paid in the future. In the period between 2007 and 2017, these expenses were projected to increase from USD 1.3 billion with the growth rate until 2017, when they were expected to reach USD 6.2 billion. In the whole 10-year interval, they were expected to amount to USD 37 billion. This would

decent life for them are defined by legislation and implemented by state governments, this is undoubtedly a point where veterans organizations can, on the basis of their activities and contacts with veterans, add significantly to the understanding of the (far too) many problems veterans face. From this viewpoint, veteran's organizations could and should be an important partner in the negotiations with the states and would thus carry out their functional imperative to protect the rights of veterans even when their rights and benefits are expected to be interfered with.

Namely, we should expect the activity of veteran's organizations in the sense of trade unions, which should not be understood as politicization of the question of veterans and their organizations. As a rule, veterans should not be denied the right to political party activity, which is restricted by the legislation in many states. Yet, the code of conduct of veterans, who have served the state and not individual political elites, should be taken into account, and therefore diametrically opposite conduct should not be expected as far as the role of veterans is concerned. As a rule, political polarization results in the entropy of veteran's organizations themselves since the element of cohesion as the most basic condition for their operations and existence, represented by patriotism – therefore, their adherence to the state, not to politics and political elites – is thus eliminated. This means the dialogue and well-argued presentation of the actual situation among veterans is very important since, after all, it also represents a mirror or reflects the very condition of the state defense system, especially the military system.

Thus, the tasks stemming from the functional imperative may be associated directly with the health, financial state, and status of veterans in civil society.

make for a significant expense as the United States is populated by 24 million veterans, 3.5 million of whom are recipients of various forms of disability compensation, amounting to USD 34.5 billion per year (Stiglitz and Bilmez, 2008: 71). Bobrow (2015: 33) underlines the consequences of post-traumatic stress disorder even after veterans have already taken part in the various counselling programs and received expert medical assistance. The consequences of the disorder remain, and it is important to be aware of them as well as to keep treating them. Unfortunately, not everything can be expressed in numbers and defined financially. Yet, the negative consequences for the soldiers' mental health are especially obvious in many respects. Balfour et al. (2014: 165) establish that between 18% and 30% of everyone who has operated in various war zones suffer from different forms of mental disorders, frequently resulting in the breaking up of families and loss of homes. These people often end up on the brink of society.

The social imperative of veteran's organizations

In a society where various attempts at changing the value system or even re-evaluating those fundamental values that represent the basis for the functioning of all societies are being made, it is certainly vital not only to defend the value system through various institutions, but to keep substantiating it again and again. We have to emphasize that military values are social values, and in this sense military values represent an insight into social values.⁷⁹² Unlike modern societies, the defense systems and armies as the most important elements of these systems represent a very conservative factor in the field of security changes. In this context, the ethics involved in the activities of the armed forces members,⁷⁹³ which we should understand as the safeguard for the legal and legitimate realization of tasks, hold a special position.⁷⁹⁴ As hierarchically-organized systems, military systems can function only if the values are observed consistently, therefore they find it extremely difficult to change these values. In this sense, veteran's organizations possess significant social capital, which is most often not exploited also due to the increasingly precise and consistent separation between the civil and military spheres.⁷⁹⁵ If we build on the thesis that in modern societies which encountered the economic and financial crisis the notable erosion of the basic social values represents an important reason for the deepening of this crisis, then veterans organizations could represent a significant and important corrective moment in these societies, also by means of their social capital. In this manner, they could importantly contribute to the social imperative.

792 Norton-Taylor, 2011, 19–23.

793 The efficiency of any defense system is based on military ethics, most often consisting of conservative values and norms necessary to ensure discipline, high morale, and obedience. However, at the same time the armed forces must also exhibit liberal values and norms in order to gain society's support. It can be expected that soldiers will fight for their homeland in order to defend the system of rights belonging to them personally as well – that the soldiers' morale will be at its highest when they are able to carry out tasks in accordance with their rights, and that they will fight best when they are able to understand the political values they are fighting for. This means that defense systems can be different from the societies, but they must ensure their legitimacy precisely on the basis of their integration into the value concepts of the civilian societies (Garb, 2009: 106).

794 Robinson, 2008: 21.

795 Prebilič and Juvan, 2012: 58.

On the other hand, the social imperative is represented by those activities of veteran's associations that involve an interaction between civil society and the defense system. We could even describe veteran's organizations as ambassadors of the defense system as they can represent the missions as well as values involved in the functioning of the defense system very credibly due to the value system that defines them. As hierarchically organized systems, military systems can function only if the values are observed consistently, therefore they find it extremely difficult to change them. In this sense, a veterans association possess significant social capital, which is most often not exploited also due to the increasingly precise and consistent separation between the civilian and military spheres. Through the prism of the social imperative, veteran's associations represent the holders of military experiences and historical memory.

