

OBLIKOVANJE VOJAŠKE STRATEGIJE REPUBLIKE SLOVENIJE

THE PROCESS OF DEVISING THE MILITARY STRATEGY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

Povzetek V članku je predstavljen potek priprave predloga Vojaške strategije Republike Slovenije znotraj Slovenske vojske z namenom oblikovanja zgodovinskega spomina in krepitve prepričanja, da sta obramba in varnost stalen proces, ki ne more biti odvisen od vsakodnevnega političnega razpoloženja, temveč mora biti dobro načrtovan, nivojsko in resorno usklajen proces, ki je na koncu zapisan v strategijah. Nato in EU intenzivno sprejemata nove strategije na obrambnem in vojaškem področju. Sledi jima Republika Slovenija z oblikovanjem prvega predloga Vojaške strategije Republike Slovenije. Bistveno vlogo pri oblikovanju predloga strategije do zdaj je imel proces, ki je zagotovil krepitev in sistematizacijo vojaške misli, poenotenje razumevanj znotraj Slovenske vojske in usklajenost z obrambno-vojaškimi dokumenti.

Ključne besede *Vojaška strategija, potek priprave vojaške strategije, Vojaška strategija Republike Slovenije.*

Abstract The article presents the process of developing the Military Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia within the Slovenian Armed Forces, with the aim of building historical memory, and in the strengthening belief that defence and security are a continual process that cannot be subjected to everyday political mood, but must be a well-planned process, departmentally coordinated at all levels, which is finally written into a strategy. NATO and the EU are intensively adopting new defence and military strategies, followed by the Republic of Slovenia with its first proposal of a Military Strategy. A key role in writing the proposed strategy was played by the process within the Slovenian Armed Forces, which ensured the strengthening and systematization of military thought, the synchronization of its understanding, and harmonization with defence-military documents.

Key words *Military strategy, process of drafting military strategy, Military Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia.*

Introduction

The significantly changed security environment, the changed strategic balance of forces, the emergence of new and complex threats after 2014, the information technology revolution, and modern security challenges require and deserve our attention, and dictate a faster adaptation of national and international security and military structures in order to be as effective as possible in ensuring peace and security.

Security is not a self-evident good, as is shown by an overview of major crises and conflicts, hybrid action¹, terrorist attacks, natural and technical disasters, famines, infectious diseases, migration, environmental problems, economic crises and so on, which can escalate towards the conventional use of military power (Conflict trends, 2020; HIIK, 2019; ReSNV-2). In such a reality, no-one is absolutely resilient and safe, a fact confirmed by a number of experts (Ramirez et al., 2018; Furlan, 2020; Malešič, 2016; Žabkar, 2003). Strategic shocks warn us that security trends are not linear; they can lead to even greater discontinuity. Changes are a trend we must follow. NATO and the European Union (EU) are aware of these trends, and since 2014 they have been in a phase of adapting to the changed security environment, and transforming and adopting new strategies. NATO is already implementing its new military strategy and vision for NATO 2030, and is announcing a new strategic concept. The EU has decided to develop a »Strategic Compass« by 2022, which will be a policy document for the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (NATO, 2021; Garmone, 2020; NATO ACT, 2020; NATO 2030, 2021; Rynning, 2020; Vergun, 2019; Broeks, 2020; EU Parliament, 2019; and EU Council, 2019).

The Republic of Slovenia (RS) follows these trends with the ambition to participate in ensuring effective national defence and regional and global peace in accordance with its interests, political decisions and obligations to the homeland, alliances and partnerships, but primarily with regard to its obligations to its citizens. In 2019, the RS adopted a new Resolution on the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia (ReSNV-2). It has also begun to increase its defence budget and raise awareness of the importance of a credible and effective military organization to protect national interests and goals. Currently, based on the defence policy's ambitions, the Ministry of Defence and the Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF) are revising key development planning documents: a Resolution on the General Long-Term Development and Equipping Programme of the Slovenian Armed Forces (ReSDPRO SV), and the Medium-Term Defence Programme (SOPr 2021/2026). With these two documents and the renewal of other relevant normative acts, the state should determine the scope and timeline of providing human, financial and material resources and a normative framework for the development of the SAF and its capabilities.

¹ *Hybrid warfare combines actions from irregular and conventional warfare, extensively using new technologies and StratCom. For more see <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/coi-strategy-and-defence/>.*

In accordance with the Vision of the SAF Chief of the General Staff (Vision, 2019), the consent of the Minister of Defence², NATO and EU documents and concepts, defence and military development trends, and on the basis of in-depth military-professional analyses and assessments of international security trends, risks and threats, the SAF has launched a systematic approach to the development of the proposal of the Military Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia (MS RS) for the first time. It will be followed by the review and revision of doctrinal documents, concepts and guidelines for the engagement of the SAF and its operational plans for different scenarios. After thirty years of the existence, development, growth and of the RS and its defence forces, the SAF, following the necessary military strategic considerations, has produced an MS RS proposal. The purpose of this document is to define the Ends and Ways of SAF strategic engagement, and the directions in which the SAF should develop according to national directions and aspirations³. The drafting of the document was approached systematically, on the basis and with the use of contemporary knowledge and experience. A guided process with extended discussions was put in place, using cooperation with other defence structures in the RS.

The main research topic of this article is the process of developing the MS RS proposal within the SAF. The goal is to systematically record the process of strategic thinking and development of the strategy and to emphasise the need for the MS RS. In addition to this, the aim is to expand military strategic knowledge and its importance for effective military engagement both in the RS and beyond. The record of the development of the MS RS has a dual purpose; the basic intention is to record and inventory the process executed by the SAF as one that enabled the strengthening and unification of military strategic thought, the final product of which is the proposal of the most senior military document in the RS. The second purpose of this article is to produce a tool⁴ that will facilitate an easier and more systematic approach to the production of security, defence and military related strategic documents. For the theoretical background of the article the method of analysis of primary and secondary sources was mainly used. The main research method is a case study by observation during participation (the first author of the article was in the lead of the MS RS process, while the second was a member of the red group and the expert-support group), through exercises and surveys conducted among the participants in the process of formulating the strategy text.

