

A Small Member State and the European Union's Security Policy

Anton Bebler



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A SMALL MEMBER STATE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION'S SECURITY POLICY

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Abstract:

Today one of the smaller EU members Slovenia has entertained political relations with the European Communities/European Union (EC/EU) for more than two decades, starting before its proclamation of independence in June 1991. Formerly a relatively small federal unit in the middle-size Yugoslavia Slovenia had been prior and during the wars of Yugoslavia's succession (1991-1995) an object of worries and even threats with economic sanctions by the EC/EU. Since then Slovenia's position *vis-à-vis* the integration has evolved dramatically. Having entered the EU in 2004 Slovenia became an actor in the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). There have been however limitations to this relationship both on the side of the EU and of Slovenia. The latter's contribution and role have been obviously constrained by the country's limited human and material resources. In 2008 Slovenia nevertheless performed well in the role of rotating Presidency of the EU Council.



Still young as an independent republic, Slovenia belongs to the category of small states according to the criteria of the size of population (about two million inhabitants) and of territory (about 20.000 sq. km). Among other members of the EU, Slovenia exceeds in population only Luxembourg, Estonia, Cyprus and Malta, while in these dimensions it trails behind Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania and other, still more populous members.

In other respects, such as the size of GNP, of the banking sector and of the diplomatic service, the position of Slovenia in the group of European small and mini-states could be evaluated differently. As Michael Handel (1987) stated a small state is not necessarily a weak state. Both the smallness and the weakness of a state are relational. For example, Slovenia is very small and weak in comparison with its most important trading partners (Germany and Italy). Slovenia is also smaller in terms of territory and population but in some other respects stronger than other former Yugoslav republics of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. According to some indicators (employment rate, unemployment rate, GDP per capita, purchasing power parities per capita, degree of social protection etc.) Slovenia has been ahead of practically all new East European members and also, at least, two older EU members.¹ Like other economically developed small states Slovenia depends more heavily on foreign trade and its exports constitute a higher percentage of GNP than is generally the case in larger states. However, the potentially harmful impact of Slovenia's high dependence on foreign trade has been softened by a widely diversified variety of exportable commodities and (to a lesser extent) also of trading partners.

Some disadvantages and advantages of small states as actors in international relations will be reviewed using the example of Slovenia. The field of enquiry will be Slovenia's position related to its role in the ESDP.

Slovenia's international position has been influenced strongly by geopolitical shifts on the European continent, in Central and South Eastern Europe and political developments in Slovenia itself. The EU became the most important attraction for the young Slovenian state. Also the intensity and quality of Slovenia's relations with European integration depended heavily on the processes within EC/EU. The most important legal and organizational changes took place in 1991-1993 (Maastricht Treaty), in 1997 (Amsterdam Treaty), in 1999 (Cologne and Laeken European Council meetings), and in 2000 (Nice Treaty). The most fundamental shift occurred in 2004 with Slovenia's accession to membership in the EU. The juxtaposition of these partly interconnected developments largely shaped the parameters within which Slovenia-EU relations have evolved. Three major stages in this evolution could be discerned:

- I. From late 1980's to July 1996: from an object of suspicion to a passive follower;

- II. July 1996 to May 2004: from a docile follower to an active participant;
- III. May 2004 to the present: participation in CFSP.

From an object of suspicion to a passive follower

The Republic of Slovenia's relationship with the EC/EU can be traced back to the late 1980s when Slovenia was still a smaller federal unit in a middle-size European state officially called the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This relationship included also a security-relevant segment.

In the late 1980s-early 1990s the governments of EC member states and the European Commission welcomed the wave of democratization and national emancipation in Eastern Europe. However the prospect of the Soviet Union's breakdown and of a possible misuse of its huge nuclear arsenal strongly alarmed the West. By inference the looming disintegration of another multinational federal state, Yugoslavia, became a source of growing worries. There was a widely held assumption that Yugoslavia's breakdown could serve as precursor, example and possible catalyst for the Soviet Union's violent demise.

Thus acting in concert with the United States the EC leaders decided around 1989/1990 to preserve Yugoslavia in one piece, using European integration's political influence and economic clout.² Slovenia, then the north-westernmost Yugoslav republic was, with good reason, suspected of a secessionist inclination. The top diplomats of the largest EC states started exerting strong diplomatic pressure and even threatened the first non-communist coalition government in Slovenia with heavy economic sanctions. It would have included a full trade boycott, if the republic were indeed to break away. On the other hand, the EC Commission informally promised to grant Yugoslavia an association status with the EC and to offer large credits to bail out the bankrupt Yugoslav treasury. However, this "carrot and stick strategy" failed to prevent Yugoslavia's disintegration. In spite of Slovenia's heavy dependence on its trade and other close relations with the EC, particularly Germany and Italy the small and weak state successfully resisted the pressure from several great powers, including the USA. Slovenia eventually weathered a two-year period of grave economic difficulties, legal and political turmoil and, against considerable odds won its independence.

When on June 25, 1991 Slovenia and Croatia almost simultaneously announced their declarations of independence, armed hostilities broke out in Slovenia between the federal army and Slovenian Territorial Defence force. Ten days later, the high EC representatives brokered a cease-fire between the Slovenian Territorial Defence and the Yugoslav Army

(JNA). The Brioni agreement concluded in July 1991 stipulated, inter alia, a three-month transitional period during which the Yugoslav military units and other federal personnel would be removed from Slovenia. A series of events then dramatically strengthened Slovenia's international position: Slovenia's assumption of full sovereignty in September 1991, the EC's collective recognition of its independence in December 1991/January 1992, the establishment of official relations between Slovenia and the EC's institutions, and Slovenia's entering into the most important interstate political organizations (UN, CSCE/OSCE, Council of Europe) in 1992-1993.

On the other hand the EC/EU's unsuccessful involvement in the Balkans crisis served as an important catalyst in European integration's own evolution from a largely "soft security" organization into both a »soft« and a »hard security« actor on the European scene (van Eekelen 1998: 146-52). The growing violence in Croatia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina led the EC to dispatch for the first time ever its personnel into a theatre of military operations. This action was carried out by about 80 unarmed EC observers in white uniforms, provided with white-painted vehicles and helicopters, all bearing the EC insignia. The EC observers' main task was to monitor hostilities in the Balkans in the vain hope that their mere presence would dampen if not stop the fighting. In their monitoring forays into Croatia the EC observers used Slovenia as a staging and resting area. This well-intended but thoroughly misconceived and poorly prepared action failed miserably and damaged the EC's reputation in the Balkans.