War as a phenomenon that irreversibly changes societies and leaves indelible marks on them is forbidden by international law, but nevertheless is part of human existence almost every day. The more memories fade and the farther that wars and battles themselves seem from us in terms of space as well as time, the more vital it is to remind the decision-makers as well as civil society of the unacceptability of war, especially its consequences. It is precisely this civil society that endures a significant share of the consequences that it cannot envision itself. Further, we can also state that veteran's associations are ambassadors of patriotism.

Veteran's associations may also be understood as bridges between the defense system and civil society as formally and legally they no longer carry out the tasks of the defense system, yet at the same time they know it very well due to their long involvement in it. Therefore, they can clarify the contents of the defense system, explain its activities, and keep informing civil society even when the defense system cannot or will not do it for various objective or subjective reasons. Veteran's organizations may also represent a specific kind of a strategic reserve in the national security system, especially in a period of the increasingly deficient security culture of modern societies and the ever-widening gap between civil society and the defense system which to some degree is caused by the professionalization of the armed forces on one hand and the changing security architecture with new security challenges on the other. Representatives of veteran's organizations could take part in an open curriculum on various levels of the formal education system, making an important contribution to a clearer formation of patriotism among youth, represent the role and tasks of the national security system, and through positive values co-shape modern, active, and responsible young citizens. Observing veterans as a social phenomenon is actually one of the constants. Like with other countries, even in Slovenia the organizing of veterans has had three basic purposes: the integration of individuals who experienced the same war;

the impact on the social activities organized in accordance with their views and experiences; and the implementation of special rights in relation to the country whose soldiers these veterans have been or on whose behalf and for whose goals they fought.⁷⁹⁶

In the 20th century, Slovenia changed its state context as many as four three times: the Habsburg Monarchy, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav socialist state and, finally, the Republic of Slovenia. The Slovenian population has experienced four wars and taken part in them: two World Wars, the "small war for the northern border" in 1918–1919, and the Slovenian Independence War in June and July 1991. Slovenians have fought on various warring sides, although mostly in the ranks of their home state at the time.⁷⁹⁷ It is thus understandable that Slovenian veterans – who took up arms in order to fight for various states under different flags for a number of diverse, even opposing goals – have never been able to find a common veterans' organization. This was a characteristic of each of the last three generations of veteran's organizations.

Veteran's organizations in the Austro-Hungarian period

The first veteran's organizations in what is today Slovenia, which brought together veterans from these territories, were established at the end of the 19th century. The local veteran's association in Domžale near Ljubljana was registered as early as in 1875.⁷⁹⁸ As the lands populated by Slovenians formed an integral part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the local veterans organizations were an integral part of the all-Austrian veterans organization. In Austro-Hungary, in the time before the First World War, the veterans were organized in the all-state Royal State Military Veterans Association (K.k. Militär Veteranen Reichsbund), an organization under the auspices of the state. It consisted of provincial associations

796 Garb, 2001, 255–267.

797 Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, 2008; Fischer et al (eds.), 2005.

798 Bernik, 1923. The First Carniola's Veterans Association (Prvo kranjsko veteransko društvo) in Domžale was founded in 1875 by the manufacturer Janez Riedl, which was also the first chairman of the Association. It counted more than 80 members.

throughout the Austro-Hungarian crown lands, and these provincial associations brought the local societies together. The Royal State Military Veterans Association (K.k. Militär Veteranen Reichsbund) had its provincial associations in the provinces inhabited by Slovenians: the Militär-Veteranen-Landesbund Krain, Landesbund Steiermark, Landesbund Kärnten.⁷⁹⁹ After 1918, when Slovenians co-founded the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians, these veterans associations were disbanded.⁸⁰⁰ They were replaced by the veterans of the recent world war.

312 Veterans of the First World War

The end of the First World War led to a true renaissance of new veterans organizations. After the war ended and demobilization had taken place, millions of citizens, drafted by their states and pushed into war, started organizing in order to fight for their rights and ensure that their social role in the Great War was being considered. Most countries let their former soldiers organize in the civilian social sphere without any problems. However, issues arose where the soldiers were veterans of armies and states that had dissolved at the end of the war and the political and social propriety of such organizations was being questioned.

Slovenia was one of these cases. In the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians, where around three-quarters of Slovenians lived after the new political unit emerged, absolute priority was given to the veterans of the former Serbian Army and volunteers in its ranks. Only a few hundred of such soldiers, mostly volunteers, existed in Slovenia. The veterans organized themselves in the Savez ratnika (Fighters' Association), which would then also accept the former Austrian soldiers.⁸⁰¹ However, the former Austro-Hungarian soldiers established their

799 Poročilo o 25letnem delovanji in računski sklep za leto 1900 pod protektoratom ... Frančiška Jožefa I. stoječega kranjskega vojaškega veteranskega kora v Ljubljani, 1900 / Bericht über die 25jährige Thätigkeit und Rechnungsabschluss für das Jahr 1900 des unter dem Allerhöchsten Protectorate ... Franz Josef I. stehenden krainischen Militär-Veteranen-Corps in Laibach, 1900.