The main research questions of the article derive from the statement that the RS and the SAF need the MS RS, which should be adopted at the level of the Government of the RS, and which will arise as a result of a process of military strategic thought synchronized with defence and national security thought, ambitions, goals

² In Slovenia, the Secretary of Defence is called the Minister of Defence.

³ The Means will be defined and planned in ReSDPRO SV and SOPr.

⁴ The article leans on the theory described by Furlan (2020, 2021) and Vuk (2020), Lykke (2001), Yarger (2006), and Rumelt (2017).

and resources. In this context, we will seek answers to questions about strategic consideration, whether there were any peculiarities in the production of the MS RS with respect to the theory, why the RS and the SAF need a military strategy at this time, and why we did not have one before. Additionally, we are interested in the dilemmas faced in the process of the development of the MS RS, and whether the MS RS as a document can contribute to the desired SAF positioning in the state's and society's structure, i.e. for the SAF to be recognized as a credible part of the instrument of national power both at home and abroad, while enjoying a high reputation in Slovenian society.

1 THE NEED FOR MILITARY STRATEGIES

Military strategy is the art and science of the engagement of the armed forces to achieve the national goals, especially in the field of national security, by using military force or threat. Based on the defined national security interests and threat assessment, the essence of such a strategy is to determine strategic military objectives, necessary resources, risks, and, consequently, military ways to achieve the set national security objectives. A military strategy is based on the national security strategy and the defence strategy⁵, and must express the connection of the armed forces with the other elements of the national security system. The strategy must also reflect the country's commitments to the international community, which in Slovenia's case must pursue national interests within international organizations and partnerships, especially NATO and the EU.

There are several reasons why the need to formulate a military strategy of the Republic of Slovenia has emerged. We can combine them into external and internal reasons, as described below.

External reasons include changes in the international security environment, and an increase in military threats on the periphery of the Euro-Atlantic area, which has been intensifying since 2014 with the use of military force, more intensive and complex hybrid actions, and military operation conflicts below the threshold of war. As a result, NATO and the EU are embarking on new strategies to strengthen their military capabilities, introduce innovations in military operations, and raise their level of preparedness. After 50 years, NATO developed its new Military Strategy (NMS)⁶, which was issued in May 2019. It is of crucial importance from a military point of view, because it was founded on a Capabilities-Based and Threat-Informed

⁵ *In the case of the RS, it must also be based on the Defence Act of the Republic of Slovenia (ZObr 1994), in which, due to the lack of strategic documents at the time of its creation, certain elements that usually belong to strategies and doctrines were also defined.*

⁶ *Relevant public source about the NMS: NATO (2019), Vergun (2019), and Broeks (2020).*

Approach⁷. In 2016, the EU adopted the EU Global Strategy »Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe« (EU Global Strategy – EUGS), which guides EU foreign and security policy, including military development and action⁸. The Republic of Slovenia also joined these processes in 2019, when it adopted a new Resolution on the National Security Strategy (ReSNV-2).

Internal factors begin with the need for clearly defined military strategic thought. Despite the fact that the SAF has most of its operational capabilities at the tactical level, it needs a strategy for SAF engagements as a whole in national defence and in NATO and EU activities, especially in collective and common defence. In its 30 years of independence, the RS has not yet developed a comprehensive military strategy⁹, a written and unified military strategic thought, which would improve and unify strategic knowledge, development and operation, and thus contribute to other national and international strategic documents and activities. The internal reasons include the fact that, despite its predominantly tactical capabilities, the SAF, as a national armed force, must ensure its involvement in providing security at a strategic national and international level, which can, in its core military essence, only be defined by a military strategy. A military strategy is required due to the processes initiated by ReSNV-2 and the growing awareness that ignorance and misunderstanding of security risks and threats can pose a critical risk to national security. Internal factors also include the fulfilment of the obligations of the RS to international allies and partners, which anticipate the strengthening of military capabilities and the strengthening of the deterrence and defence posture. Thus, the MS RS provides a conceptual connection with national, NATO and EU documents, as well as with the documents of allies and partners.

Consequently, and in accordance with the vision and intention of the Chief of the General Staff, in 2020 the SAF began the process of drafting the MS RS proposal (Vision of the Chief of the General Staff of the Slovenian Armed Forces, 2020), which is to be prepared and submitted to the competent authority by summer 2021.

⁷ *With a coherent top-down approach, the NMS provides directives and guidelines to the military structure for the continuous and effective development and use of Allied military instruments of power over a 10-year period. Its implementation is based on two documents: Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area Concept (DDA), issued in June 2020, and NATO's Warfighting Capstone Concept (NWCC) issued in 2021. The contents of the documents are mostly confidential, but publicly available summaries of the documents used in the article are the following: NATO, 2021; Garmonie, 2020; NATO ACT, 2020; NATO 2030, 2021; Rynning, 2020; Vergun, 2019; Broeks, 2020.*

In 2019, NATO issued new Political Guidance (PG19) for NATO adaptation in an unpredictable security environment, focusing on strengthening deterrence and defence, projecting stability and the fight against terrorism, investing in defence, and modernization, focused on military capabilities.