However, on the positive side, the very failure of this operation bolstered the French argument that without developing effective foreign and security policy instruments of its own, the EC cannot wield political influence in the world even distantly commensurate with its economic weight. Thus the events surrounding Slovenia's dissociation from the rest of Yugoslavia (and the ensuing Balkan wars) contributed significantly to the maturation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

The EC—Slovenia confrontational interaction with clear security implications intensified in autumn 1992 when the UN Security Council imposed an embargo on all shipments of war materials to the theatre of armed hostilities in the Western Balkans. The EC strongly supported the resolution and its application to all Yugoslav successor states. Slovenia was unjustly included in the list of countries under the embargo despite since July 1991 having not participated in armed hostilities anywhere and since May 1992 having been a UN member. Slovenia was not however subjected to even stronger economic and financial sanctions imposed a year later on Serbia, Montenegro and the Serb-controlled areas in Bosnia

and Croatia. The UN-imposed arms embargo had proved to be largely counterproductive. It actually increased the strong military advantages, particularly in heavy weapons, already enjoyed by the Serbian forces in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time it appreciably weakened the ability of the victims of armed aggression to resist the aggressor. The arms embargo also harmed Slovenia's modest defence capabilities and thus violated its right as a UN member to individual and collective self-defence (Art. 51 of the UN Charter).

The implementation of the UN arms embargo in the Adriatic Sea, including the short Slovenian coast, had been monitored jointly by the Western European Union (WEU) and NATO. This interaction between WEU and Slovenia in the framework of the Operation "Sharp Guard" started in June 1993 and lasted for about three years (van Eekelen 1998: 153-9). During this period several thousand ships plying to Slovenia's only sea port, Koper, were inspected on the high seas (out of the total of about 74,000 vessels in the Adriatic) and several hundred were diverted to Italian ports and searched. The operation "Sharp Guard" actually raised the prices of war materials on the Balkans' black market but failed to reduce tangibly, let alone to stop altogether the flow of smuggled weapons to the areas of armed conflict. The WEU/NATO maritime and air surveillance operation was eventually terminated with the coming into force of the Dayton – Paris peace accords on Bosnia and Herzegovina. It proved to be also the last military operation by the WEU.

The continuing hostilities in the southern Balkan neighbourhood sharpened Slovenia's immediate and long-term security dilemma. Constituting in terms of population and territory only one twelfth of the former federal state and due to its smallness and very shallow territorial depth Slovenia could not possibly continue with Yugoslavia's official policy of "total defence" and of the corresponding foreign policy of "active non-alignment". Slovenia also lacked international recognition and guarantees in case it were unilaterally to declare its neutrality. Security-wise the country could not rely on a defence pact with any of its neighbours nor could it remain complacent in splendid isolation due to the continuing instability and armed violence in its immediate Balkan neighbourhood. The only feasible way to resolve the security dilemma of a small, military weak but geopolitically exposed state was to seek membership in the existing Western integrations (EU, WEU, NATO). Slovenia's biggest neighbour - Italy already belonged to all three. In Slovenia there have been no special interest groups to block this strategic choice. The decision to seek EU membership has been particularly strongly supported by the public and by all major political parties. Consequently, already in 1993 Slovenia's National Assembly declared the entry into Western integration as the country's chief strategic foreign policy goal.

However, the UN-imposed sanctions slowed down very considerably Slovenia's approaching the EU and NATO. Another set of obstacles to closer Slovenia's relations with the EU was created intentionally by the rightist Berlusconi government in Italy and pursued particularly assiduously by Berlusconi's neo-fascist coalition partner *Allianza Nazionale*. Consequently the Italian government for two years effectively blocked the conclusion of Slovenia's negotiations with the European Commission.

The NATO-imposed termination of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the signing of the Dayton/Paris agreements in November – December 1995 (in which the EU played no role) as well as the Berlusconi government's fall, allowed for a considerable improvement and intensification of relations between the EU and Slovenia. In summer 1996 these developments led to the conclusion of an agreement on Slovenia's associated membership of the EU. In autumn 1996 Slovenia could thus join the network of the EU members' collective relations with the Central-East European Associated States. This network contained also a CFSP segment.

The process of Slovenia's approaching integration had been reflected in the county's voting behaviour in the United Nations General Assembly between 1992 and 1996 which showed the clear tendency of growing alignment with the EU consensus. The distance on all issues during these four years had been reduced from 11 to 2 (out of 100 points), on security and disarmament issues from 5 to 2, while on the Middle Eastern issues and decolonization the respective positions had been identical (Luif 2003: 39-46). On all these issues Slovenia's international behaviour has showed the same characteristics as that of all small EU members and all East European associated states, including the largest among the latter – Poland.

From a docile follower to an active participant

The lessons drawn by the EU from its unsuccessful involvement in the Balkan wars of 1992-1995 led however to several positive steps. The EU's apparent impotence convinced the member states to address more actively the security and defence dimension of CFSP. The ensuing shift in the EU's security policy was agreed upon at the 1996 – 1997 Intergovernmental Conference and became enshrined in the Amsterdam Treaty (1997).

By the time Slovenia entered the ranks of the EU Associated States, considerable experience in CFSP had been already accumulated and corresponding organizational mechanisms developed. The EU interaction with the Eastern European Associated States had been marked then by the very unbalanced relationships between the EU members,

particularly the large ones, on one hand, and the Associated States, on the other (Neuhold and Sucharipa 2003:96-7). The Foreign Ministry and the diplomatic representatives of each EU member state presiding in the EU Council developed the practice of more or less regularly informing the Foreign Ministries and the diplomatic representatives of the Associated States on the EU's common positions and on joint actions to be taken by the EU in the CFSP context. This information had usually come shortly before a given EU step was made known to the mass media. Thus it had been always too late for the EU members to take into account the Associated States' particular interests and sensitivities related to the EU actions. Reservations and critical remarks raised confidentially by the Associated States were noted and stored but had no impact on current EU actions.

Adjustments on the EU side came later, prompted partly by the Associated States' discrete complaints. In order to facilitate the flow of timely information to the Associated States their foreign ministries we plugged into the electronic "Associated Countries Network" (a reduced COREU spin-off). Thus since autumn 1999 the Slovenian Foreign Ministry has also been linked electronically with the General Secretariat of the EU Council and the position of an EU correspondent was established within the Ministry. Since 1999 Slovenian representatives had been sitting in at the meetings of twelve out of thirty CFSP Working Groups. The most important in the learning process had been however Slovenian Foreign Minister's presence at the special meetings of the General Affairs Council (GAC).