800 Bernik, 1923. After 1918, the Association in Domžale was abolished. Its flag ended up in the Provincial Museum in Ljubljana, but its assets were divided among the disabled.

801 Newman, 2015, 58, 105–109.

own organization as well: Zveza slovenskih vojakov svetovne vojne (Association of Slovenian World War Soldiers), subsequently renamed Zveza bojevnikov (Fighters' Association) in 1931 and thus became part of the all-state umbrella veteran's organization.⁸⁰²

Volunteers organized themselves on their own. They established the Savez dobrovoljaca Kraljevine SHS (Volunteer Association of the Kingdom of SHS), while the Slovenian volunteers founded the Društvo jugoslovanskih dobrovoljcev za Slovenijo (Society of Yugoslav Volunteers for Slovenia) as early as in 1920.⁸⁰³ In the 1930s, the organization was renamed in accordance with the new name of the state, becoming the Savez ratnih dobrovoljaca Kraljevine Jugoslavije (War Volunteer Association of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) with 43,196 members.⁸⁰⁴

Meanwhile, in 1920 a special section in the context of Društvo jugoslovanskih dobrovoljcev (Society of Yugoslav Volunteers) was founded by volunteers from the battles along the "northern border" – the border with the Republic of German Austria in 1918 and 1919. They established a section named Organizacija koroških prostovoljcev (Organization of Carinthian Volunteers). A similar society was established in the Prekmurje region⁸⁰⁵ in 1923, called Organizacija prekmurskih dobrovoljcev (Organization of the Prekmurje Volunteers).⁸⁰⁶

In 1933, the former volunteers from the struggle for the northern border made another attempt to establish a separate veteran's organization. They founded the Zveza Maistrovih borcev society (Association of Maister's Fighters). General Rudolf Maister, the former commander of these units in Maribor after whom the society was named, was appointed honorary president.⁸⁰⁷ Only those veterans who had fought in the units commanded by Rudolf Maister until 22 November 1918 could become regular members, while those who had not fought or had been mobilized into the Slovenian units after 22 November 1918 could become extraordinary members. At the time of its establishment, this organization had at least 650 members, organized in local sections. In 1940, it had 2,400 members.⁸⁰⁸

802 Svöljšak, 2006, 277–288; Hajdinac, 2022.

803 Newman, 2015, 105–106.

804 Newman, 2015, 109–112.

805 Prekmurje (the Over Mura River region) is a former Hungarian territory opposite southwest Hungary.

806 Penič, 2010, 13.

807 Penič, 2010, 14–19.

808 Ibid., 19–23.

The same population of veterans was also included in the *Zveza koroških borcev* (Alliance of Carinthian Fighters) founded in 1934. All soldiers, volunteers, and conscripts who had fought in Carinthia in 1918 and 1919 could become members. For many years, this organization, which also consisted of 27 local sections, was presided over by Colonel Viktor Andrejka. The number of its members grew rapidly from around 70 in the first year of its existence to as many as 2,300 in April 1938.⁸⁰⁹ In 1935, in Zagreb volunteers from the battles along the “northern border” established the society *Udruženje ratnih dobrovoljaca – boraca za oslobodjenje severnih krajeva Jugoslavije* (Association of War Volunteers – Fighters for the Liberation of the Northern Territories of Yugoslavia). In the autumn of 1935, the president of the *Legija koroških borcev* (Legion of Carinthian Fighters) encouraged the integration of all three veteran’s organizations into a single umbrella organization. In March 1936, all three organizations agreed to merge, although they preserved full internal independence. They founded the *Zveza legionarjev Kraljevine Jugoslavije* alliance (Alliance of Legionnaires of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). Their primary program objective was to ensure that their organization was legally placed on an equal footing with the *Savez dobrovoljaca Kraljevine Jugoslavije* organization (Alliance of Volunteers of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia); that is, to ensure the same rights for its members as those of the volunteers who had entered the Serbian or Montenegrin armies by November 5, 1918 and were enjoying a number of concessions pursuant to the Volunteer Act of 1928.⁸¹⁰

The Axis’ occupation of Yugoslavia in April 1941 and division of Slovenian territory put a stop to the tradition of veterans associations. German, Italian, and Hungarian occupation authorities abolished most associations and societies as their patriotic function was by no means desirable. Many of these veterans joined the resistance movement, including the whole group of volunteers in the Serbian Army. From veterans, they once again transformed into soldiers.

