

EXPERTS ON NATO 2030: THE ALLIANCE WILL BE MORE RESILIENT PROVIDED THE MEMBERS LEARN HOW TO FACE CRISES (A POLL)

Author: Lucia Yar



NATO is currently discussing how to set its defence strategy for the upcoming decade. Experts are convinced that Slovakia should mainly promote such reforms that will enable the development of its own defence capabilities. However, it should also pay attention to non-traditional military threats, including hybrid, cybersecurity, and new technology.

We asked several security experts which field of defence they regard as crucial for Slovakia in the preparations for the NATO 2030 agenda.

MARTIN SKLENÁR, General Director of the Defence Policy Section, Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic

For Slovakia, it is instrumental that the new NATO Strategic Concept confirm that collective defence is one of the basic tasks of the organization. The common reaction of NATO members in response to an attack on any of them is something that grants Slovakia and its citizens a higher level of security and stability. Simultaneously, it represents one of the basic preconditions for economic development. No other organization has the strength and means to make its collective defence mechanism credible. Slovakia joined the Alliance precisely because of the possibility of defending against any possible threats together with other NATO members.

In the current security landscape, any country should not only pay attention to the traditional military threats but other, so-called hybrid threats, needs to be noted, too. It will therefore be crucial to define in the new Strategic Concept how NATO can help its Member Countries build the resilience of the state and society in relation to hybrid threats. Determining NATO's other main tasks will be also very important for Slovakia. The ability to conduct international crisis management operations and develop relations with the partners are the tools that NATO needs to maintain also in the future.

MICHAL KOMADA, Ambassador, Representative of the Slovak Republic to the Political and Security Committee at the Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU

The so-called neighbourhood area should be key in the preparation of the NATO 2030 strategy, not only our Slovak neighbourhood (east of our borders), but especially the European one. The Western Balkan is, of course, a chapter of its own from the point of view of Euro-Atlantic integration, but the focus will be on the Eastern Partnership, North Africa, and the Middle East.

The more important the transpacific dimension is for the United States, the more responsibility will be on the EU's shoulders in the transatlantic area. It is exactly in these regions where European leadership is expected.

Concerning a specific engagement, capacity building will be the key – both on the part of the allies and the partners. The events of 2021 will undoubtedly mark and redefine the demands and expectations in this area.

BARBORA HROZENSKÁ, Director (ad interim) of the Analytical Department, Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic

One of the essential elements of NATO's 2030 strategy is the area of new technologies (EDTs) and the Alliance's effort to maintain its technological superiority. Building niche capabilities in areas such as cyber security, space technology, or artificial intelligence will be one of the main trends in defence development in NATO member countries in the coming years.

The defence ministry's Concept of focusing on and supporting of defence research and development from 2021 is a step in a positive direction. However, Slovakia does not possess the financial or human resources to fully develop all ten areas defined in the concept. Therefore, specialization and focus on one, or maximum of two competencies, in which the ministry should invest more intensively, will be crucial.

We can take an example from the neighbouring Czech Republic, which is engaged in the use of space for defence purposes, operates the Alliance's SATCEN satellite centre, as well as the GOLEM satellite observation system. The development of innovative technologies is, of course, costly. For example, a way to go for Slovakia, could be participation in collective projects to support the development of dual-use EDTs for the military and civilian sectors. The emerging NATO Defence Innovation Accelerator (DIANA) and the follow-

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up NATO Innovation Fund (NIF) will be the instruments to support such cooperation efforts.

The founding treaties, as well as the financing model, are to be agreed upon in the first quarter of 2022. The Ministry of Defence has now room to negotiate and promote a form of involvement that will enable the development of Slovakia's specific defence capabilities in the coming years.

LUBOMÍR TOKÁR, Second Secretary of the Political Section in the NATO Permanent Delegation of the Slovak Republic to Brussels

Slovakia's top priority for the new strategic concept, which the Alliance will adopt at the next year's Madrid summit, will be strengthening the Alliance's deterrence and collective defence capabilities. In addition, the priorities will also include the topic of strengthening resilience. Resilience represents the first, or more precisely, the advanced defence perimeter - it is the pillar enabling the political decision on the deployment of armed forces and the basis of society's support for their activities.

Changes in the security landscape bring new challenges to resilience as such. These include topics such as the security of information and communication systems (including the cyber, space, and submarine infrastructure) and data protection, screening of suppliers of components for critical infrastructure sectors (or investments in them), or security of the supply chain. But also a sufficient amount of supplies in case of an emergency (in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, this could be e.g. face masks or vaccines).

It does not primarily represent a collective, but rather an individual role and responsibility of NATO members. So collective resilience can be imagined as a chain, the strength of which depends on the strength of each individual link (representing a respective ally). The weakest link can be overwhelmed with targeted attacks by opponents on its specific vulnerabilities, thus eroding the Alliance's political unity or preventing the decision to use armed forces to defend the Allies.

Resilience is mainly about the continuity of the state's activities in crises, guaranteeing of basic services for the population, and support for the activities of the military

(both domestic and allied) in the territory of the Allies. However, resilience is not a topic for one or two government departments, but an across-the-board priority that must be adequately addressed by all ministries (e.g. education ministry by supporting critical thinking that vaccinates the population against deceptive information). The topic of resilience is a systemic challenge that requires maintaining of high level of political concentration. This can be a challenge in a democratic country such as Slovakia, typically ruled by multi-coalitions. The necessary change of institutional culture or mindset cannot be achieved overnight using targeted cure-all silver bullets with the top-down approach. Instead, small-scale daily efforts must be used, sometimes requiring very basic almost banal daily work at various levels of state administration, self-government, or support for the conditions enabling the development of civil society.