Throughout the period of EU apprenticeship, Slovenia's voting in international organizations continued to show growing alignment with the agreed EU positions. Slovenia as well as other candidates for full membership had supported practically all EU positions in other international fora such as UN, OSCE and the Council of Europe. On all votes taken in the United Nations General Assembly since 1996 the distance between Slovenian positions and the EU consensus has fallen from 1 (out of 100) to zero. Slovenia's positions became even closer to the EU consensus than those of France (8), United Kingdom (8), Ireland (5), Sweden and Portugal (4). Particularly on security-related issues Slovenia's alignment had been thus on average higher than that of all EU member states counted together.

By supporting EU's positions in international fora the new Associated States, including Slovenia, had modestly contributed to the increase in European integration's influence in world affairs. The alignment however reflected the mostly passive and subordinated roles played by the Associated States since they could influence neither the EU decisions in the CFSP context nor their subsequent implementation or non-implementation by the EU member states. On the domestic front the Slovenian government's international behaviour

had been met occasionally with criticisms for its purported uncritical attitude, docility, even servility toward the EU (and NATO). According to these criticisms, coming from individual commentators and non-governmental organizations, Slovenia in spite of its smallness ought to display self-confidence, character and individuality in international politics.

Slovenia’s steadily improving relations with the EU have been facilitated by the fact that all ruling coalitions since Slovenia’s independence have been dominated by pro-EU political parties. The highest trust in the EU has been recorded among the rank-and-file of the Slovenian Democratic Party and of the Social Democrats. There were, of course, also Euro-sceptics but they constituted minorities in all larger Slovenian parliamentary parties. Only in one small parliamentary party have the EU-sceptics held the leadership positions. This small Slovenian National Party has been officially steadfastly in opposition since its inception. Internally the Slovenian governments of both the centre-left and centre-right coalitions have had experienced a few internal political problems related to CFSP and ESDP. The Slovenian public has been generally well-disposed to the EU. According to public opinion polls the level of trust in the EU has consistently exceeded that in UN, NATO and also in a number of national political institutions (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1: Slovenians’ trust in institutions

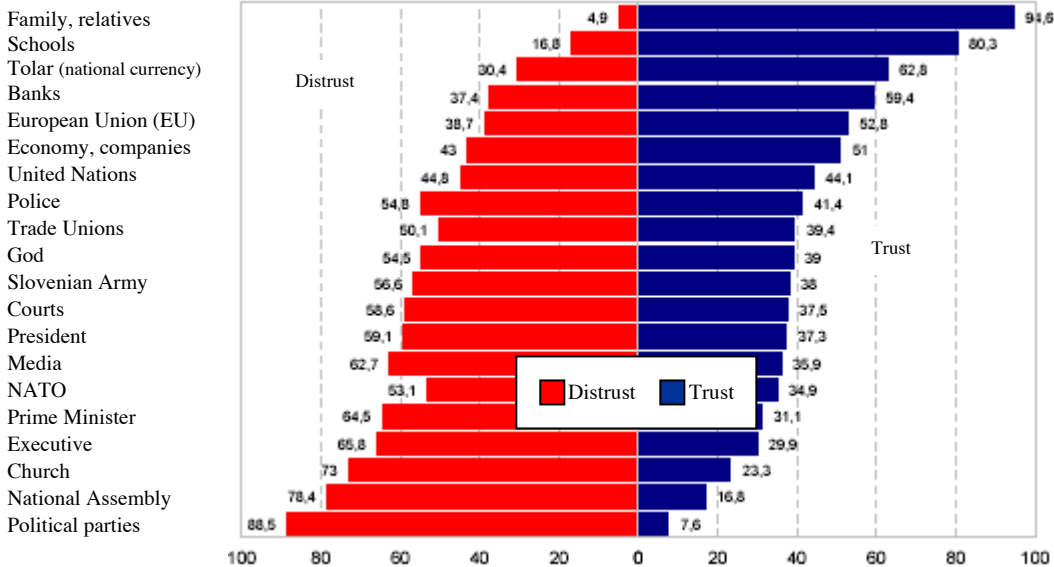
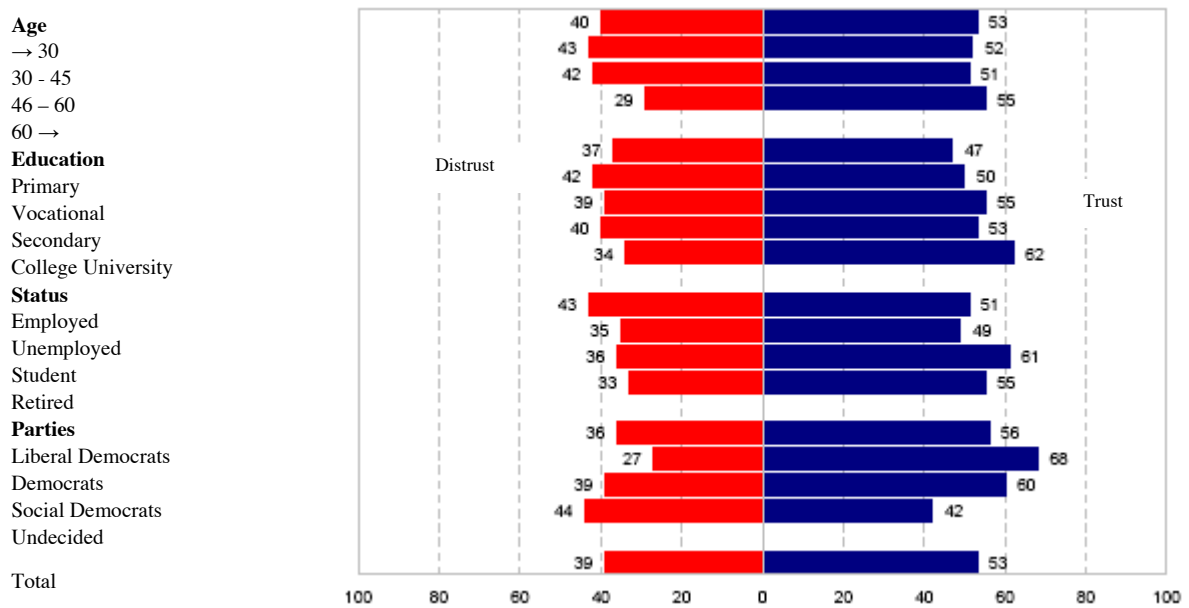


Table 2: Slovenians' trust in the EU



Source: FDV – CJMMK, Slovenian public opinion, 2006/2, N= 1003

The Slovenian public has supported strengthening the EU and its international role. This generally positive disposition toward the EU has been accompanied however by very low interest in the EU affairs, including in its CFSP and ESDP.