In May 1945, the state was liberated. During the war, a strong resistance movement had developed in Yugoslavia and rose to power under the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia.⁸¹¹ In the autumn of 1945, both organizations of veteran fighters for the northern borders decided to reconstitute themselves, and the Slovenian authorities agreed. In the autumn of 1945, the Legion

809 Penič, 2010, 23–24.

810 Penič, 2010, 24–27.

811 Vodušek Starič, 1992.

of Carinthian Fighters was restored, while in December 1945 the Alliance of Maister's Fighters was reconstituted in Maribor. It is interesting that at this time the authorities suggested that the organizations merge into a single entity, just as these organizations had intended to do themselves before the war. The merging of the two veterans organizations succeeded at the beginning of 1947. On January 12, 1947, a decision was reached at the general meeting of the Legion of Carinthian Fighters to merge the organizations into the Legija koroških in Maistrovih borcev (Legion of Carinthian and Maister's Fighters).⁸¹² Three months later, the leadership decided that the new organization would be named Zveza koroških partizanskih Maistrovih borcev (Alliance of Carinthian Partisan Maister's Fighters) while unofficially the name Zveza koroških borcev 1918–1945 (Alliance of Carinthian Fighters 1918–1945) was used as well. The pressure of the communist authorities to ensure a monolithic organization resulted in the veterans disbanding both organizations, while Savez ratnih dobrovoljaca Jugoslavije (Alliance of War Volunteers of Yugoslavia) was abolished by a decree in 1947.⁸¹³

Veterans of the Second World War

The post-war period after the end of the Second World War brought a change in the organization of veterans. Moreover, the war had produced a large number of veterans who had fought as volunteers or conscripts in the Partisan units. The number of surviving Slovenians from the Partisan units alone amounted to 50,000. The majority of them were demobilized in August 1945 and in 1946 and returned to civilian life.⁸¹⁴

The Legion of Carinthian Fighters was the first to think of including the young veterans in its veteran's organization, but they only included the Partisans who had fought in Carinthia. An agreement was reached, and the former Partisans were included in the society. The new rules of the society of June 1946 defined members as veterans who had fought in 1918–1919 as well as in 1941–1945

812 Penič, 2010, 31–37.

813 Ibid., 43.

814 Vodušek Starič, 1992; Guštin, 2005c, 59–85.

for the liberation of the Carinthian Slovenians and the annexation of Slovenian Carinthia to Yugoslavia.⁸¹⁵

Meanwhile a large-scale action by the new authorities was underway to establish an all-Yugoslav veteran's organization, which would bring together and represent the former Partisan Army soldiers. At the founding general meeting in 1947, the *Zveza borcev narodnoosvobodilne vojne Jugoslavije* (Association of Yugoslav National Liberation War Fighters) was established. In accordance with its articles of association, this organization brought together all the veterans who had fought in the ranks of the Yugoslav National Liberation Army.⁸¹⁶ In these new times, it was also necessary to take care of the specific problems of numerous former members of the resistance movement, especially the Partisans who after the war had returned to normal but at the same time a new life, to their pre-war businesses, jobs, and social roles. The political significance of the newly established organization of the National Liberation War veterans was apparent already from the fact that its first president was the leader of Yugoslavia at the time and the wartime Supreme Headquarters commander Josip Broz Tito. The political part of the organization's program was probably most significant, but nevertheless its program was more far-reaching, and the founding of the organization fulfilled the needs of the population, which had undoubtedly become apparent, that had fought in the war. Besides ensuring the political mobilization and control, the new organization was tasked with bringing together and mobilizing the former fighters, assuring that they took part in the restoration and development of their homeland and participated in the defense of its socialist regime. The organization also founded its central magazine with the characteristic title *Crvena zvezda* (The Red Star), referring to what was then already the official symbol of the new state. Soon after the organization was organized on the federal level, the veteran's organizations in each of the Yugoslav federal units were established as well. The Slovenian branch, *Zveza borcev narodnoosvobodilne borbe Slovenije* (Association of Slovenian National Liberation War Fighters), was established on July 4, 1948, on the very day already designated as Fighter's Day in the system of national holidays of the new Yugoslavia. This day was therefore also designated the day of the new veteran's organization. At this point in time, the organization already had 120,000 members.⁸¹⁷

815 Penič, 2010, 36–41.

816 Pravila Saveza boraca narodnooslobodilačkog rata, 1948.

817 Grčar, 2007: 85–88. The organization was at its largest in 1965 when it had 132,062 members. At that point, approximately 85% of all members of the resistance movement were included in this organization.

At its session on May 27, 1949, the lead committee of the Association of Yugoslav National Liberation War Fighters adopted a decision that republican gazettes were to be founded besides the main magazine, tasked with “strengthening the organization of the Veterans Association and the multifaceted role of veterans in the social and political life of our state”.⁸¹⁸ Only 2 months later, the first issue of *Borec* (Fighter) magazine was published in Slovenia.