⁸ *The EU has begun to influence the strengthening, building and integration of military capabilities in EU countries. Initiatives have been devised, such as Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the European Defence Fund (EDF), the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), and the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDIP). Open sources on the topic can be found at: EU Parliament (2019) and EU Council (2019).*

⁹ *The Strategy of the Military Defence of the Republic of Slovenia was issued in 1998 (Grizold, 2004), but focuses mainly on the military part of national defence, which is the most important part of military activities and strategy, yet only one of them.*

The SAF General Staff is the highest military expert body of the RS and is, as such, responsible for the development of military strategic thought, which supports the realization of national interests and goals, and guides the achievement of a proper state of preparedness and the efficient engagement of the SAF forces. As such, it has initiated and led the process of drafting the strategy proposal. The initiated process, however, must ensure the systematic development of military strategic thought from which the MS RS emerges, which offers a solid and modern starting point for the SAF's functioning. Vuk (in Furlan, 2020) argues that strategic (military) thought in the SAF is relatively weakly present. Therefore, it is important to take into consideration how its military experts will perceive, unify and implement this process.

2 THE PROCESS OF FORMING A MILITARY STRATEGY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

Different scholars from strategy science like Žabkar, Vuk, Furlan agree that defence, especially its military part¹⁰, and the security of the RS are constant processes that cannot vary according to daily mood and spirit, but must be well planned and clearly defined in the strategy. A military strategy must be synchronized with other strategic documents. A good strategy systematically reduces the impact of uncertainty in decision-making and action processes. It examines, develops and anticipates the strategic environment to the extent that we can respond to a variety of security challenges effectively and in a timely manner. A military strategy substantiates the basis for military concepts, doctrines and plans, as well as basic military and defence planning documents. The strategy is the most important military document, since it defines why we have a military instrument of power, what goals it wants to achieve, and in what way. An important role in the formation of strategies is played by the process of creating, designing and writing them, which their content, feasibility, effectiveness and efficiency largely depend upon (Žabkar, 2003; Vuk, 2016; Furlan, 2020).

2.1 Principles of devising the Military Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia

In the process of drafting the MS RS, the SAF followed a theoretical framework developed by Furlan (2020). It is also important to highlight Prochazaka's all twelve guiding principles of strategy formulation shown below were taken into account in the implementation of the strategy-making process.

1. The problem was identified – the changed security environment, the escalation of threats and security challenges, the need for adaptation and for systematization of thought, knowledge, experience and strategic solutions.
2. Transparency has been ensured – a process implementation team has been appointed; strategic communications have been included in the process from the very beginning, and a time limit and references have been defined.

¹⁰ *In accordance with the Defence Act of the Republic of Slovenia, the defence of the Republic of Slovenia is an indivisible whole consisting of the military and civil defence.*

3. Attempts were made to ensure the principle of interdisciplinarity – both officers and non-commissioned officers from various working levels and specialties have been appointed to the working group. In the future second phase of the strategy development process (after internal harmonization), external experts in the field of national security will be present.
4. Objectivity was ensured – an analytical group was formed, and exercises were conducted to find and test the proposed solutions.
5. The process was project-led – despite their regular work commitments, the planned number of key officers and non-commissioned officers took part in the strategy formulation process.
6. Coherence was achieved gradually – the MS RS was placed in the hierarchy of documents, but at the beginning some decision-makers of the defence system had concerns with the importance of the military strategy.
7. An alternative approach was enabled by the assessment of different solutions, especially in the context of decision-making exercises (Table Top Exercise (TTX)).
8. The cost assessment has been made – through the provision of resources for the SAF defined in reference documents.
9. MS RS objectives have been set – publicity; development; strengthening; unification and systematization of military strategic thought; building knowledge and experience; contribution to other documents; creating a starting point for the revision of other military documents, doctrines, plans; etc.
10. An implementation framework has been established – the main implementation elements have been determined and the identified resource-related modalities have been linked to resources and objectives.
11. Indirectly, lessons learned have been taken into account – lessons learned from devising other strategic-level documents were indirectly taken into consideration. During the process, the analytical team accurately recorded the lessons learned.
12. Best practice – to a large extent theoretical and international strategy-making practice has been taken into account (Prochazaka, 2019 in Furlan, 2020).

Strategic communications

Strategic communications is a sub-process within the MS RS formation process, which in terms of content complemented the aspect of the cognitive and non-kinetic dimensions of SAF activities. At the same time (more relevant to this article), the aim of integrating strategic communications into the entire process of the development of the MS RS was to uniformly achieve the desired communication effects with regard to the content and the MS RS devising process on the perception and behaviour of the selected target public. For the purposes of drafting the strategy strategic communications guidelines were developed, which sought to form a unified understanding of the need for the formation of the MS RS and why the RS needs it. Strategic communications provide a framework for the commonly accepted presentation of the strategy's content and its effects to the internal and external environment, and help to balance the expectations of the national and strategic operating environment.

2.2 The basis of the Military Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia

Initial guidelines

The Chief of the General Staff's intent, which was written in the development vision, is clear. He wrote that the activities and efforts of all SAF members should focus on the development of a military strategy, which will be based on the ReSNV and the Defence Strategy of the RS. It must take into account other strategic documents in the area of national security and the newly adopted NATO and EU documents – the NATO military strategy, EU concepts, plans and guidelines, and a strategic analysis of the security environment and contemporary threats.

By order of the Chief of the General Staff, an Interim Group for the preparation of a draft MS RS was established in the SAF. The group consisted of more than 60 different military, defence and security experts who were tasked with preparing a Draft Military Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia in a transparent manner and in a professionally planned and managed process, by 30 June 2021.