As representatives of a small candidate country and guests at some EU preparatory meetings, Slovenian diplomats could observe the conduct of CFSP at close range and learn considerably about it. Their behaviour has been unavoidably influenced, amongst other things, by the tensions within the EU related to CFSP and ESDP. The transatlantic differences since September 11, 2001 and their impact on the relations among the EU members have on a number of occasions put Slovenian representatives into a delicate position. This was particularly true of the period immediately following the outbreak of the Iraqi war in 2003. Even before the US delegation at the UN Security Council presented the (false) evidence on Iraq's violations of UN Security Council's resolutions, a group of new NATO members and of five EU Associated States (who were then NATO invitees) decided publicly to support the Bush Administration's justification for an armed attack on Iraq. In the Vilnius statement they followed the positions taken earlier by the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain. In order not to jeopardize Slovenia's admission to NATO, the Slovenian Foreign Ministry associated the country with this ill-fated pro-Bush action. The French President J. Chirac angrily reacted to the statement, reproaching the Eastern European candidates for EU membership for not "keeping quiet". This highly undiplomatic remark clearly expressed the

expectation, at least, on the part of France that the Associated States should simply obediently follow the EU line on most important issues raised in international fora. The Associated states indeed generally followed this practice when the EU acted with unanimity or at least without visible internal disagreements. Chirac's remark nevertheless offended many Eastern Europeans, including the Slovenian political elite.

Faced with unpleasant choices the Slovenian government has on this and on other similar occasions endeavoured to avoid spoiling its relations both with the leading EU members and with the USA. The usual tactic of Slovenian diplomacy had been to avoid controversial issues. It is not surprising then that the public statements and actions taken by the Slovenian government were often criticized by Slovenian opposition parties, by non-governmental organizations and by the media for their lack of principles, clarity and consistency. The tactic of avoidance had become more vexing and difficult to maintain as Slovenia approached its almost simultaneous accession to the EU and NATO in April – May 2004.

In addition to its association status with the EU Slovenia has since 1997 enjoyed the status of an Associated Partner in the Western European Union (WEU). Since then it started actively participating in WEU activities and offered the organization its contribution to the implementation of the WEU Petersberg tasks. In line with this commitment Slovenia sent two police instructors to the WEU advisory police mission in Albania (MAPE, 1997-2001). When the WEU activities became integrated into the EU's structure Slovenia pledged to provide the future European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF) with one motorized infantry company, one military police unit, one transport helicopter and one medical unit. In 2003 Slovenia joined the EU-led Operation Concordia and increased its contribution to the following Operation Proxima and Operation EPAT in Macedonia (2003-2005).

In parallel with conducting its negotiations on the accession to the EU, Slovenia started adapting some of its institutions to the future need of actively participating in CFSP and ESDP. These institutions notably included the National Assembly, Office of Prime Minister, Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Defence. A new Government's Office for European Affairs (GOEA) was then established. It was headed by a Minister without portfolio charged with European Affairs. GOEA had a status lower than that of the Foreign Ministry and was housed in a building situated within the Foreign Ministry compound. It was given the responsibility for handling the matters falling within the first "pillar", while the CFSP and ESDP matters were assigned in an unequal proportion to the Foreign and Defence Ministries. This division of labour (and of respective public relations rewards) has produced occasional tensions between the bureaucracies involved. Specialized departments, sectors and other

units charged with the EU affairs were created in all Slovenian ministries, as well as several interministerial coordinating bodies. In March 2003 the National Assembly passed an amendment to the Slovenian constitution legalizing a partial transfer of the implementation of state sovereignty to the EU institutions.

CFSP and ESDP had been among the easiest issues in Slovenia's pre-accession negotiations with the EU. Internally this aspect of Slovenia's membership presented no problem to Slovenian negotiators due to a high degree of political consensus on the desirability of Slovenia's membership of the EU. The high consensus manifested itself convincingly at the referenda on the EU (and NATO) membership on March 23, 2003 when about 87 percent of votes were cast in favour of Slovenia's joining EU. On the other hand, the non-problematic treatment of the CFSP and ESDP in the National Assembly and in the mass media has probably also reflected the wide-spread lack of knowledge and underestimation of these two EU policies among of the political elite and Slovenian general public.

After protracted negotiations Slovenia finally entered the EU as full-fledged member on May 1, 2004, together with nine other Central, East European and Mediterranean states. Among the EU members Slovenia was the first and still is the only successor state of ex-Yugoslavia.

Slovenia's participation in CFSP

Since its entry into the EU Slovenia's engagement in and contribution to ESDP have been largely shaped by a number of factors. To a significant extent they have resulted from the EU's own institutional features and bureaucratic culture, from wider geopolitical developments as well as from Slovenia's preferences and capabilities.

Already during the years of Slovenia's apprenticeship for the EU membership, Slovenian politicians and diplomats as "active observers" at EU meetings could follow the open disagreements between the most influential EU members. At times these conflicts even temporarily crippled CFSP. The fundamental weakness of CFSP has emanated largely from the unwillingness of big member states to entrust the management of their security to the supranational integration and to its bureaucracy. Particularly the two permanent members of the UN Security Council (France and Great Britain) have often avoided submitting themselves to the collective discipline required by CFSP. The non-fulfilment of commitments by other members led to the failure to implement the most important among

the Helsinki Headline goals adopted by the European Council in December 1999. It was to be the creation by 2003 of the European Rapid Reaction Force. A very low percentage of the EU budget devoted to CFSP and ESDP could be also explained by the same attitude. A related manifestation in the “third pillar” appeared in September 2006 when a majority of justice ministers refused to give more power to the EU institutions in the struggle against terrorism. The lack of a coherent and effective CFSP (and ESDP) has however been for years papered over and masked behind numerous declarations and common positions on unimportant issues. The real Common Foreign and Security Policy by the EU obviously remains a political objective only to a modest extent realized in the EU practice.

The most important obstacle to CFSP’s effectiveness has stemmed from the EU’s three “pillar” structure and consequently from CFSP’s separation from the most potent instruments of the EU external action. This separation has significantly weakened the potency of “the second pillar”. Divergent priorities and insufficient coordination between CFSP and the economic, humanitarian and other EU policies have resulted from this structural peculiarity of the integration. Having become an EU full-fledged member Slovenia, has consistently supported the efforts to make CFSP and ESDP more effective through better coordinated employment of the tools managed by the Commission. Slovenia has also regularly argued for better coordination of CFSP with the activities of other international organizations, most notably with the United Nations.