The simultaneous founding of the international veteran’s organization probably influenced the organizing of veterans as well. As it was, in 1946 several veteran organizations from Belgium and France initiated an action of international integration, and on October 23, 1948 the representatives of seven states, including Yugoslavia, gathered in Brussels and decided to establish a temporary body of the new organization. At the founding meeting in Paris held between November 23 and 27, 1950, the international organization with the participation of eight countries (including Yugoslavia) was finally constituted.⁸¹⁹

The role and importance of the *Zveza združenj borcev NOVJ* (Yugoslav Association of Fighters of the National Liberation War) kept changing in accordance with the major changes in Yugoslav society and the political regime. The membership in organization gradually included everyone who had been active in the ranks of the resistance movement, even civilians and supporters of the resistance movement. Initially, membership was strongly encouraged so that the initial distrust and reservations could be overcome. The issues regarding the status of fighters and other participants of the resistance movement, of which the right of the participants to a special pensionable service was the most important, were largely settled by the beginning of the 1970s when the majority of the still-active war generation started to retire.⁸²⁰ Its specific task – political support of the socialist social order and authority in general – was maintained by this organization, and it kept pursuing this goal until the very end of the socialist period. It had been the veteran fighters who had ensured the legitimacy of the contemporaneous authorities by winning the national liberation struggle and/or revolution; and depending on the political needs, the organization emphasized either the former or the latter. Already in the 1960s, the authorities included the veterans association in the political system. This organization gained the status of the fifth “socio-political organization” alongside the Socialist Alliance of Working People,

818 *Borec*, Vol. I, 1949, 1: 2, Ob prvi številki.

819 World Veterans Federation.

820 Blagojević (ed.), 1963.

the League of Communists, the Socialist Youth League and the Trade Union Association. At that time, it also changed its official name somewhat and became *Zveza združenj borcev narodnoosvobodilne vojne Jugoslavije* (Federation of Associations of Yugoslav National Liberation Struggle Fighters), emphasizing its focus on growth from below. However, in the late 1960s the Slovenian veterans association finally allowed the Association of Fighters for the Northern Border to be organized as its special section, just like the restoration of the War Volunteer Association had been allowed in Serbia in 1967 – but only in the context of the veterans association. Around 1,900 still-living former soldiers of the State of SHS and the Kingdom of SHS, who had fought for the northern border between 1918 and 1920, could therefore once again organize themselves to cherish the historical memory of the battles for the nation state in the 1.5 years after the end of the First World War and proclaim it publicly.⁸²¹ The social turmoil and imminent political changes in Slovenia in the 1980s also affected the Slovenian organization, *Zveza združenj borcev NOV Slovenije* (Federation of Associations of Slovenian National Liberation Struggle Fighters), and in 1990 this organization also formally lost its role in the political system.⁸²²

Veterans of the Slovenian Independence War, 1990–1991

The period of the independent Slovenia saw a new wave of veterans emerge following after the Slovenian Independence War. The organizing of Independence War veterans was encouraged in 1993, two years after the country's independence had been attained. The organization of Slovenian Independence War veterans was envisioned as a single organization, even though the Slovenian defense forces in the period of preparing for the potential defense of the independence and autonomy of Slovenia and during the war itself consisted of several components, which also held special significance for the forms of the veteran's organization. In October 1993, the participants established the *Zveza*

821 Penič, 2010, 73–118.

822 Podoba, organiziranost in dejavnost Zveze združenj borcev in udeležencev narodnoosvobodilnega boja (ZZB NOB) Slovenije, 2002.

veteranov vojne za Slovenijo organization (Union of Veterans of the War for Slovenia), which brought together the veterans of the war in June and July 1991 as well as the participants in the preceding defense preparations between May 17, 1990 and October 26, 1991. The Union of Veterans of the War for Slovenia defined itself as a “patriotic, independent, nonpartisan, non-profit, and non-governmental association of the regional associations of Slovenian Independence War veterans”.⁸²³

Even though the initial intentions were different, members of the police who had taken part in the war and in the earlier defense preparations organized themselves separately 1 year later in the Združenje Sever – Zveza veteranskih policijskih združenj Sever (Sever Association – Sever, Association of Police Veteran Societies), which was initially uniform, but then became an association of regional organizations.⁸²⁴ In the first years, both veterans organizations dedicated a lot of energy to the substantiation of their existence and to mutual conflicts in interpretations of the events before and during the Independence War. A number of members as well as those who had encouraged the conflicts between the two veterans organizations were involved in contemporary political developments and disputes, especially the conflicts in the relationship between the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defense, which escalated in 1993–1994. Thus, two veteran’s organizations exist in Slovenia which are also officially (in the legislation) acknowledged as such by the state, albeit objectively other veteran’s organizations exist as well. Zveza klubov MORIS (The MORIS Clubs Association) was established as the veteran’s organization of a Slovenian special unit (Brigade MORIS). In 2011, right-wing politicians also founded the Association for the Values of Slovenia’s Independence, which is not a classic veteran’s organization, but nevertheless brings together some veterans, especially those with a right-leaning political orientation.