IDENTITY CARD OF MS RS

Proposer of the strategy: SAF

Approver: Minister of Defence

Holder of the MS RS: SAF General Staff

Signatory: Government of the RS

Time frame: 24 September 2020 – 31 July 2021

Participants: Administrative part of the MoD

Coordination: Interdepartmental

Type: Operational military strategy with development elements

Accessibility: Public text

Placement of the military strategy in the hierarchy of strategic documents

As already mentioned, the strategy must be in line with national and international strategic documents in the field of defence and the military. The SAF is based on the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia; the Defence Act (ZObr); the Resolution on the National Security Strategy of the RS (ResNV-2); the Defence strategy; and other strategic level documents¹¹ affecting the functioning of the SAF. Based on the tasks from the ZObr and other guidance documents, the military strategy, which is the

¹¹ *The study Hierarchy of Documents in the Field of National Security in the Republic of Slovenia from 1999 and the decisions of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia from 1999 and 2000, among other documents, define the strategy of military defence. In accordance with the ZObr and the ReSNV, the SAF, in addition to the key function of national military defence, also has other functions and thus a broader mission. This all together is the comprehensive matter of the MS RS. However, the military strategy must be complementary to the ReSDPRO SV, which is defined in the Rules on Planning in the MoD of the RS, as a guiding and planning document in the area of SAF development.*

skill and science of balancing military objectives, means, ways and methods of use, defines the achievement of the set objectives. The MS RS also takes into account the adopted NATO Military Strategy (and the documents implementing it), the NATO Joint Doctrine (AJP-01), and the emerging EU Strategic Compass.

It was decided by the MoD that the process of drafting the MS RS must take place simultaneously and in coordination with the drafting of the Resolution on the General Long-Term Programme of the Development and Equipping of the SAF (ReSDPRO) and the Medium-Term Defence Programme of the RS (SOPR), and must reflect the direction of the NATO and EU strategies. All this will enable the renewal and development of the operation plans of the SAF and provide adequate resources for strengthening and building the SAF's capabilities.

Process of devising the Military Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia and organization of work

The course of the individual phases of strategy formulation was defined while preparing the starting points for the MS RS, and registered in the Order for the Implementation of the Proposal Process of the MS RS (Order, 007-203/2020-1). Within the process of the formation and adoption of the MS RS, three phases were defined:¹²

1. Phase 1: Strategic consideration (September to December 2020).
2. Phase 2: Development of strategic thought (January to May 2021).
3. Phase 3: Formulation of the Military Strategy proposal (May to July 2021).

The phase of creating starting points was not defined in the Order, so in this article we consider it a pre-phase. Phases 1 and 2 were conducted in a strictly confidential environment; however, the third phase, the harmonization and drafting of the MS RS, was unclassified, as the MS RS will be a public document. The completion of each phase is reported to the Chief of the General Staff to provide him with an overview of the situation. According to the report, the Chief of Defence (CHOD) provides guidelines and instructions for the further work of the MS RS preparation group. In practice, the development of strategic thought and the drafting of the MS RS already began in Phase 1, so in reality the phases overlapped.

The work was organized within five groups, each with its own specific content-related task. The groups adjusted their methods and micro-timing according to the content, availability of personnel and expectations:

¹² *It should be noted that the process of creating a MS RS was underway when the Covid-19 epidemic was declared. All consultations, meetings, presentations and exercises were therefore carried out in compliance with the prescribed measures for the prevention of SARS-CoV-2 Covid-19 virus infection. This additionally impeded the work of the organizational team; however none of the participants caught the infection during the MS RS-related activities related.*

1. The expert-coordinating group was tasked with the decision-making process and the presentation of the strategy to the internal professional public at the Ministry of Defence and later to the external public and the media. It consisted of the most senior SAF representatives, who were able to use their strategic-level competencies to formally and professionally design and direct the process of military strategic reflection and knowledge development.
2. The Blue Group consisted of strategic experts and decision-makers who, with their competencies in specific subject-matter areas, ensure a military professional, meaningful and coordinated search for the definition of solutions and the formulation of the emerging strategy and its systematic record. Their basic task was to unify military strategic thought, thus providing a solid basis for a clear military strategy. The group provided the necessary transfer and management of information and synchronized the work of the other groups.
3. The Yellow Group consisted of operational and strategic-level experts. They were tasked with ensuring the synchronization of strategic thought with the operational requirements, examining the security situation and the strategic environment, providing threat assessment, and identifying security risks and threats.
4. The Green Group consisted of representatives of the operational and tactical levels, whose competencies ensured the synchronization of strategic thought with the tactical requirements, and whose task is to define the strategic military objectives and their connection to the tactical level, and to approach the search for ways to operate and engage the SAF.
5. The Red Group consisted of representatives who used their knowledge, connections and careful planning skills to provide the necessary connections to the environment and various publics within and outside the SAF. They were in charge of implementing the strategic communications processes from the beginning of the strategy development process until the MS RS adoption and its further implementation. The group was tasked with ensuring the comprehensibility of the text and the message related to the content of the MS RS, as well as the processes of its implementation.

Individual members of these groups also participated in the expert-coordinating and expert-support groups. They were tasked with preparing substantive material for study and discussion, and exercises, discussions and seminars. The preparations were organizational, logistical and mostly contextual. They defined the main objectives, issues and dilemmas of the discussions. After seminars and exercises, which they organized and provided the substantive materials for (scenarios, vignettes, solutions and contents), conclusions and tasks for further work were designed and approved by the expert-coordinating group. The key task, and most demanding one, was to write down the solutions from the discussions that were the basis for drafting the proposed chapters. The chapter proposals were discussed by all the groups, and they

could send written suggestions on the proposals. The consolidated proposal of the full text was discussed three times in the Blue Group before the final approval¹³.

Aim and purpose of the strategy

The purpose of the consideration and development of the MS RS is to define the concept, principles and idea of the SAF's engagement as a defence force and as a key part of the military instrument of power, and to consolidate its military strategic thought and moral foundations.

Military professionals define and understand the SAF as an instrument of national power. Therefore, the purpose of the MS RS is to define the military strategic goals and the ways of achieving them with the military instrument of national power, thus contributing to the renewal and preparation of other strategic documents of the RS.