Another major source of tensions related to the CFSP has originated in trans-Atlantic differences and in varying positions and attitudes among the EU members towards US policies. Internal divisions among the EU members became glaringly visible during the bouts of transatlantic diplomatic tensions related to trade feuds arbitrated by WTO, to the International Court of Justice, to the Israel – Arab conflict, the Middle East etc. US President George W. Bush’s adventure in Iraq brought the EU/USA relations to the lowest point in years. Slovenia has been obviously interested in improved relations with USA which would allow for more effective international conflict management in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, for more constructive relations with the Russian Federation, Ukraine and other CIS states. While advocating a more effective ESDP, Slovenia, as most other new EU members, has seen no need to invest heavily into developing the EU military infrastructure separate from the European pillar of NATO. This is why Slovenia did not support the French-German-Belgian proposal initiated by President Chirac of France to establish an EU military headquarters at Tervuren near Brussels.

Slovenia has also favoured improvements in the EU decision-making process. During the debates at the European convention on the “Constitutional Treaty” the Slovenian delegates lent their support to the creation of a single EU “foreign minister”, to allowing enhanced cooperation among some members also in security matters, to strengthening the European Commission’s role and to establishing the EU external relations service. Slovenia understandably preferred continuing rotating of Presidency in the EU Council among all EU members but agreed with the establishing the post of a non-rotating President. On the EU institutional issues the Slovenian delegates were naturally in favour of protecting the smaller member states’ influence in the EU Council’s decision-making.

The last two rounds of enlargement (2004 and 2007) further increased the EU territorially and population-wise. The number of EU members in other international organizations and bodies has also grown. The enlargement has consequently added to the EU’s political weight and influence in these organizations and in world politics in general. On the other hand, Slovenia as a new member did not burden the EU with serious additional problems in its relations with other states. The remaining open issues with a candidate for the EU membership – Croatia – have been minor in comparison with the conflicting elements in the relations between Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, on one hand, and the Russian Federation on the other, or between Cyprus and Turkey.

The accession of new countries has also augmented the EU expertise and contacts in several areas where also older EU members have had considerable security, economic, political, cultural and other interests. Slovenia, particularly due to its ties to and decades-long experience in dealing with the Western Balkans has contributed to the over-all positive balance of the two last rounds of enlargement. This conclusion applies also to CFSP and ESDP.

Slovenia as EU member and ESDP

The need for further adaptation of state institutions and their activities to the rules and practice in the EU became highly urgent in preparation for Slovenia’s accession to European integration in May 2004. The Government’s Office for European Affairs was moved from the Foreign Ministry’s compound to the Prime Minister’s Office while its Director was given the rank of State Secretary with a sub-ministerial status. Slovenia’s full membership position required engaging additional diplomatic and expert personnel in Brussels and Ljubljana and opening diplomatic missions in almost all EU member-states.

The National Assembly passed a new law regulating parliamentary oversight of the Slovenian government's activities related to the EU. According to the law government representatives in the EU institutions are obliged to inform the National Assembly's Committee on EU Affairs of all important matters and to obtain the Committee's consent prior to engaging the country in EU bodies. However this leverage of parliamentary control has become to a considerable extent a formalized routine. During the first four years of Slovenia's membership this had been due to the attitudes of the then governing right-of-centre coalition. Enjoying a solid majority in the Committee and controlling disciplined deputies, the coalition protected the government representatives from embarrassments and criticisms in the Committee. Objections raised by the opposition parties had been regularly rejected or neutralized while their alternative proposals were voted down. This practice gave the Slovenian executive *de facto* a free hand in dealing with the EU. The mass media and the public have had limited access to relevant information as the Committee's meetings have always taken place behind closed doors. In several known cases the government representatives in Brussels took positions on CFSP and ESDP even without having informed the Committee. After the parliamentary election in autumn 2008 and under a new, left-of-centre coalition, the situation with parliamentary control has tangibly improved. However, the problem of severe time constraint has remained as the Committee has normally only several hours on Friday mornings to evaluate the proposals on often complicated and controversial issues submitted by the executive.

Following the previous practice described above, the Committee on EU Affairs, without a debate approved the government's affirmative position concerning the EU Security Strategy (2003). This happened despite the rank ordering of major security threats to the EU contained in this pivotal document has been at gross variance with the attitudes of the Slovenian public. For example, according to Slovenian public opinion polls, the presumably global threat number one (terrorism) has been consistently perceived by Slovenians as belonging to the bottom of the listed twenty alternatives (Prezelj 2003):

Table 3: **Slovenian Public Perception of Threats to National Security**

Source of Threat	Average in 1999	Average in 2001
Drugs, narcotics	3,46	3,41
Crime	3,46	3,28
Traffic accidents	3,22	3,24
Unemployment	3,35	3,14
Environmental deterioration	3,35	3,07
Poverty	3,13	3,05
Low birth rate	3,29	3,00
Economic problems	3,23	2,99
Suicides	3,09	2,88
Selling off social property	3,14	2,87
Natural and technological disasters	3,20	2,76
Refugees, illegal immigrants, immigrants	2,98	2,74
Domestic instability	2,94	2,53
Infectious diseases – AIDS, etc	2,78	2,43
Lagging behind in science and technology	2,84	2,33
Extreme nationalism	2,54	2,20
Terrorism	2,64	2,09
Conflicts in former Yugoslavia	2,75	2,09
Military threats from other states	2,21	1,79