STELLA BULEJKOVÁ, Executive Director of the Security and Defence Industry Association of the Slovak Republic

According to the Security and Defence Industry Association of the Slovak Republic (SDIA SR), proactive responses to hybrid operations, as well as cyber defence and security, should be key areas for Slovakia in the preparation of the NATO 2030 strategy.

The field of hybrid operations classifies as a both military and non-military threat and therefore concerns not only military targets but especially civilian ones. The importance of building resilience capabilities against hybrid threats is currently evident not only in the Slovak Republic but also in other NATO countries. To our knowledge, Slovakia is already developing some efforts in this area, and therefore there is something to build on.

Cyber operations against NATO members are already ongoing and the importance of defending against them will only increase due to the development of digital technologies. The operations in cyberspace do not only aim at military targets, but also – and perhaps primarily – at civilian targets. That is why we consider the area of cyber defence and security to be of utmost importance.

In order to prevent the effects of cybercrime, SDIA SR is taking the necessary steps to increase the awareness and

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level of digital literacy of its members. It organizes educational events and facilitates professional discussions on the most appropriate approaches to education in the field of information and cyber security and data protection.

VOJTECH JURČÁK, Professor, Head of the Security and Defence Department of the Armed Forces Academy of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik

In my view, the protection from the current global external security threats is crucial for Slovakia. This results from the fact that we are a small country with small armed forces. Collective defence, as amended by Art. 5 of the Washington Treaty, is a guarantee of Slovakia's security and is simultaneously NATO's main mission.

Current global security threats, such as cyber-attacks, terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, hybrid threats, etc. can only be eliminated through collective effort and mutual cooperation based on mutual respect, recognition, and equality. It turns out that eliminating security threats nowadays requires a political solution rather than a military one, and that is the reason why NATO is challenged to become more of a "political-military" organization.

Cooperation with other regional organizations and non-state actors is another item in the agenda that needs to be considered in ensuring collective defence. Slovakia's role is to actively participate in these activities to also ensure its own security.

ANDREA FIGULOVÁ, Researcher at the European Studies and International Relations, Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Comenius University

For Slovakia as a smaller Central European country that is, moreover, burdened by the deposits of history, it is more than important to strategically form its allied connections and thus also the position in which it perceives and defines itself against the backdrop of modern security threats. To achieve this, it needs to have appropriate relations with its partners not only in NATO.

At the same time, it is necessary to consider the attitude of the Slovak population and their perception of strategic security problems, as well as the formulation of the attitudes of the political elites when it comes to the direction of Slovakia's foreign policy. These are the basic factors identifying the strategic areas that can be covered by NATO and, conversely, areas that we can cover ourselves, as a relevant member of the Alliance.

It is important to establish an appropriate and convenient cooperation with the allies. Geopolitically, we should be aware of the position and role of the Russian Federation, especially in the context of energy security, and we should not forget about China either. Cyber security issues should be one of the priority areas when considering what is happening in our region. In other words, we should focus on what we actually can influence and the issues of the space exploration or those related to climate change should be *a priori* left to be addressed by the relevant partners.

KATARÍNA KLINGOVÁ, researcher, GLOBSEC

Slovakia should focus on building its own resilience in both military and civil defence. The form of conflicts has changed significantly in recent years, with non-military hybrid tools and forms of attack predominating. Slovakia needs to build its resilience exactly to such types of attacks - from improving crisis management, the resilience of critical infrastructure, exchange of information, and coordination between individual central government bodies, as well as building situational-awareness across all levels of its public administration. The resilience of a country is not only about the readiness of its armed forces, which is, of course, very important and we see an active effort to modernize our military in this respect. However, it also includes the resilience of the society as such to subversive activities, whether of domestic or foreign origin. Building the resilience of the state and society is an inevitable response to the dynamically changing security landscape.

Similarly, we will not be perceived as a credible partner and ally within the Alliance if the ongoing attempt for a full-scale ideological disruption in our country is successful and the very values, on which the Alliance is built, are called into question. Even though support for Slovakia's NATO membership has increased by 13

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percentage points in recent years, many Slovaks believe in various conspiracy theories and misinformation about NATO, or about what our soldiers are doing on their missions. Consequently, building Slovakia's resilience will ultimately contribute to a more resilient and stronger Alliance, because, after all, we are NATO.

MATEJ KANDRÍK, Director of the Institute for Strategic Policies STRATPOL

I consider building resilience to be one of the most important topics for Slovakia found in NATO Agenda 2030. This low-profile term actually represents a broad and complex issue. In a nutshell, it can be characterised as the ability to successfully deal with crises, whether we are talking about large-scale natural disasters, harmful cyber-attacks, the pressure of mass migration, or terrorist attacks.

Given the growing tensions in the areas of conflict in our immediate and wider neighbourhood, intensifying geopolitical rivalry, or the accelerating climate change and its consequences, building resilience represents a major challenge. We need to talk about the readiness of the society and the state to deal effectively with negative scenarios and restore their functions.

Such a setting requires the cooperation and involvement of armed forces, civilian agencies of the security system, the private sector, and the civil society. It is of key importance that building resilience receives attention at the overall Alliance level. However, specific measures must come at the level of the Member Countries, and Slovakia has a long list with homework in this area.



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