The aim of the MS RS is to determine the ways in which the SAF is engaged and used in pursuing the interests and goals of national (defence) security and in responding to sources of risks and threats to national security. As part of the introductory section of the formation of the MS RS, the desired final state was defined, which can be achieved by recording a realistic and feasible MS RS: the SAF is a credible military instrument of high reputation in Slovenian society's domestic and international environment.

Designing the MS RS contents outline

The MS RS contents outline followed the theory of the process of creating and formulating strategies. The created content sets served as the basis for the work of the groups and their content engagement, and later became an index of the strategy. The assessment and selection of the framework were carried out by the strategic decision-makers and by groups to which an individual thematic set of the contents was assigned. In addition to the foreword, introduction and conclusion, the proposal of the MS RS consists of six content sets: (1) Strategic Framework; (2) Military Security Environment: Threats and Risks; (3) Strategic Military Objectives; (4) Military Instrument of Power of the RS; (5) Deterrence and Military Defence Methods of the RS, and engagement of the SAF; (6) Imperatives of the development and engagement of the SAF.

2.3 Phase one – strategic consideration, assessment

The process of extended discussions and deliberations began on 24 September 2020 at the Kadetnica military facility in Maribor, with two-day consultation of the

¹³ The blue group organized 10 consultations, while the other groups had even more. Additionally, two exercises by SAF strategic decision-makers and three mini-exercises and one extensive seminar of experts from the defence structures of the Republic of Slovenia were organized. More than 80 military, defence and national security experts participated in the strategy process. A small group in charge of writing spent more than 10,000 hours in refining and formatting the text. Several presentations of the process and content of the MS RS have been given for various interested groups.

SAF's key personnel. In the first phase, a series of discussions, consultations and workshops were held, as well as a process of military-strategic reflection, focusing on defining the strategic and military environment, political and military ambitions, and the military instrument of power in both the narrower and broader sense.

The first two content sets of the index served as a framework for the MS RS and were carried out through discussions within the Blue Group on the basis of materials prepared by individuals¹⁴ and the Yellow and Green groups. This part of the process was classified as "secret". The discussion of the selected topic at the level of the Blue group was followed by discussions at the level of the Yellow and Green groups. The Red group continuously monitored the flow of the discussions, informed the internal public about it, and organized presentations and meetings with stakeholders in the defence system. The first phase was followed by an analysis of the situation, where the military-strategic consideration was assessed. The formulated content and the set postulates were written down as a unified foundation for the continuation of the production of the MS RS.

Following the guidelines of the Blue Group, the Green Group examined the strategic environment and threats, as well as the documents defining the SAF's goals and functions. In connection with this, the group defined the goals, sub-goals and activities that the military power should provide for the implementation of the basic tasks from the Constitution and the Defence Act.

The first phase of the process of drafting the MS RS was completed by recording the strategic military goals. The content was coordinated and approved at a meeting of SAF strategic leaders. The confirmed content of the first three sections was then presented to the working bodies and internal organizational units of the Ministry of Defence¹⁵. In principle, the strategy development process was accepted and supported. All undefined, uncoordinated topics were identified, such as protection of critical infrastructure, increase in defence forces, strategic logistics, and so on. The fact that the SAF and the administrative part of the MoD had difficulties in agreeing on the MS RS signing authority is of key importance for understanding the process of the MS RS formation. All the identified topics, perceived deviations in understanding, and open questions concerning the content and process of the strategy were recorded with the aim of them being resolved and coordinated in the second phase of the formation of the MS RS.

¹⁴ *Experts from the SAF, specializing in strategy science, including Vuk (2020).*

¹⁵ *During the completion of the first phase the first findings, the contents of the first three sections and the process of drafting the MS RS were presented to: the Defence Policy Directorate, the Defence Affairs Directorate, the Logistics Directorate, the Intelligence and Security Service, the Secretariat of the Secretary-General, the Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, the Defence Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia and, outside the MOD, to the Slovene Intelligence and Security Agency.*

2.4 Second phase – development of military strategic thought

In the second phase the process continued, based on the situation analysis and the first three content sets, with the first exercise testing the already defined content to find solutions for bridging the gaps between the environment, ends, means and exploring possible working methods. The process focused on defining the use of the military instrument of power; conducting military activities in peacetime, crisis and war, including the cooperation and support of other departments; the support of and integration of the SAF into the national security system (including participation in the decision-making process); and identifying important strategic imperatives of the SAF's development and warfare. The discussion of these topics was carried out sequentially, bottom up, in accordance with the set outline and the already defined goals, with the initial discussion at the level of the Green Group, followed by discussions at the level of the Yellow and Blue Groups¹⁶.

In the search for solutions through discussion, the key working method in this phase were the table-top exercises (TTX); one TTX at the beginning and one at the end of this phase. During the exercises, other stakeholders in the defence and security system were also included in the process of creating the MS RS. In addition, a full-day expert seminar with participants from the MoD and the SAF took place. Considering the needs of the process and the guidelines provided by the Chief of the General Staff, this phase included at least two consultations of each individual group. During these consultations, the groups focused on the substantive and procedural challenges in the formation of the MS RS.

A test of the risks and benefits of the MS RS content was carried out in the TTX, through discussions at working meetings of different strategy-making groups, and in numerous correspondence reflections of selected experts. The risks and benefits were sought by monitoring discussions and exercises, and were integrated into the organization of further work.

Table top exercises – Kresnik

As part of the process of military strategic reflection and the formation of the MS RS, two TTXs were carried out, based on the Kresnik 2020 scenario¹⁷. The purpose of the

¹⁶ The connecting element of writing the strategy in this and the next phase was a group of individuals, who provided the draft text of the strategy. The group refined each chapter, which had been written on the basis of discussions, findings and compromises, in terms of terminology, content and form. By doing this, they enabled a review of the text in the reverse hierarchy of the MS RS creation.