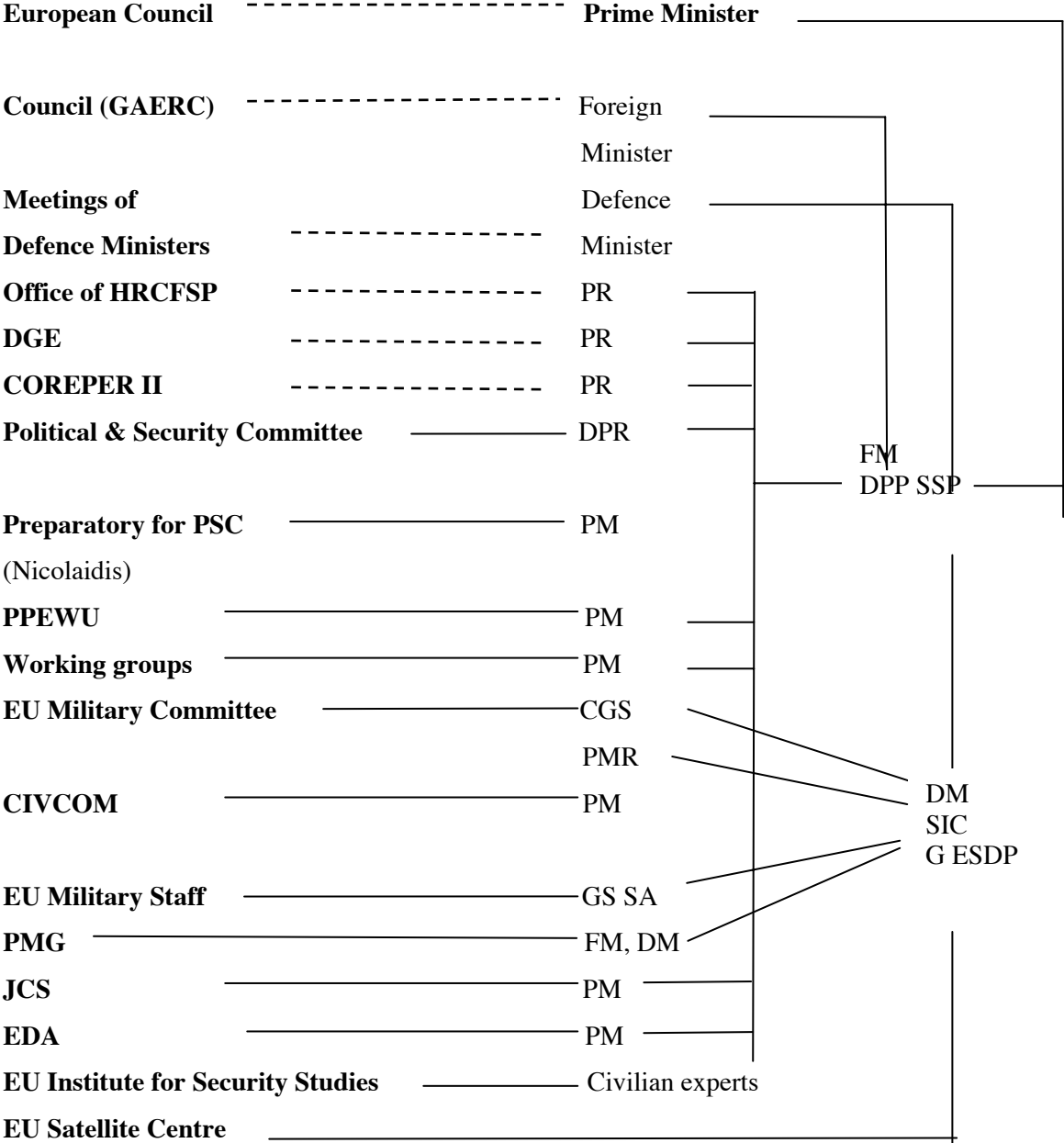
Threats to Slovenian national security in 1999 and 2001 – rating based on mean value on the scale from 1 to 4 (1 = issue does not represent a threat, 2 = weak threat, 3 = medium threat, 4 = big threat)

This wide discrepancy reflects a major general problem of ESDP – low democratic legitimacy and very weak accountability due to the practically absent control by the European Parliament, by national parliaments and by public opinion. The general awareness about and the understanding of ESDP could certainly be improved by better informing the public, also in Slovenia.

Maintaining a relatively small Foreign Service, Slovenia entered the European Union on May 1, 2004 with only two junior officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs charged with the task of monitoring ESDP. By autumn 2006 the number of Slovenian diplomats, military officers and other officials engaged in ESDP rose to about a dozen. They were located in the Foreign and Defence Ministries, in the General Staff of the Slovenian Army and in

Slovenia’s Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels. The linkages between the Slovenian and EU bodies involved in ESDP affairs are represented on the following table:

Diagram of Slovenia’s institutionalized participation in the ESDP -related bodies



- CIVCOM – Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management
- CGS – Chief of General Staff
- DGE – Directorate General for External Relations EU Council
- DM – Defence Ministry
- DDP – Directorate for Defence Policy
- DPP – Directorate for Policy Planning
- DPR – Deputy Permanent Representative
- FM – Foreign Ministry
- G – Group
- GS – General Staff
- HR – High Representative for CFSP and Secretary General of the Council
- JCS – Joint Situation Centre
- PM – Permanent Mission of Slovenia to EU
- PMG – Politico-military group
- PMR – Permanent Military Representative
- PPEWU – Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit
- PR – Permanent Representative
- SA – Slovenian Army
- SIC – Sector for International Cooperation
- SSP – Sector for Security Policy

In spite of its smallness, Slovenia's constructive contribution to CFSP and ESDP has been noteworthy in the context of the EU activities in the Western Balkans. Particularly the EU-managed "Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe" and its Security Table had served to better focus the international efforts to extend security and prosperity into this proverbially volatile region. By its own example Slovenia has contributed to this endeavour, for example by having become the biggest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the successor states of ex-SFRY. By 2009 the total amount of direct investment by Slovenian enterprises in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo exceeded €2 billion. Slovenia has been thus contributing tangibly to reducing glaring poverty, high unemployment and other sources of social instability and insecurity.

Slovenian military and policemen together with their colleagues from the EU members and other Associated States joined the NATO Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR) in 1999. When in 2002 France launched the idea of replacing the NATO-led SFOR by the EU-led Operation Althea (EUFOR) Slovenia offered its assistance and active participation. The Slovenian contribution was foreseen largely in the form of intelligence support, a company of motorized infantry, a military police element and of transportation service equipped with newly acquired Cougar helicopters. Slovenian military personnel previously engaged in the SFOR intelligence unit were augmented to the level of about 25 officers and NCO's and in December 2004 transferred to the "Local Observation Teams" (LOTs) of EUFOR. The intelligence support with operatives speaking the local language proved to be highly valuable for the successful implementation of the mission. Interestingly enough, the most valuable information concerning the ongoing and/or pending criminal activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina were gathered outside that country. This Slovenian input to EUFOR was publicly acknowledged by high officials of the United Kingdom – the lead nation in the Operation Althea.