Four Slovenian veteran organizations are members of the World Veterans Federation.⁸²⁵ The period after the abolition of the socialist system and its reservations allowed for the establishment of yet another organization of former soldiers. The still-living soldiers forcedly drafted into the Wehrmacht (German Army) between 1942 and 1945 organized themselves as societies of forced conscripts and established the Zveza društev prisilno mobiliziranih v nemško vojsko

823 Kuzman, 2006.

824 Anžič, 1995, 859–867.

825 World Veterans Federation: Members.

(Association of Forced German Army Conscripts Societies) in their efforts to ensure that their newly established status as victims of war was acknowledged.⁸²⁶ Their organization was not generally welcomed by society, and very controversial discussions from the socialist period – reproaches that this was an organization of collaborators of occupiers – were brought to life once again.⁸²⁷ Still, these veterans were included in the state system for victims of war at least partly and acquired certain social rights.⁸²⁸

The Republic of Slovenia recognizes the statutory status of military veterans and the related special social and health benefits. The veteran's organizations are recognized as the legitimate representatives of veterans. Meanwhile, the veteran organizations themselves came together in the Coordination of Patriotic and Veteran Organizations of Slovenia, which coordinates exactly these special demands and expectations towards the state authorities.⁸²⁹

826 Hartman, 1994, 23–26.

827 Zavrnik, 1994, 31.

828 Markovič, 1994, 13–22.

829 Romih, 2003.

CONCLUSION

Today, the Western Balkans are understood by many – on top of the war in Ukraine – as a latent area of unrest for European countries and a major indirect security challenge. Such views are based on the exceptional particularization of this space, the considerable ethnic diversity, religious diversity, the extremely complex history that has left many contradictions and hatred behind, the still present nationalism, and constant interference of great powers whose purpose seems to be to maintain the insecurity. Although both the EU and NATO are heavily involved in attempts to ease various tensions, the region's long-term stability appears to be a long way off. When we add to the above the circumstances related to the instability in the Middle East and, unfortunately, the still active Western Balkan migration route, potential instability in the future seems almost inevitable.

The territory of the Republic of Slovenia is an entry point for the Western Balkans. It acts like some kind of natural-geographic bridge between Central Europe and the Balkan Peninsula. This specific position is made even more interesting by the fact that four natural geographical units meet in Slovenia: the Julian Alps, the Pannonian Plain, the northern Adriatic, and the Dinaric-Karst mountain range, which stretches from Slovenia all the way to Albania. At the same time, its other geographical features mean the contact area has allowed movement in the West–East direction. Moreover, it is the only avenue of access to the area of the Apennine peninsula south of the Alpine arc. Namely, whoever controls the area of today's Republic of Slovenia has free access in all directions: north to Central Europe, south to the Balkan Peninsula, east to the Pannonian Plain and thus to Eastern Europe, and finally to the west via the Po Valley to Western Europe. This fact makes everyone's efforts to control this geostrategically important area abundantly clear. It is accordingly not unusual that important military conflicts occurred in this part of Europe during every European war, in the Napoleonic wars, during the First and Second World Wars, which indirectly determined other, perhaps even more important events for the European continent. The Slovenian population also participated in these according to the will and for the purposes of the countries to which they belonged. Yet, alongside that, at critical moments of national survival – at the end of the First World War, in the Second World War, at the transition to a nation state in 1990/1991 – it also organized itself militarily, established its own military forces, and fought for its national goals.

The Slovenian population has inhabited this territory for over a millennium and a half. However, while it bore a geostrategic curse and throughout history lived under the rule of various empires, kingdoms, and multinational state formations, at the end of the 18th century it developed into a nation. It seems almost impossible that it overcame all the attempts at systematic denationalization, the forced change of the national identity, and the division of ethnic territory among several countries. During the period of coexistence in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as well as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the rough attempts represented by the processes of Romanization, Germanization, and Hungarianization were replaced by calmer attempts to build a new, Yugoslav nation in which the Slovenian national identity would gradually be drowned. Still, even these expectations were not realized, ending with the country's disintegration and the Yugoslav wars after 1991. On the contrary, the national self-identity was preserved and became the cornerstone of the effort for a nation state or the construction of an independent and democratic Republic of Slovenia. The way events unfolded following the country's independence is interesting. The severing of historical ties between the Slovenian area and the area of the Western Balkans began immediately after independence. Of course, this is not about changing the borders between Slovenia and other nations, but about the systematic building of the national identity on some kind of anti-identity. The independence of the Republic of Slovenia and bringing it closer to the Euro-Atlantic integration was subject to the constant view that the territory of Slovenia has nothing to do with the Western Balkans; on the contrary, that this area has always been comprehensively included in Central Europe. Many scientists and especially politicians, who were afraid that Slovenia would be perceived as a Balkan country, looked for many arguments and reasons to break this viewpoint. Such thinking was subject to a negative understanding of the area of the Western Balkans, burdened with complex and cruel wars, (too) many victims, migrations, and a potential danger for other European countries. The result of such behavior is non-systemic thinking about Slovenian identity. That is, it was not built on what we are, but on what we are not. All these points are a major problem in the civic and patriotic literacy of Slovenian citizens. Low voting participation and electoral abstinence have long accompanied all the elections, the development of civil society is weak, while social control over the functioning of the government is simultaneously low. All this typically leads to latent dissatisfaction with the administration of the country, and in (too) many cases even raises doubt concerning the ability of the political elites, on both left and right political poles. The disappointment of citizens is manifested in an extremely low level of trust in politics, the state, and its institutions. Also