¹⁷ The Kresnik 2020 scenarios, which were used to enact exercises TTX 1 and 2, were created on the basis of knowledge of the strategic framework of the RS and its geographical strategic position, analysis and identification of threats to national and international security, and the way the opponents operate. The scenario was formed on the basis of realistic assumptions and taking into account the technological development and information environment of the SAF operation. The scenarios were complemented by various vignettes (the term vignette denotes an imaginary event that in a fictional situation requires some action and response and is a consequence of the development of the scenario). The participants responded to the vignettes in the form of discussions and expressions of opinion through pre-prepared questions asked by the exercise managers. These questions were a reflection of dilemmas or open questions in writing down the content of the strategy and its concepts.

TTXs was to conduct an effective discussion and exchange the views and opinions of key SAF leaders in an effective way, with different views within the framework of strategic reflection based on the scenario.

The first exercise, in December 2020, was attended by 60 people from the Blue Group for the preparation of the MS RS, and invited individuals from the administrative part of the MoD and the SAF members supporting the exercise. In this way, an attempt was made to identify the gaps between the means and the goals, define the possible ways in which our defence forces should operate, and systematically write them down in the military strategy. The Exercise Director was the Chief of the General Staff of the SAF. His basic guidance was that the MS RS was to provide an answer to how the SAF will carry out its basic mission in the future, and to reflect the fact that the SAF is a military instrument of power.

During the exercises, working meetings and consultations of the formed groups were organised to prepare the contents. All the participants were aware of the importance of the process of creating a strategy, not only from a substantive point of view, but also from an educational point of view. In this context, and based on TTX-1, three additional mini TTX exercises were carried out. The participants in these TTXs were members of the Yellow and Green Groups, the Senior Officer Staff Course candidates, and the writers of the content part of the strategy. These three exercises enabled the testing of the comprehensibility of the defined solutions, the expansion of strategic thought within the SAF, and the identification of gaps in the solutions, as well as unifying the understanding of exposed strategic dilemmas between the strategic, operational and tactical levels. Additionally, it facilitated the expansion of knowledge of the reasons and need for developing a military strategy.

The final part of the second phase of strategy formulation was the implementation of TTX 2, carried out in March 2021. This exercise included all the groups involved in the strategy formulation process, thus enabling a two-level discussion, identification of solutions, decision-making, and detailed replay, as well as the testing of certain solutions. The operational and tactical parts were divided into ten project groups, which, according to the projects, presented solutions or responses to the vignettes from the scenario. Their starting points and suggestions were used by the strategic (Blue) group in their decision-making. The purpose of the exercise was to encourage discussion on the possible ways and methods under which the SAF could operate in order to achieve the set military strategic goals in a complex, hybrid, information environment in which we are already facing modern security challenges and threats. Experts from the Ministry of Defence also took part in the exercise, which enabled mutual discussion and a coordinated search for solutions within the overall response to ensure the defence of the Republic of Slovenia and the use of the SAF. The findings of the discussion served as a good basis for the quality continuation of the formation of military strategic thought, and the preparation of a proposal of the SAF's contributions to the Resolution on General Long-Term Development and Equipping Programme of the SAF.

The analysis of the findings, the results of the discussions, the highlighted topics and the accepted facts were monitored by the analytical and observatory groups, which had the exclusive task of recording during the exercises.

Strategic seminar as part of the project of preparing the MS RS proposal

Based on the experience of the MS RS formation process and the implementation of the first TTX, areas were identified which would require in-depth knowledge and the appropriate exchange of information and procedures with other stakeholders in the national security system. A strategic seminar, in cooperation with representatives of various MoD bodies and the SAF, was therefore held. The topics discussed in more depth and coordinated between all the stakeholders at the seminar were the following: the national command and control system in crisis and war; the national command and control system immediately prior to and during collective defence; system and crisis response measures; threat assessment; the development of the SAF's capabilities; growth in military and defence capabilities; the National Defence Plan; host nation support; protection of critical infrastructure and facilities of special importance; and the response to hybrid threats.

Each individual topic was presented by the administrative part of the MoD, which covered mainly the legal-formal aspect of the topic, and by the user (the SAF), which presented the topic from the user's perspective and the perspective of practical experience. The topics were presented in sets, between which it was possible to initiate discussion and coordinate opinions. The remaining dilemmas and open questions were postponed until the gaming and discussion during TTX-2. The findings, compromises and provided solutions represented the basis for the definition of the second part of the MS RS content proposal. In this phase, the risks of feasibility and the substantive inadequacy of the MS RS were identified.

2.5 Phase three: design of the text proposal of the MS RS

In the third phase, on the basis of the substantive material prepared in the previous phases, the writing and drafting of the proposal of the MS RS continued. The preparation of the proposal was carried out by an expert support group, which carried out the process through the coordination of the strategy proposal at all three levels. The individuals responsible for particular sections and content were designated, as well as a subgroup which was to compile the first drafts of the complete text. These drafts went through at least three coordination meetings in the Blue group, with the support of the other groups.

In cooperation with Slovene language specialists and terminologists, the group harmonized the terminology and arranged proofreading. An English translation of the text was provided by the translators. Additionally, two attachments to the MS RS were prepared: an explanation of terms, and a terminology glossary of the basic resources used in the MS RS. The MS RS draft in its current version represents the proposal draft for the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia.

According to the plans, the final proposal of the strategy can, at this stage, also be presented to the wider professional and other public. However, in accordance with the guidelines of the MoD, it was necessary to take this phase slower in order to harmonize the MS RS timetable and content with ReSDPRO.