Table 4: **The engagement of the Slovenian military personnel in operations of crisis management between 1997 and 2006**

Mission	Responsible institution	Country of engagement	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
ALBA	OSCE	Albania	22									
UNFICYP	UN	Cyprus	10	27	29	29	29					
SFOR	NATO	B&H			44	56	81	81	178	163 (173)		
JOINT ENTERPRISE	NATO	B&H									2	2 (1)
UNTSO	UN	Lebanon		2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2 (12)
AFOR	NATO	Albania			28							
UNMIK	UN	Kosovo			1	1	1	1				
KFOR	NATO	Kosovo				6	6	2	11	11 (32)	32 (92)	168
OHR	UN	B&H					1	1	1			
CONCORDIA	EU	Macedonia							1			
ISAF	NATO	Afghanistan								18 (27)	27 (58)	54
EUFOR	EU	B&H								184	93	76
CENTCOM	NATO	USA (Florida)									1 (2)	2
Pakistan	NATO	Pakistan									2	2
NTM I	NATO	Iraq										4
DR KONGO	EU	FRG + Congo										4
Amis II	EU	Sudan										1 (2)
Total			32	29	104	94	120	88	194	245	378	326

Source: Slovenian Ministry of Defence, March 2007

Slovenia's growing involvement in international endeavours to stabilize the Western Balkans has been met with considerable support and understanding by the Slovenian public. The preference for South-Eastern Europe as a theatre for stabilization operations has had its strategic, political, economic and cultural underpinnings. Given the relatively recent experience of the Balkan wars, the Slovenian public has easily accepted the government's view that the deployment of Slovenian soldiers and policemen in the Western Balkans makes more sense and is more relevant security-wise than the deployment somewhere much further afield, for instance in Southern Asia or Africa. The deployment in the Western Balkans has furthermore indirectly promoted trade, enhanced general cooperation with the region and benefited also Slovenian economy.

Table 5: The engagement of the Slovenian police personnel in crisis management operations between 1997 and 2007.

	Mission	Number of personnel	Number of personnel to this day	Time of launching	Foreseen end date
1.	MAPE , Albania	2	/	06.09.1997	22.06.2001
2.	UNMISSET , East Timor	2	/	27.03.2000	20.12.2004
3.	OSCE KPSS , Kosovo	2 + 2 = 4	/	04.04.2000	2006
4.	IPTM , Afghanistan	1	/	09.03.2003	14.04.2004
5.	UNMIK / CIVPOL , Kosovo	15	15	03.11.2000	2007
6.	OSCE SMMS , Macedonia	2 + 2 = 4	/	10.07.2001	2007
7.	EUPM , Bosnia & Herzegovina	4	/	25.11.2002	31.12.2005
8.	EUPM 2 , Bosnia & Herzegovina	4	4	06.02.2006	2009
9.	OHR , Bosnia & Herzegovina	1	/	19.05.2003	31.03.2006
10.	PROXIMA , Macedonia	5	/	12.12.2003	15.12.2005
11.	EUPAT , Macedonia	5	/	15.12.2005	15.06. 2006
12.	JIPTC , Jordan	5	5	20.01.2004	2006
13.	OSCE , Serbia	2	2	08.07.2006	07.07.2007
	Total	54	26		

Source: Slovenian Ministry of Interior, March 2007

Being a small but active participant in ESDP and simultaneously also a member of NATO, Slovenia has been developing its modest expeditionary military and police capabilities which could be used in international crisis management, peace-support and post-conflict stabilization operations. From a Slovenian government's point of view it would be preferable to have the country's commitments to both organizations balanced both qualitatively and quantitatively. This sought-after balance has been however difficult to achieve, mainly due to the difficulties on the EU side.

Slovenia has actively cooperated with the European Defence Agency (EDA) efforts to promote joint acquisitions of expensive defence products and joint utilization of costly systems (such as strategic airlift capabilities). Slovenia also subscribed to the liberalized code of conduct in arms trade. As of July 1, 2006 it joined the system of coordinated defence procurement within the EDA framework and opened its small defence market to foreign

bidders. The latest open bidding for 135 eight-wheel armoured personnel carriers was won by the Finnish state-owned producer Patria. When delivered, these vehicles will be available also for ESDP crisis management missions.

In realization of the EU Battle Groups project Slovenia has teamed up with its two neighbours - Italy (the lead nation) and Hungary. The trilateral Italian – Hungarian – Slovenian Battle Group became operative in mid-2007 thus enhancing the operational capabilities of the European Rapid Reaction Force and of the EU Battle Groups. To this endeavour Slovenia contributes one motorized company, staff and logistical elements as well as a squad of military police, in total up to 200 military personnel.

Incentives and impediments

There have been both incentives and impediments to Slovenia's active contribution to ESDP. Being a small country Slovenia can more effectively improve its security as an EU (and NATO) member state. By transforming the neighbouring Western Balkans into a zone of peace, healthy economic and social development and prosperity, the EU and NATO members collectively contribute also to furthering Slovenia's national interests. Slovenian peacekeepers and other personnel engaged in the EU stabilization activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Kosovo, due to their previous experience, accumulated knowledge and numerous interpersonal contacts in the area strengthen Slovenia's presence and standing in the region.³ Slovenian diplomatic, security and technical personnel offers also valuable services to and bolsters the EU influence in the region.

There have been however also impediments. It is obvious that Slovenia has been constrained by its modest financial and human resources, by its small-size military and police organizations as well as by a limited number of qualified and available civilian officials. On the diplomatic front the modest number of Slovenian practitioners, their relatively short experience in the EU and weak analytical back-up at home explain to a large extent the Slovenian diplomats' largely reactive behaviour and timidity when participating in the ESDP bodies. Moreover, the two key Slovenian ministries have not used optimally the knowledge and skills which could be available from the non-governmental academic and business sphere.

In spite of these objective and subjective limitations, Slovenia's contribution to ESDP could still have been more substantial and versatile. Expertise, initiative, creativity and ingenuity could often compensate for limited material and human resources of a small state.

There has been considerable interest among the Slovenian military and police rank-and-file for increased peace-keeping deployment, particularly in the Balkans. Some initiatives from below have been however stymied by bureaucratic inertia and by middle-level officials' preference for playing it safe. There is also a problem of effective and timely coordination between the foreign, defence and other ministries in the ESDP matters. The best channel for this coordination would be the National Security Council, chaired by the prime minister. The Council however has only marginally been used for this purpose.

On the other hand there have been ever greater impediments on the EU side. From its inception in 1999, the ESDP has experienced a number of serious systemic difficulties in:

- proper and timely coordination among the EU institutions (particularly between the Council and the Commission),
- political and operational coordination with UN and NATO,
- coordination between the lead nation and other contributing nations in each EU-led operation,
- the timely and quality-wise proper fulfilment of the Headline Capabilities Commitments by all EU members.