caught up in this is the key issue of national defense, where the historically inherited yet living resistance to (transnational) armies, which they did not feel as their own, is intertwined with the limitations imposed by the country's size and human resources. This greatly impedes the rapid, balanced, and sustainable development of the country.

Still, the relatively chilled perception of the Western Balkans is also visible in Slovenia's foreign policy. Instead of the Republic of Slovenia being a bridge between the Western Balkans and Europe and the world, it seems that even today it looks at this region with enormous reluctance. The minimal language barriers, exceptional knowledge of the historical background, as well as the current situation, definitely speak in favor of the considerable untapped potential in this area. When, if at all, this will change is primarily a question of security. Namely, the very period of mass migration clearly indicates that neither the Republic of Slovenia nor the entire EU will be able to handle this kind of challenge unless there is close cooperation between all the countries of the Western Balkans. That this is possible was shown in 2016 after the large waves of migrants and arrival of over 1 million people in EU territory. How it will be possible in the future is a major question when considering that the Western Balkans is becoming a training ground for the geopolitical interests of various important powers. Despite the war in Ukraine, the Russian Federation views this region as geostrategically extremely important, while a new player that is steadily strengthening its presence is the People's Republic of China. The mentioned interests of the bigger players are not helping to pacify the Western Balkans, but the opposite.

Can we expect appeasement, economic prosperity and, above all, long-term stability in the Western Balkans? Historical experience and geopolitical architecture prove that something like this can be achieved if two essential conditions are met: the first is to find a way to ensure the closer cooperation of everyone in the region, which would no doubt ease the mutual relations somewhat. They are (over)burdened with negative mutual experiences and consequently have a low level of trust in each other. In this context, the international community plays an important role as a mediator and promoter of fair decisions. The second condition is perhaps more difficult, namely the provision of a higher standard of living for the inhabitants of the Western Balkans. The EU has already demonstrated that it is quality of life that significantly lowers the probability of conflict between nations. Its very existence even after the end of the Cold War led to the longest period of peace in history in the political center of the old continent, which is a description that does not apply to the European periphery (Western Balkans 1991–1995 and Ukraine), and assures a higher

level of tolerance, inclusion, and cooperation both within and between nations. It is precisely in this respect that the Republic of Slovenia holds a certain responsibility, as well as an opportunity, to (co)shape a better and, in particular, safer future for the Western Balkans region.

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Abbreviations

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BOV	Armored fighting vehicle
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CP	Communist party
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CPY	Communist Party of Yugoslavia
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
GC	The Geneva Conventions
GDP	Gros domestic product
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
LCY	League of Communists of Yugoslavia
MORIS	Special Unit of Ministry of Defense
MSNZ	Maneuver Structure of National Protection
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NOVJ	National Liberation Struggle in Yugoslavia
PEM	Special Unit of Slovenian Militia
POW	Prisoners of War
PTT	National company for Postal, Telephone and Telegraph services in Slovenia.
RS	Republic of Slovenia
RŠTO	Republic Headquarters of the Territorial Defence
RTV	Television and radio station
SAF	Slovenian Armed Forces
SFRY	Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia
YPA	Yugoslav People's Army
TD	Territorial Defence
UN	United Nations
UNYOM	United Nations Yemen Observation Mission
U.S.A.	United States of America