3 LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PROCESS OF DEVISING THE MS RS

The evaluation of the performance, usefulness and content acceptability of the MS RS was a regular, continual process in the formation of the strategy. The process of creating the strategy was monitored by the analytical group in the strategic decision-making exercises. Feedback and (dis)satisfaction with the process and new proposals were sought by conducting surveys of the TTX participants. Minutes of the group's findings and conclusions were also written at all the consultations of the Blue group.

3.1 Evaluation of the performance, usefulness and content

Findings of the survey analysis

During the process of developing the MS RS, three surveys were conducted with approximately 40 respondents who participated in the TTX or strategic seminar¹⁸. The key findings are described below:

The process of strategy drafting, the exercises and the discussion at the TTX were identified by the respondents as very useful, because they enabled a unique process of learning the development of military thought and military decision-making. A large proportion of the respondents believed that the process contributed to personal professional development in terms of broader military strategic thinking and decision-making.

It was considered to be an excellent opportunity for an exchange of expert opinions on the topic of military strategic thought, since all the participants had the option to participate in the discussion, and all were encouraged to contribute. They found that the exercises provided important guidelines and starting points for further work on the strategy; enabled the verification of the SAF's methods of operation and use; indicated gaps, especially capability-related ones; and revealed gaps between the actual and the recorded existing situation, and the relevant solutions. The exercises provided a very good starting point for further work and decision-making. The integration of the civilian and military perspectives was recognized as important in the exercises and consultations, because only in this way can a suitable environment for a comprehensive approach be created. The vast majority of participants identified the exercises and the process as a cost-effective and useful form of training. The discussion helped to confirm the strategic goals and unify the understanding of the participants of the exercise. Very quickly, it hinted at the gaps in our system. Most of all, it showed the different perceptions of the strategic environment, decision-makers

¹⁸ All surveys are archived in the SAF HQ.

and, above all, strategic considerations, and at the same time put them over a common denominator.

Instead of a conclusion, a quote from one of the surveys: »In the given circumstances, the chosen way of working certainly means a quantum leap in the approach to long-term planning in the SAF«.

Weaknesses identified in the surveys and the given suggestions

The discussion did not take sufficient account of new technology and the development of new systems. Solutions were sought mainly in the increasing numbers in the SAF and their capabilities, not in the prioritization of tasks or new technologies. Too much emphasis was placed on the modes of operation that support the SAF's non-priority tasks. It is necessary to continue with exercises for the leaders to unify and game through the worst-case scenarios.

There was a gap between the highlights of the strategic seminar and the differences in the perception of the future between the administrative part of the MoD and the SAF, and the ways of operation defined by the MS RS. In the future, it will be necessary to ensure the presence of other stakeholders in the national security system and other government departments responsible for national security in discussions and exercises. There was also a critical remark that the exercises were somewhat one-sidedly focused on the land part of military operations.

There should be more interaction between individual exercise groups. The TTXs should include fewer vignettes and provide more time for discussion. Even though the exercises were well set out, it was not possible to clearly conclude from the discussion what the ways of operation were supposed to be. The debaters opened up too many dilemmas and provided too few focused solutions. A TTX is especially useful when looking for answers to the question of "how"; of course, it will also be necessary to find the answer to the question "with what".

Findings of the analytical group¹⁹

The key task of the analytical group was to extract the content important for the writing of the MS RS, in terms of content elements, dilemmas, and offered solutions, from the exercise and the discussions. The analytical group set up an analytical model for the assessment and findings of the discussion in the frame of the exercise scenario. They monitored the given responses to the vignettes in accordance with military strategic objectives, ways of operation and other categories listed as objectives of the TTX. The content of the work of the analytical group is reflected in the content of the MS RS. In this respect, it is worth highlighting five facts: (1) In addition to the development of the MS RS, it is necessary to prepare a glossary of terms with definitions in order to ensure uniform understanding and terminological consistency;

¹⁹ All data, monitoring matrix and findings are archived in the SAF HQ.

(2) The topics that were most discussed within the framework of the scenario and vignettes of the exercise were the following: increased strength of forces; scope and structure; the importance of strategic communications and its capabilities, and threat assessment; (3) The discussions during the exercise clearly showed that the exercise participants were aware of the challenges in achieving the defined military strategic objectives; (4) The idea of a defence staff was identified and supported; (5) It would be sensible to carry out exercises and processes of a similar type in the SAF in the future, and to plan them in a complementary manner with regard to other SAF exercises, training events and activities, as they represent an extremely suitable tool for an exchange of views and opinions between leaders.

The purpose of both the exercises and the process of formation of the MS RS was achieved, as it effectively illuminated strategic dilemmas from various perspectives within military strategic consideration, enabled an exchange of views and solutions, and thus strengthened group awareness of key challenges.

Innovations and highlights introduced by the MS RS and the challenges arising from it

The MS RS introduces important innovations that redefine the SAF's main effort. Among other things, the MS RS emphasizes that the SAF is the main authority in charge of combat activities in the RS in all combat domains and dimensions. It defines the SAF as the main part of the military instrument of power²⁰. It defines the deterrence posture as the SAF's priority, both in independent activities and within NATO and the EU. It identifies the ways of deterrence and military defence of the RS, and the engagement of the SAF. It connects the resources and goals of the RS in the field of defence with the methods of implementing it. Part of this is also the concept of increasing military forces in case of need. This is an upgrade of the current concept of a military strategic reserve.