The following detected deficiencies have negatively affected the ESDP effectiveness (Montanaro-Jankovski 2007: 146-7):

- considerable discontinuity between rotating Presidencies, confusing plurality of actors,
- grossly insufficient financing from the EU budget,
- over-institutionalization, cumbersome and protracted decision-making,
- inefficient division of responsibilities,
- deficient or lacking common infrastructure (C4, intelligence, logistics, strategic lift capability),
- the lack of continuous intelligence sharing,
- constraints on the use of troops imposed by national caveats,
- faulty control over the implementation and low accountability for non-compliance by member states,
- low visibility and weak public support.

It is hoped that the entering into force and the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty will help to at least, reduce some of these shortcomings.

Slovenia's high interest in the Western Balkans has constituted the most notable peculiarity in the country's attitudes related to ESDP. After a period of intense preoccupation

with “a return to Europe”, finally having entered the EU and NATO and strengthened its numerous political and economic ties with the West, Slovenia turned in the mid-1990s to the Western Balkans. The previous benign neglect and distancing herself from the Balkans were replaced by a much more proactive stance. Slovenian diplomacy has actively endeavoured since the late 1990s to position the country as one of the bridges between the previously exclusively Western integrations and the Western Balkans. Given its objective geopolitical interests, Slovenia could certainly be more active in the Mediterranean dialogue. On the other hand Slovenia is much less inclined and has little to offer to the EU missions in Africa or in Asia.

Concerning the strategic partnership between the EU and NATO, Slovenian diplomacy has consistently advocated the regular utilization of the Berlin-plus instruments on the grounds of efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Slovenia’s preference has been for a well-balanced and coordinated use of the same limited military resources devoted to ESDP and to NATO’s expeditionary capabilities. In August 2007 the total number of Slovenian soldiers in various missions abroad reached the level of 983 or almost a quarter of the Slovenian army’s active mobile strength. This was the highest percentage among EU member states. Slovenia contributed then close to 700 personnel to the NATO-led operations (mostly on Kosovo and Afghanistan) and only 52 military and police personnel to the EU-led operations. A reduction of the Slovenian contingent in Bosnia and Herzegovina has not resulted from Slovenia’s lack of commitment but from the EU’s decision to greatly scale down the EUFOR deployment. The decision not to transfer the NATO-led Kosovo stabilization mission to EU management also reflected the limitations and deficiencies on the EU side. Slovenian peace-keepers’ greatly enhanced presence in Kosovo has been consequently channelled through the NATO-managed KFOR and not *via* an EU stabilization operation. The present distribution of Slovenian military and police personnel between EU-led and NATO-led peace-keeping and stabilization missions deviates thus significantly from Slovenia’s own preference.

Intensive preparation for Slovenia’s assuming the Presidency of the Council of the European Union started already in autumn 2006. The number of diplomats and military officers involved in ESDP was raised then from twelve to about 30. During the EU Presidency in the first half of 2008 it was maintained at the level of about 85 officials, not counting auxiliary personnel. With these human resources Slovenia was able to acquit well its ESDP responsibilities.

In some respects, such as the organization of numerous meetings, excellent logistics and warm hospitality, the performance of the small Slovenian bureaucracy was decidedly better

than that of the Portuguese prior and the French bureaucracy immediately after Slovenia's turn. The fact that Slovenia was the first among the new, formerly Eastern European members to be entrusted with the demanding job of the Presidency highly motivated the Slovenian officialdom. The timely and extensive preparations for the task were made one of the national priorities. As such they were solidly approved by the general public and loyally supported also by the parliamentary opposition parties. The quality of Slovenia's performance was diminished though by the selection of Slovenian representatives at the ministerial, sub-ministerial, ambassadorial and high civil service level predominantly on ideological-party grounds. The government also unwisely mostly avoided using the intellectual capital of the civil society located at three Universities, in several research institutes, in non-governmental organizations and in Slovenian business community. This mistake explains why Slovenia during its Presidency failed to make any substantive innovative proposals. On the other hand, the smallness, compactness of and informality in the ranks of about two thousand middle- and low level public servants and of the auxiliary civilian, military and police personnel involved in the operation allowed for their very good to high efficiency. During six months they performed the roles of co-organizers or local organizers in several hundred activities which took place in Brussels and in Slovenia as well as of the host to over a hundred events in Slovenia. The latter category included several ministerial meetings (notably of foreign affairs and defence), several dozen sub-ministerial conferences and other activities.

The then governing right-of-centre coalition devoted to the task of the EU Council Presidency a good deal of its efforts and also considerable funds from the state budget. By orchestrating extensive mass media publicity to its role as "Europe's leader" the governing coalition hoped to enhance greatly its internal political capital which would allow it to win the approaching parliamentary election. During the pre-election campaign which started practically immediately after the end of Presidency the main coalition party SDS strenuously tried to exploit the presumably magnificent achievement of its leadership in "guiding Europe" during the previous half year. The results of the election which took place only three months later came however as a great disappointment. The ruling coalition and its presumably internationally highly appreciated and successful leader were replaced by a left-of-centre coalition with the formerly main opposition leader and a member of the European Parliament becoming the new Prime Minister. Slovenia was not however the first EU member where the publicity and political benefits stemming from the EU Presidency proved to be insufficient to win the following parliamentary election.

Slovenia's Presidency of the EU Council certainly increased the country's hitherto very modest general visibility and negligible role in guiding and implementing the ESDP. During the demanding six months Slovenia's performance was comparable to the contributions by much larger member states. In carrying out these demanding tasks Slovenian officialdom was greatly helped by the personnel of the EU Council and by the existence of the well developed practice of assisting small EU members in the Presidency role.



As seen above during the last two decades Slovenia's position *vis-à-vis* European integration has changed dramatically. From being in the relatively recent past an object of worries, suspicions, even threats with economic sanctions by EC Slovenia evolved into a full-fledged member of the EU and an active participant in the ESDP. During its EU Presidency Slovenia produced a solid and in some respects even excellent performance belying the notion that small states are condemned in advance to insignificance in world affairs, thus agreeing with the conclusion of Baldur Thorhallsson (2000).

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² See Chapter Seven 'The Yugoslav crisis' in van Eekelen, W. 1998: 140-149.

³ See Jane's Defence Weekly (27 September 2006) Interview with the Slovenian Defence Minister Karl Erjavec's, p. 34.

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