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Reviews

Avtorja sta se v obsežnem in prepričljivo temeljitem delu lotila deficitarne historio-grafske teme in ob upoštevanju širših teritorialno-političnih in družbenih kontekstov oblikovala pregledno, sistematično in berljivo analizo slovenskega državnega teritorija in ozemelj, poseljenih s Slovenci. Avtorja ponudita več kot preprost pregled vojaške zgodovine, ker se pri svojem raziskovalnem delu zavedata dejstva podrejenosti vojne političnim odločevalcem in mednarodnim okoliščinam. Zato delo dograjujeta s prepričljivim argumentiranjem in poglobljeno analizo politik, ki so definirale okoliščine za preslikavo geopolitičnih interesov različnih dejavnikov v prostor Zahodnega Balkana. Preplet teh poskušata avtorja prikazati čim bolj sistematično. Bralec mora uvideti, da je to vse prej kot enostavno početje. Razlog je v stalnem spreminjanju akterjev (državnih tvorb), kakor tudi v spremenjenem številu mednarodnih dejavnikov, njihovi moči, preletu interesov in včasih presenetljivih partnerstvih in temu sledečim zapletom, ki jih lahko predstavi dinamika svetovne geopolitike. Da se razmere še dodatno zapletejo poskrbijo diametralno nasprotni interesi številnih deležnikov. V dvajsetih poglavjih avtorja analizirata tokove skozi obdobje dobrih dvesto let, kjer bralcu ponudita veliko odgovorov in pojasnil prej omenjene kompleksnosti geopolitično in geostrateško pomembnega prostora. Čeprav besedilo strokovno zahtevnejše, pa avtorja ohranjata slog posredovanja svojih razmišljanj dostopen širšemu občinstvu, hkrati pa predvsem ob dejstvu izdaje monografije v angleškem jeziku, omogočata uvid bistveno širšemu krogu tako akademskega kot poljudnoznanstvenega dela bralcev. Bogata citatologija upošteva vrsto virov in zapisov, ki jih angleško govoreči ne najde v primerljivih prikazih in študijah, ter s tem opolnomoča tiste, ki bi želeli (ali morali!) vojaško in politično zgodovino brati z več kritične distance in umevanjem tudi internih (slovenskih) informacij in ne le tujih, često naslonjenih na miselnost in kulturo nerazumevanju sodobnih konfliktov, ki tudi za evropsko prihodnost očitno niso neznanka velikih, za katere so bili manj številčni narodi pač le strateška ovira (prej) in objekt usmiljene širokogrudnosti (sedaj). V atmosferi mednarodnega sporazumevanja so mnoge spremembe le navidezne ali kvečjemu površinske. Neupoštevanje tega pa pogosto vodi k nerazumevanju sodobnih konfliktov, ki tudi za evropsko prihodnost očitno niso neznanka.

Monografija *History of the Western Balkans Gateway – A Geostrategic Consideration of Slovenian Territory* predstavlja vsebinsko zaokroženo, mozaično raziskavo pomembnih vojaškozgodovinskih vprašanj v razvoju slovenskega etničnega in državnega prostora slovenskega naroda. Avtorja v monografiji obravnavata, upošteva geostrateške vidike vojaška in varnostna vprašanja slovenskega prostora v zadnjih 200 letih, od izoblikovanja slovenskega naroda kot naroda do sodobnosti, s poudarki v zadnjih desetletjih.

Značilnost slovenskega etničnega in državnega prostora je njegova dolga vpetost v sestav večnacionalnih držav, Avstrije in Avstro-Ogrske, Kraljevine Jugoslavije in FLRJ/SFRJ. Geostrateška dimenzija, na katero sta avtorja posebej pozorna pa opozarja, da se je izhodiščna polarnost slovenskega prostora spreminjala, v glavnem od severa proti Balkanu in nato večino 20. stoletja od jugozahoda (Jugoslavije) proti severu in zahodu. Vojaška dogajanja so se zato izkazovala v soudeležbi v velikih vojaško-političnih prelomnicah prve in druge svetovne vojne ter vojn ob razpadu Jugoslavije. To terja od avtorjev pozornost tudi na širši državni okvir. Veliko pozornosti avtorja posvečata sodobnim varnostnim in vojaškim izzivom po letu 1991, ko se je Slovenija osamosvojila in oblikovala kot nacionalna država slovenskega naroda in odzivu vojaškega sektorja slovenske države leta 1991 ter njegovega razvoja v treh desetletjih obstoja države.

Avtorja sta v monografiji zajela širok spekter vprašanj nacionalne vojaške zgodovine (z osredotočenjem na 20. stoletje in sodobnost). V njih sta zajela in promovirala mednarodni skupnosti mnoge dosežke slovenske vojaške zgodovine in obramboslovja v Sloveniji. Monografija je pomemben prispevek k predstavljanju znanstvenih dosežkov v domačem in mednarodnem prostoru predvsem s tem, da opozarja na dogajanje znotraj ene manjših evropskih nacionalnih skupnosti (ki je bila poleg tega do 1991 zgolj eden od dejavnikov v okviru večnacionalnih držav), na katere je v evropskem prostoru pri ustvarjanju globalne historiografske slike manj pozornosti, čeprav je na geostrateško pomembnem evropskem prostoru.

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