The MS RS also highlights other important, often under-emphasized concepts and ideas. It makes it clear that the RS and its people are the centre of military defence, and that individuals and their perception are key to ensuring security. It states that in today's security environment, military threats are mostly related to or are even an integral part of other threats and will be carried out below the threshold of war, which can upset the balance and directly threaten peace, security and stability in Europe. It puts a special emphasis on hybrid warfare and highlights the importance of non-physical factors and the impact of technology development in ensuring security in a modern security environment. Military action is extended to all domains

²⁰ *The DIME methodology was developed by U.S. Department of Defence academics and experts in 2005 as an acronym for describing the various powers of the state (DoD, 2005). The traditional instruments of national power of the state externally are: Diplomacy, Information, Army, Economy (DIME - Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economy). Morgenthau (1995: 220) argues that military power gives the other instruments of national power real significance for the overall power of the state. Furlan makes similar claims in his textbook on strategy (Furlan, 2020, 2021). Total national strength is the product of the strength of individual instruments. DIME is also defined in NATO AJP-01.*

and dimensions, within the framework of a comprehensive and integrated approach, with the participation of all instruments of power of the state and its citizens in responding to modern security challenges. It emphasizes that the RS manages its military posture together with NATO and within the EU. In extreme situations, the RS will also defend itself independently and, if necessary, unconventionally. The RS will play an active role in NATO and the EU and will responsibly assume its obligations in these two organizations.

The introduction of these innovations and the emphasis on the neglected ideas of the MS RS could, in the event of inconsistencies at the level of the national security system, lead to certain disagreements. At the same time, these facts and the introduced innovations confirm the thesis that the RS needs a national military strategy if it wants the SAF to continue to perform its legally determined tasks successfully and efficiently. Failure to achieve its military strategic goals will also increase the risks involved in preserving the fundamental values of Slovenian society and our way of life, as well as protecting and defending our national interests and goals.

There are risks associated with personnel, sustainable financing, and challenges within the SAF and between the SAF and the MoD. The SAF has the ambition to minimize these risks. Although in accordance with the Constitution and the Defence Act the SAF is a defence force of the RS, it does not represent the entire military instrument of power of the RS. Even generally, warfare is the responsibility of the state, with all its instruments of power, not just the military. The SAF, as the competent body responsible for combat and thus the carrier of combat in warfare and a key part of warfare, will propose the draft MS RS. With regard to the fact that warfare and combat are the basic forms of the SAF's activities, the SAF will also take into account other aspects of engagement, such as international military operations and missions in peacetime, ensuring readiness, and support to other state bodies and the protection and rescue system.

Conclusion Do the RS and the SAF need the MS RS? The theoretical framework and research findings in the article can fully confirm the hypothesis from the beginning of the article – the RS and the SAF need the MS RS, which should be developed in the process of military strategic thought synchronized with defence and national security thought and adopted at the level of the Government of the RS.

The answers to individual research questions are offered by a case study and in the content of the MS RS sections. They are summarized below:

- There were no peculiarities in the production of the MS RS with respect to the theory. The process of the draft MS RS formation played a key role in its creation. This ensured the systematic development of military strategic thought and its harmonization with the basic documents in the field of defence. As such, it offers a sufficiently solid and modern starting point for the engagement and use of the SAF. The content is based on the expectations of the national security system, the

military profession, and Slovenian military thought. According to our analysis of the MS RS process we can see that strategic communications and coordination within the defence and national security system needed to be commenced earlier, even before a pre-phase.

- The development of the SAF and military defence in the 30 years of independence followed more development of the organizational point of view (from mandatory service and reserve to all volunteer professional forces), which did not develop the full range of military forces and the fulfilment of obligations in the RS defence system and to NATO and the EU. Such a mode of operation dictated the use of individual military forces and not the SAF as a whole, so there was no urgent need to develop ways of operating and using the SAF as a whole. The development of the SAF has brought us to the point where we are able to use the SAF as a whole, and the security situation also requires it, so the MS RS is very timely.
- In the process of drafting the MS RS proposal, the SAF strengthened and systematized military strategic thought. Thus, the SAF is now much better prepared to be involved in strategic processes at the national level and in NATO and the EU. Interdepartmental coordination of the MS RS is definitely needed. The question is whether it was necessary to start it at the time of the formation of the MS RS within the SAF. A further question is whether the process of drafting the proposal of the MS RS could have been better used for the creation of ReSDPRO SAF.
- The MS RS is one of the foundation documents of the SAF, on the basis of which it builds its character and ways of operation and engagement in the national security system and within the obligations accepted by the RS in NATO, the EU and other international alliances. The MS RS was designed taking into account the national strategic documents in the field of security and defence of the RS and allied strategies, concepts, plans, guidelines and strategic analyses of the security environment and modern threats. The MS RS therefore defines cooperation with and use of NATO and EU mechanisms for ensuring the military strategic goals of the RS, especially through NATO deterrence and collective defence and the EU CSDP.
- Finally the MS RS, as a document, can contribute to the desired SAF positioning in the state's and society's structure, i.e. for the SAF to be recognized as a credible part of the instrument of national power both at home and abroad, while enjoying a high reputation in Slovenian society.

The MS RS is the most senior national document in the field of the military. It defines the SAF as the most important part of the military instrument of state power, and makes its role and engagement concrete. The envisaged implementation of the MS RS is based on the basic principles of democratic civilian control over the armed forces, with decisions on the defence policy of the RS and the development and use of military forces being made by the Government of the RS.

The MS RS will serve as the basis for the development of a military instrument of power and its functioning, which must be prepared to implement a deterrence posture and national and collective defence within NATO and/or the EU, and to strengthen

the resilience of the society as a whole. This strategy will only be able to have its greatest impact if everyone agrees on its context and while providing the necessary resources, which must be sufficient, predictable, and stable in the long term. Time will tell whether the MS RS will work, but it is already obvious that in the process of drafting the military strategy, the strengthening of military strategic thought has been unified and systematized, and process was cost effective.

The fact remains that the General Staff of the SAF is the only competent body in the RS on the use of military force. The draft MS RS developed in the SAF military process described in this article offers a sufficiently solid and modern starting point for the operation and engagement of the SAF. Now the draft MS RS is ready for intergovernmental coordination, public presentation, and finally for approval by the Government of the RS.

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